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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 14, 2006****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome to the House on this fine Valentine's Day. With your indulgence, I would like to, on your behalf, send out greetings to all our loved ones at home and all the people in the Northwest Territories on this Valentine's Day.

---Applause

I would especially like to send greetings out to my wife, Davida, who is hard at work in Hay River today.

Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Housing Opportunities Arising From The Mackenzie Gas Pipeline**

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, while answering my questions about Novel housing, the Minister of Finance said the following, on unedited Hansard, page 2,153, and I quote, "It seems that there is an inherent dislike to the fact of trying to use this concept as one that could help families in the Northwest Territories, especially those in the smaller communities."

Mr. Speaker, this is an absolutely appalling and unacceptable statement from a Cabinet Minister to very legitimate questions about a concept that will define and determine the work of the NWT Housing Corporation and this government for at least the next decade.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I have an inherent dislike for the way the Minister is constantly defining the important questions we must debate in this House into a small town versus big town issues. It is their favourite way to distract, discredit and divert the attention away from the real issues like their lack of ability to come up with good answers, Mr. Speaker.

Here are some more dislikes, Mr. Speaker. I have an inherent dislike for the distinct possibility that, if this Cabinet continues to fail to do its due diligence, this concept is going to create more big, fat bank accounts for multi-national corporations than the homes to our families in the North. I have an inherent dislike for the complete lack of respect this government has shown for the northern manufacturing industries. From the beginning, it has never hidden the fact that it had no faith in any of our own home builders.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just a big girl from the big town in Yellowknife, but I have to tell you, I have an inherent

dislike for the government using its annual budget to promote an idea by one business and really putting its credibility on the line. How is this different than the government asking the diamond mines to buy nothing but coffee from Tim Horton's? Just think of that, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, I have an inherent dislike for the fact that this government fails to see this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where northern businesses can build them, northern labour force can work in them, as well as our small town families living in them. Instead, the government is blind to do one idea without due diligence, and puts it into a budget, and lobbies the federal government for an idea that it has already stated is not up to...

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement On Administration Of The NWT Arctic Winter Games Team

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Valentine's Day today, I would like to tell a story of a Hay River athlete whose heart was broken by the process by which participants qualify to attend the upcoming Arctic Winter Games. Little Johnny comes home all excited about going to the Arctic Winter Games. He is an excellent athlete in his sport and his family is supportive. His parents complete the Arctic Winter Games application form and remit the registration fee for trials. He also begins the process of applying for the required passport. He applied early as he has been clearly notified that passport documents had to be received by January 6th in order to participate in the Arctic Winter Games.

Johnny participates in the regionals and he does well. He continues to attend practices and becomes even more excited. Then Johnny finds out that the issuance of his birth certificate from vital statistics is being delayed which, in turn, delays his passport from being received by the deadline that Sport North has announced to all athletes. At this point, he knows he cannot go to the games, so his parents decide it would not be sensible to pay the \$100 fee to play in the territorials when it was predetermined that he could not go to the Arctic Winter Games without a passport. This is where his dream ended, but his story is not over because then little Johnny now reads in the newspaper that passports are not required to travel to Alaska for the Arctic Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, this is not fair. How do we explain to a young person who has prepared for his or her sport for several months and sometimes waited years to participate in a competition like the Arctic Winter Games that, although you applied in plenty of time, your paperwork wasn't going to be completed in time and you can pay \$100 to play in the territorials but you can't attend the Arctic Winter Games even if you win? Then, less than a few weeks later, when it is too late to qualify in the territorials, too late to be accepted to attend the Arctic Winter Games, now we are told that none of these documents are mandatory.

Mr. Speaker, what is the message to the young athletes who have been so disappointed? Who is going to apologize to them? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Graduates From The Tlicho Region

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, I want to talk about education. Tlicho residents are special and we are proud of them. Today, these children that went to school, they are adults. Some of these adults are going back to high school. We look at these graduates. We are depending on them. They are good role models for other communities. That is what we call role models. We take a look at the Edzo Bruno School, there are many photos on the wall. It is all the graduates of Grade 12. They are all brothers, sisters, and aunts. They all go to school together. It is good to take a look at that. I am proud to say that they are role models for our communities. Although they graduate from Grade 12, some of them go further to post-secondary studies. Some of these have taken some community addiction counsellor training in their region. These graduates speak in their language. They have a very strong traditional background. With this knowledge that they have, they are helping their community. This is how they are helping their communities. I am very happy to see that.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, the government has been very supportive of adult students that go back to school. We are thankful for that. This investment has been worthwhile for the Tlicho region. This is what you call investment in our community. It is a worthwhile cause that we support these students. I would like to see the government to continue this support for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Aboriginal Governments In The Northwest Territories

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement today is about the special interest group perspective this government seems to have towards First Nations' governments in the NWT. This perspective seems to be more obvious given the recent developments

in the land transfer to the City of Yellowknife by this government, and then the recent court injunction filed by the Akaitcho Territory Government to address this ongoing issue.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government come to grips with reality and start to realize that future aboriginal governments will require some significant changes to the structure of our present system of governance, one being the transfer of authority and responsibility for many government services to the aboriginal governments, thus severely downsizing this one level of territorial bureaucracy?

Mr. Speaker, the Akaitcho Territory Government Interim Measures Agreement signed in 2001 clearly outlines the process to transfer Commissioner's land within the Akaitcho territory, and the establishment of a land lease-only policy for disposition of Commissioner's land within municipal boundaries are two agreements that this government has been a party to but, clearly, has not adhered to given the latest developments and dispositions of land in fee-simple title to the City of Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, if this government is serious about its recognition of aboriginal governments as legitimate governments, like we hear about all the time, then I think it is time we start treating these aboriginal governments with the respect and dignity they deserve, especially when talking about land the First Nations' groups have established, through the highest court in our land, to have an inherent right to ownership and management of. Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs questions about this government's recent actions on this matter at the appropriate time later today. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Investment In The Children Of The Northwest Territories

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government makes many investments in infrastructure and personnel throughout the NWT. They like to speak of the long-term benefits of these investments. Today, Mr. Speaker, I ask this government to make an investment that is sure to bring the return. That investment, Mr. Speaker, is in our young children.

The Children's First Society in Inuvik is a non-profit group that was formed with the hope of having their needs incorporated into the new school being built in Inuvik. This group consists of the Aboriginal Head Start Program, the day care society, and the Inuvik preschool. By having these groups as part of the school, we increase their chances of finishing school. Studies have proven this statement, Mr. Speaker.

Between these three groups, they have 15 employees and will be able to amalgamate -- and that is a word that the government likes to use -- their staff and resources. We spend millions of dollars on jails, courthouses, subsidies and much more. Let's now make an investment in the resource that will be able to bring a good return. Let's invest in our children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Member's Statement On Youth Employment Program Initiatives In Nahendeh

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Last summer, during the May session, I raised concerns regarding the drastic funding cuts to the Youth Employment Program initiative, the acronym YEPI, as we know it in Nahendeh. However, in Nahendeh, we are not saying YEPI anymore. This continued reduction in assistance to youth workers is, and was, visibly noticeable. A ghost town is how many people could describe Nahendeh communities if something is not done about this soon.

There is a change when I see no groups of youth painting, cutting grass, et cetera in our communities. The village of Fort Simpson, like all communities in the territory, offered a wide variety of services throughout the summer which are critical to the tourism, recreational and youth activities through a partnership with the GNWT.

Throughout the last three years, the village has received enough partnership funding for nine to 11 positions, ranging from staffing assistance with the community pool, tourism information centres, and many summer youth activities.

Last year, the village, due to this drastic cut from the ECE funding, resulted in a reduction of numerous summer programs. The programming gave our youth experience, skills, responsibilities and the ability to earn and save money. The confidence youth receive from these employment programs is invaluable to the development within the communities. The most unfortunate aspect in all of this is the ministry has not considered the reinstatement of this funding as a priority. Many constituent parents have expressed their concerns, once again this year, whether there will be enough employment opportunities for our children again this summer.

The actions of this government seem to continuously contradict the policies and objectives of this government with a growing concern for youth, healthy living, and substance abuse such as crystal meth. Why would this government cut so many badly needed youth employment opportunities? Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak today about the Government of the Northwest Territories support, or lack thereof, for the secondary diamond industry. I have asked numerous questions in the past regarding the investment and the support that the GNWT is providing to this industry.

I would like to know if the Minister plans on releasing to the public the cost benefit analysis of government support

to the value-added industry. The secondary diamond industry has been a very large contributor to the Northwest Territories economy. It is estimated that between 1999 and 2014, a period of 15 years, this industry will pump a total of \$207 million in direct, indirect and induced wages, or an average of \$13 million per year, Mr. Speaker.

My concern is that the department has folded up the diamond division, thus sending a poor message and signal to the companies in the value-added industry.

Where is the support going to come from under this new reorganization? What about the protection of the GNWT's heavily invested position in this industry, estimated to be in the neighbourhood of \$20 million? We must protect our investment in this industry. The value-added diamond industry here in Yellowknife employs over 160 people. They pay taxes. They rent. They buy homes. They are very positive contributors to our local economy, as I mentioned earlier; somewhere in the magnitude of \$13 million a year.

When a factory is telling Members of this House that they can go to Antwerp and buy diamonds from BHP for less than they can here in Canada, I have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker. I understand the Minister is saying that he will look into these concerns, and so he should.

Our factories just want to be treated fairly. Is that too much to ask? Is it our government's intention to slowly kill off the local cut and polish industry? The government has to listen and take immediate action to remedy this situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Member's Statement On Income Support Programs In The Hamlet Of Tuktoyaktuk

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to raise a concern I received from the hamlet council of Tuktoyaktuk in regard to income support.

Mr. Speaker, on December 15, 2005, a Tuk development corporation, a business arm of the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation, issued a dividend to all beneficiaries 18 and over to their membership of Tuktoyaktuk.

Mr. Speaker, this payment was made available by the surrender of the Esso concession, as negotiated by Inuvialuit Regional Corporation on behalf of the Tuk Community Corporation. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that some income support clients were refused assistance for the month of January 2006, because of dividend payments. Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the Income Support Program having worked with the department in the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that this payment was issued from the surrender of the Esso concession, is it fair for this government to include this as earned income? Many single parents and families rely on assistance from time to time under the Income Support Program because of lack of work.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this government, what constitutes earned and unearned income? The dividend issued to Tuk beneficiaries in December 2005, should not have been considered as income because of the Inuvialuit land claim agreement. At the appropriate time, I will ask the Minister appropriate for questions in this regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Member's Statement On WCB Insurance Premiums In The NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent report given by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, it said that 48 percent of NWT respondents cited WCB premiums as a harmful tax to small business. This is something that we need to pay close attention to, Mr. Speaker, because small business is the backbone of our community and it is a bellwether of our good, solid economy in the Territories.

When I look at the situation, I can understand why franchise operators say that the WCB premiums are such a concern. Their rates are \$2.93 per \$100, Mr. Speaker, which is nearly twice as much paid by their counterparts in the Yukon. That is well above the rest of Canadian provinces. They have seen increases over the past several years of 25 percent or more each year. Mr. Speaker, in all fairness to WCB, that is because they have been taking out the subsidy but that still does not allude to the fact, or take away the facts, that the premiums are still very high.

The ultimate goal, Mr. Speaker, should be that the WCB is about preventing accidents and injuries. It seems obvious to me that we should be rewarding good safety practices and we should be punishing poor practices. Franchises follow national mandatory safety programs and standards, Mr. Speaker, or else they get their franchise operation licence pulled. WCB has to place them in a class that represents really what they do and recognize the efforts that they take to safety procedures. As a result, we should be recognizing, again, safe practices and finding ways to eliminate bad practices.

Mr. Speaker, we need to start rewarding good ones. I am going to give you some suggestions. First, we need to start by looking at franchises and moving them to a class that truly represents the efforts that they make towards safety. Mr. Speaker, second, the WCB needs to start cracking down on businesses that do not have adequate safety procedures in place and have poor records. Finally, when businesses violate these safety items, just like the Liquor Act, the Public Health Act, or whatever, they should be cracking down with real penalties and possibly even enforcing closures if they are not operating a safe business.

Mr. Speaker, in some places out there, this is a first job for many young people. We want to make sure that they are working and learning skills in a safe environment. I will have questions for the Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to welcome everyone in the gallery today. Welcome to the House. It is always nice to have an audience. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I just said in my Member's statement, I believe that the Minister should be taking immediate steps to improve the situation of the WCB rates. What is the Minister doing to ensure that bad companies or businesses out there are not putting the burden of WCB premiums on good businesses that have good, solid safety practices and records? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I met with the chair of the governance council. We discussed the issue that has been raised in this House by members of the industry with my office. I did ask the chair to make sure that, this week, during the governance council meetings, they review the situation that has been brought to their attention by the franchise operators. I was informed that it is on the agenda for their discussions this week. So the governance council will be considering it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these franchises that have brought forward this concern wouldn't need a new category or be screaming for different rates if the rates were fairly spread across the board which, what I am saying is, basically, if we had safety practices, procedures and policies out there organized by these sort of bad businesses, then they wouldn't need a new category that fairly represents what they do. What is the Minister doing to help promote safety policies and safe practices in the workplace? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The WCB does have a safety program. They have a regular follow-up with employers who have poor safety records. They do work with those employers to try and make sure

that they have programs in place to bring down the incidents of unsafe work practices. That is something that is taking place right now. Also, the WCB does have a program in place to reward those businesses that have a good safety record. I understand, though, that the program right now is focussed on larger employers and would hit right now those employers who are slightly above the amount of payment that we are seeing from the franchise operators. I believe that the governance council is going to take a look at that issue this week, as well. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister pointing out that the reward program, yes, it actually is exempt to almost all of those franchises that we are talking about. They are exempt from that, I think, except for one. It really doesn't affect most of them. Mr. Speaker, can this Minister tell me today if anyone was ever fined, or has WCB worked towards removing someone's business licence or whatnot because they have demonstrated clear, bad safety practices that, yet again, their rates are reflective on the good businesses that have good safety operations? Have they ever pulled a licence, or what dramatic steps have they ever done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 393-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure that the WCB can pull a business licence. I guess they could consider cancelling the coverage and that would, in effect, put many businesses out of business. I don't know if they have done that. I do know that the WCB has gone to court; has taken employers to court for unsafe work practices. I would suspect that they will continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for Minister McLeod with respect to the kind of unhappy story of some of the participants, or would-be potential participants, in the Arctic Winter Games. We have a group out there, Mr. Speaker, of very disappointed young people who had dreams of going to the Arctic Winter Games. Through a myriad of misunderstanding, miscommunication, missed deadlines and things like this, were unable to...What could we have done differently, knowing that the Arctic Winter Games were going to be held in Alaska this year? What could we have done differently as a government to have made this a smooth process and put everyone on an equal bare footing that had potential to attend these games and compete on behalf of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we were advised in the spring of this past year that the requirement for passports was going to be an issue. We were advised by the host society. We were also advised by the international committee that all countries should ensure that athletes and the mission staff have passports. We were also advised by the United States government that they may be proposing or that there was consideration of increasing the security requirements. They could not ensure that anybody that didn't have a passport would get across the border. We, then, in turn, or the Sport North Federation who is responsible for delivering and managing the Arctic Winter Games programs for the Northwest Territories, advised all of the sports groups, the organizations and the communities. That information was out there for a considerable amount of time. The regional recreational officers all knew about it. The community recreation people also knew that there was going to be this requirement. For the most part, it was followed. We did not allow anybody that took part in the territorial trials to participate unless they had their applications filed. That went very well. We have had 336 participants that took part and 200 and some of these are athletes. There is some concern that there were a small few who are not receiving their passports on time. We are trying to work around it. We are trying to find an alternative by using a birth certificate or a government ID. We still have not received confirmation that the border will let us use this documentation, but we are working on that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in hindsight, is there anything that the government could have done to be a little more proactive about this? Obviously, passports are a government-issued document. Birth certificates are a government-issued document. Certainly, there are ways, everyone knows, where passports and the issuance of them can be expedited on behalf of dignitaries and elected officials. On a government-to-government basis, especially for the departments such as our own department of vital statistics, was there nothing this government could have done to be more proactive to ensure that these young people wanting to compete could have had passports? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what else we could have done. The Sport North Federation did work with the RCMP, the retailers, photographers. We advised our RDOs, our recreation development officers. The community recreation officers

knew of the situation, they knew there were requirements. They helped fill in the applications. We also directed people that did not have the sufficient funding, to go through the kids funding program where they could have gotten assistance, or received assistance. So I'm not sure what else we could have done that would have been different. This is not the first time that there was a requirement for passports. Sport North has dealt with the passport issue when there was an Arctic Winter Games hosted in Greenland, for example. So it's something that's been required before and we've done, I think, everything that we could do to cover all the angles on this issue. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we need to send a message to those athletes who wanted to participate but were precluded from doing so because of bureaucratic-type barriers and obstacles that were put in front of them. Mr. Speaker, I need to tell the kids in my community something about how this government feels about how things went, and to the parents and to other people here, and I don't know what to offer them as a solution. But I think this is a distinct case where the rules changed in the middle of the game, and I think that that sends a very bad message to our youth. I want a clear answer from the Minister right now, are athletes going to be going to the Arctic Winter Games after all this around passports? Are there athletes in the NWT going to the Arctic Winter Games without passports? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 394-15(4): Arctic Winter Games Teams - Change Of Rules

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm that at this point. We know that there are some athletes that have applied...Everybody has applied for their passport, but there are some athletes that the passport office has sent back their application and is requesting more information. I don't have a firm number on that as of yet. We are working on that. We know that it hasn't restricted the number of athletes from applying or taking part. This year in our regional trials, we've had 1,300 athletes take part. That's 200 more athletes than we did in 2004. We had five more communities take part this time around than we did before. We had smaller communities getting involved. I think there's a lot of things we could point to that are showing that the Arctic Winter Games are becoming increasingly popular. But as to if there are any youth or athletes travelling to Alaska without a passport, I'd have to confirm that later. We don't have that information as of yet. We are hoping that we're going to have all our athletes and all our mission staff with passports when they leave here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a year ago there was much discussion in this House on the government's handling and consequential loss of \$11 million, or thereabouts, in dealing with the secondary diamond industry here in Yellowknife; the failure of a couple of factories. There was much discussion at that time about government support; what was in place, how we were looking at the industry, and how we could support that industry. At that time, the Minister committed to going about a cost-benefit analysis of the industry so that Members of this House could see how much money the government has invested in the secondary industry; how much benefit that industry brings to the local economy of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, my first question for the Minister would be whether or not that report that his department concluded in October would be available for public viewing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member knows, committee has a copy of that report. We've transmitted that to committee and I'd be more than happy to make that public. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister how the dismantling of the diamond projects division, one that had been in place for a number of years and had provided much support to the industry, how the dismantling of that division is going to help us protect the secondary industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member knows, we've had a shift of focus in the department in terms of our support. We've made the decision to withdraw, at this point, from the National Diamond Strategy, at the suggestion of the factories, and more closely focus on our local support initiatives to factories, working with them on our Rare in Nature campaign. In order to do so, as the Member indicated, we have taken the diamond projects division, taken away the task of National Diamond Strategy support, which was taking up quite a bit of our time, and parcelled out the responsibilities. For instance, tourism and parks division in my department will now handle all the diamond tourism marketing. Investment and economic analysis division is the one point of contact for our Rare in Nature campaign. Minerals, oil and gas is going to be handling our certification program, the administration of our rough diamonds supply, and also monitoring of the approved

NWT manufacturers. As the Members also know, some of the diamond marketing programs that are being generated through the Rare in Nature campaign are being paid for with funds that come from the polished diamond certification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the other areas I think the local industry turns for support, because the diamond division isn't there any longer, is to Members of this House, Mr. Speaker. I know some of my colleagues have brought this up, as well, about the situation where one of our local cut and polish factories can buy diamonds cheaper in Antwerp than they can here in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister if he has met with BHP regarding the pricing discrepancies between Antwerp and Yellowknife, and how he will take action to make sure that our cut and polish industry here is being treated fairly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 395-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Important to point out, I think, that the local factories here enjoy an excellent relationship, for the most part, with the mines. The mines have been very supportive of the programs and there is, but, at this point, really one main complaint between a factory and one of the mines. The Member has indicated it's BHP Billiton. I've encouraged the two sides to come together; encouraged the factory to take their concerns, document their concerns, and have a pointed discussion with the mine around those. They have met in Antwerp, I understand, either yesterday or today. So we'll hopefully, shortly, know the outcome of that discussion. But it was important, I think, to recognize that this is a commercial dispute. It should be settled by these two parties where possible. If it can't and won't be settled by these two parties, then, obviously, our government has to be involved. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment with regard to the Youth Employment Program initiative, and I believe it's in his mandate. Just with respect to that, I'd just like to ask the Minister what's in the plans this year for contributions to our communities. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The program will be funded at the same level as it was last year, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just wondering if the Minister's office has any intention to support special initiative projects that are out there, if there's any allocation at all for that. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The funding for the programs is divided on a regional basis throughout the Northwest Territories and funding decisions are made at the regional offices, based on applications that come in. So it's important that groups or organizations that wish to access this funding get their applications into the regional office as quickly as possible. In this year's budget we're not proposing an increase in the funding. It is just the exact same amount as we had last year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering, because I know that there is a demand out there to provide adequate funding to youth employment opportunities, I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell me how much of an uptake was taken last year and how much of a demand there was to provide opportunities to our youth. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 396-15(4): Youth Employment Program Initiatives In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have last year's uptake figures with me. I will ensure that the Member gets that information very quickly. I'll transmit it to him and other Members in writing. I think it's important to remember that when the monies were reduced in this one program, Youth Employment Program, they weren't taken out of the budget; they were moved into apprenticeship. After talking to people through the Northwest Territories, the suggestion was that we needed to focus more on getting money into apprenticeship and that's where we moved the monies to. So it's not a situation where the funding was reduced for young people, it's just we've refocused it in a different area. I know that I've heard from a number of Members that this has caused some concerns in their communities, but we still have some money there. I would encourage the communities to get their applications in early for this funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I indicated that a court injunction was filed by the Akaitcho Territory Government and, just for the record, I'd like to withdraw that as part of my statement because it has not been formally done as of now. But I just want to ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, what action is this government going to take to avoid or circumvent this option and start working more cooperatively with the First Nations to find a more agreeable solution? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, although the question was directed to the Minister of MACA, the question is more appropriate for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and I hold that portfolio. Mr. Speaker, we have been negotiating with Canada and the Akaitcho for a number of years on their process. We are working in good faith. We will continue to work with the Akaitcho and the federal government on the issues. There is a table dealing with land withdrawal and we intend to continue to negotiate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I don't know; you know, negotiating in good faith, I don't know if the Minister is saying that the Yellowknives have no right to block the land process, I don't know if that's a statement that says anything about going in good faith. I just want to know who the GNWT is negotiating on behalf of. Are they negotiating on behalf of the GNWT, or are they negotiating on behalf of the City of Yellowknife? Basically the GNWT has made two types of land withdrawals, one for the new courthouse that's going to be situated here near the Legislative Assembly for the Department of Justice, and the other withdrawal is for the City of Yellowknife in the industrial zone. There have been no interim measure land with withdrawals agreed to with the Akaitcho Territory Government as of now, so where is that good faith? He says that the territory and the city are frustrated with Yellowknives lack of progress on their negotiations. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you there are many people in the NWT who are frustrated with this government's lack of progress on just transfer of land for housing needs, you know, and I haven't seen any significant changes in that area as of today. So I just want to ask the Minister, what actions in good faith is the department of Aboriginal Affairs willing to take over the next couple of days? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say, first of all, that there was an interim lands withdrawal protocol that was agreed to in November 2005. Our government continues to negotiate with the Akaitcho on the withdrawal, or identification of lands withdrawal, in what's called Commissioner's land area. The federal government continues to negotiate with the Akaitcho on federal Crown land outside of where the Commissioner's land boundaries are. So, Mr. Speaker, we are working through a Lands Working Group. The Lands Working Group meets at least once a month and, in fact, has been meeting more often to identify land for withdrawal, and we continue with that process. Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, because there is no land identified as land to be withdrawn, then we have to continue to carry out our responsibilities to all of the people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As far as I know, the draft interim land withdrawal protocol that was agreed to by the federal government and the Akaitcho government, but not agreed to by the territorial government because of some issues that the territorial government had under the disposal of Commissioner's land. I just want to ask...You know, issues under discussion with regard to the GNWT policies on one of their land lease-only policies that the GNWT agreed to abide by with the Akaitcho Territory Government, but now they've just sort of circumvented that whole policy in itself, like a lot of other government policies, for reasons who knows why. But why doesn't the government follow its own policies if they're going to draft up a policy and get the First Nations to work with them on that policy? How come the government doesn't even do itself any justice by following their own rules? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 397-15(4): Land Transfer Agreements And Aboriginal Governments

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are following the land lease-only policy. The land lease-only policy does not provide for an absolute freeze on land, but it does, consistent with the interim measures agreement with the Akaitcho and the federal government, provide for a process we have to go through in consultation where there is going to be a transfer of land. Mr. Speaker, we have been following that diligently and in no way have been circumventing our own policies or negotiating in bad faith. Mr. Speaker, we are following all of the agreements we have in place. We follow our own policy; we follow the interim measures agreement. Mr. Speaker, just one correction for the Member is that we have agreed to the interim land withdrawal protocol as of November 2005. But what has happened is there has been no interim land withdrawals, so there's nothing the protocol can apply to until there are some withdrawals. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to move along to that step at the negotiating table

and we're certainly prepared to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) My questions will be to the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. This is one concern that comes from the community when I recently visited. (Translation ends)

...it is common for two or three generations of Dene family to share a home. Not only is the tradition of our culture, but also necessary for the lack of housing in our communities, Mr. Speaker. Those who work in the mines also depend on this custom of grandparents raising their children while they're at work. The reality is the head of the household, usually an elder, Mr. Speaker, is the rent payer. I would like to ask the Minister why the rent scale does not reflect this reality, by basing the rent on the income of the head of the household instead of the total household income. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reason that we use the rent scale is to ensure that people don't take advantage of the social housing that we do have where it's based on the income of the whole household, not the individual. But we are looking at ways of getting people to sign co-leases with the elder and whatnot, because we found a lot of elders have found themselves in the situation where they do run into arrears and problems with arrears because individuals that have worked, their relatives and whatnot, have come lived with them and then have gone back to school or whatnot. But again, we're trying to find a way to be more flexible in that area, and one of the areas we are looking at is signing co-leases with other occupants of the unit instead of just the household. So we are looking at this problem and we're hoping to bring something forward. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) I would like to ask him another question, the same kind of question. (Translation ends)

In the past, Mr. Speaker, the head of household income was considered by the Housing Corporation. I am glad to hear the Minister is somewhat receptive to going back there or reviewing the situation. Mr. Speaker, despite these outrageous rents, we have the units in very bad conditions.

AN HON. MEMBER: Outrageous!

MR. LAFFERTY: Some are on the verge of being condemned in the communities.

AN HON. MEMBER: Slumlords!

MR. LAFFERTY: Why isn't there some requirements for at least, Mr. Speaker, a certain portion of the rent be set aside for maintenance and repairs of these units? Some units are so bad that they can't even live in the household where elders are living in the mould.

AN HON. MEMBER: Mould!

MR. LAFFERTY: Would the Minister consider putting in such a requirement within the Housing Corporation? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have an avenue by way of looking at the rent scale, but also looking at the condition rating of the unit which is subtracted from the rent where a person only pays the rent based on a subtracted money on a condition rate. So the building they are renting is in a certain condition rate, which is lower than a certain percentage and you deduct that percentage from the rent. So you don't pay the full rent. You pay rent based on the condition of the facility you are renting. So we do have that already in place. Mr. Speaker, we are hoping to be able to look at a new Supported Lease Program and I think that program going forward, we'll be able to deal with all these issues that come forward in this House. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, every time we talk about housing, we talk about our elders and the well-being of our elders. (Translation ends)

...elders in the community, like granny in Nahanni. They pay the ridiculous prices of the units in the communities. At the same time, some community members, especially elders, are not fully aware of the process of changes, or changes within policies or regulations within the corporation mandate, which also creates a huge problem in the community with outstanding debts and owing, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister be committed to provide clear direction for housing officers to ensure that they are doing everything they can to assess clients with paperwork, or counselling, or whatever is needed, so they are not paying more than they should be according to their current income? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 398-15(4): Rent Scale Formulas And Social Housing In The NWT

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make it clear that seniors who

live in social housing don't pay any rent. But if someone who is working moves in with a senior or relative, based on the household income, that individual's rent has to be assessed. That's where we have a difference of opinion here. Under the existing program, seniors do not pay rent in social housing. But if someone moves in with them who is working or has an income, that rent is assessed against the household income. Again, we do have one of the best programs across the country where seniors don't pay rent in seniors' housing, but because of the loophole that people were taking advantage of, they've made a change to look at the whole household income where those individuals take advantage of the seniors and we are trying to...I will definitely look into the questions the Member raised here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for Mr. Bell, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, on the area of the secondary diamond industry. Mr. Speaker, we are going back almost a decade now, before Mr. Bell's watch and before I was in this Assembly, where agreements were set up, socio-economic agreements were set up with diamond mines requiring them to integrate, to some extent, into our economy and our society here. One of the principle hopes/expectations of this government was that we could create a secondary cutting and polishing industry and, indeed, we've had some success there. But, Mr. Speaker, we've run into at least a recent situation where the anticipated supply and flow, and terms and conditions by which a diamond mine will sell rough product to a cutting and polishing industry has run into a little bit of rough weather.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to get at least another two diamond mines in the Northwest Territories, so we've got some work to do here if we are going to be able to continue this expectation. With the socio-economic agreements that we have in place today, is there anything in this agreement that requires or stipulates that diamond miners shall sell rough product to NWT-based cutting and polishing companies, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our socio-economic agreements with the two existing mines do stipulate that they make rough diamonds available for secondary, value-added industries here in the NWT. They are doing that. In terms of details, it's very difficult for us, because they are business arrangements and we are not privy to all the details of these, it's difficult for us to assess these agreements. It's also very difficult to know what the cost of diamonds is on the open market because, of course, these are confidential agreements between parties. But in terms of our socio-economic agreements, it is stipulated that these mines provide access to rough to our local cutting and polishing industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I guess here is where the nub of the issue is. As the Minister has outlined, we've set out the expectation, or the requirement, that these are sold, but we do not have the ability to monitor or, it would seem, enforce these conditions. So, therefore, the investment that we've made, and we can attest to some fairly severe losses and some risks already, we still have a considerable exposure, Mr. Speaker, based in loan guarantees to cutting and polishing plants, based on this expectation, but we have not negotiated our ability to enforce it. How are we going to close this gap, Mr. Speaker? How are we going to protect the continuing investment of the taxpayer in this vital industry?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to recognize when we talk about enforceability, there are many unknowns and there is risk involved in this. We think it's a risk that's worth taking. We think we are doing what we can to mitigate it and make sure we have some success in this industry. Essentially, two parties come together, a factory and the mine. They agree an assortment of goods be provided to that factory that best meets its needs. They come up with what they call a sample box and then the mine does what it can, does its best to match that sample at each site. Now, we don't know in future what the pipes that are being mined will look like, so it's entirely possible that what was once economic to cut and polish in the Northwest Territories, you could find a pipe that isn't. You could find that the next mine developed in the NWT is more similar to something like Argyle in Australia, where none of it would be fit for cutting and polishing here because of our high cost of labour. That isn't the case. We've been lucky. In terms of getting an ironclad agreement and contract in force that can take into account all the possible variations, it's very difficult, almost impossible to do. I think we are doing what we can to make sure that this industry is a success. I would say that with 150 people employed in this local industry, or thereabouts, it is a success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be content to say we should be happy to have 150 people employed. I would like to see hundreds more engaged, because I think there is the opportunity. Mr. Speaker, what I am looking at right now is a requirement or an obligation, that I feel I have, and we have in this Assembly, to be held accountable for the investment that we have at risk and, to some extent, for the jobs that people are engaged in here.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister, in response to a question from Mr. Ramsay a little while ago, said, well, if the producers and polishers can't make a deal -- and paraphrasing

roughly here, Mr. Speaker -- then the government will just have to get involved. How are we going to be able to get involved in fixing this problem if we don't have an agreement that allows us to have a meaningful role, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 399-15(4): Support Of The Secondary Diamond Industry In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, first of all, we have to understand the problem. I don't think we are entirely there yet. We are sitting down with the factory to talk about what they perceive as a premium being charged for the supply of the rough. They think they can do better on the open market in Antwerp. We are trying to understand exactly what the premium is. There is a bit of a difference of opinion, even within the factor, in terms of what that is. So they are trying to compare it to the open market in Antwerp. But one of the things we know about the way diamonds are sold is that, somebody in Antwerp who has a site pays for a parcel of goods with a wide range of goods. If you want to extract only one segment of those goods that might be fit for cutting and polishing in the Northwest Territories and attribute a value to it based on the overall package or parcel size, it is very difficult because they aren't sold that way.

What I have said is, if the factory can sit down and document the problem, explain the problem to BHP, lay out the evidence, as it were, I am more than happy to participate in that discussion and sit down with BHP. I think it is in BHP's interest, and the interest of all mines, to make sure this industry works here. I do think they are committed to this industry. I think they have to have an understanding of the challenge that this factory is facing. I am optimistic that they will sit down and work this through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, further to my Member's statement, I would like to ask questions to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, in answering my questions, other than what he said about inherent dislike, he seems to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is an idea. It could come down the pipes. We have to be ready for that. I have no problem with that. It could be a great deal. Imperial Oil, if they do decide to go with the pipeline -- and I hope they do -- they are going to need housing. They are going to have to buy it from somebody. They may buy it from ATCO. There will be housing left. If we can get advantage of that, that is great. But that is not the way the government is operating. This item is in the budget. The Minister has indicated that he is going to promote the pipeline workforce housing conversion. He has already stated that there is only one company that can do it. The Minister of the Housing Corporation stated this, and he has already stated in this House that he has been in negotiation with the federal government for them to give us \$120 million so we can put in \$110 million so we can work on this \$297 million. Does he see any problem with him being so ahead of this thing without having given due regard to what is possible in the North among our own

industries, labour force and what other options there might be? Would it not preclude getting us a really good deal at the end of the day? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pipeline project, or the Mackenzie gas project's partnership with Imperial being one of those, is ultimately going to make a decision of what package they would go for. If they go with a traditional package of just supplying camp workforce housing without any conversion aspects, this is off the table. If we don't get support from the federal government, this is off the table. Part of the problem we face here is timelines, and commitments have to be made before they make a decision to go down the path of building a pipeline. The timing of it, the volume of it to get it done, we don't have factories in the Northwest Territories that can take on such a demand in such a short time frame. What we have been working on is what aspects of training can we have northerners put these packages together and then do the conversion afterwards, as well as the Minister of the Housing Corporation has talked about what portions of these camps can be built in the Northwest Territories. So there are those aspects.

But let's be clear. An opportunity here does exist. We recognize that and have been exploring that and putting the numbers together on the risks of going down this road and the positive solution that this could present to people of the Northwest Territories. As for myself in addressing it in the budget address, I think it is incumbent on ourselves here in the Northwest Territories, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, to look at this opportunity as a potential to dealing with the housing shortage we face across the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know sometimes if it is just wilful blindness or intentional neglect, or it is just really playing innocent. I have no idea. Mr. Speaker, let me just say that a budget document is really important. The markets go up and down on the basis of what a budget says. For the Minister to say that he is putting a concept in the budget and the Minister of Housing is going to negotiate and has been negotiating, I am telling you, if this goes through -- I hope it goes through. I don't know if this is the only option for Housing. I hope it does. -- then it is definitely going to put ATCO housing at the front line for Imperial to consider. Any company that comes with 297 million...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a question, Ms. Lee?

MS. LEE: ...that is going to give a leg up. In that case, I want to know if the Minister will consider asking Imperial Oil to leave a trailer behind for free, because they have to get rid of them somehow, and ask ATCO housing to give these for free because we are giving them, really, the lifetime opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, being that I've, although at a younger day in my life, saw what happened in the Beaufort-Delta when companies came up with their traditional workforce housing and left them in the North. They left them and they are used for warehouses and sometimes a camp house out in the bush, as we call it, up in the Delta. Is that what we want to be left with in communities? I don't think so. People don't like that concept. If we are going to take advantage of this, we are going to have to take advantages upfront and make some necessary investments. A company has approached us, approached the Housing Corporation, with a concept and, in fact, applied for a patent on that concept to make a conversion happen easier. We are working with that company, yes. If there are companies in the Northwest Territories that feel they have a product that they can supply, then they can, as well, work with the pipeline partners as well as working with the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Northwest Territories, we look right here in the city and see what development is happening when it comes to mobile homes in those areas. I think I can speak fairly clearly here that the majority of those units going up are not being manufactured in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, the Minister still has not answered that question. The Housing Corporation Minister stated that this is a brilliant concept by a great company. They are going to try to sell this into other provinces. So we are doing ATCO Novel a great favour. We are going to be the test case. It is going to work. It is going to put 1,400 housing units in the Delta, so why can we not get that for free? We are doing them a favour. Why are we giving them the money? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 400-15(4): Novel Housing Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie gas project will be purchasing workforce housing. The Government of the Northwest Territories is not going to ATCO to say supply us with 1,400 camp beds so we can have these in the Northwest Territories. Our commitment through the Government of the Northwest Territories, as we have laid out to Members, totals about maybe \$120 million. That is to do the groundwork, the development of subdivisions and in that area, conversions, tankage, and those things of setting them up in the communities. That is what we've committed to. We want to take a concept, if it is applied at the front end, we can take it at the back end and probably get a deal. That is what we are after, is get a deal that affords us suitable housing for people in the Northwest Territories so we can meet what Members have put on the floor and passed the motion of dealing with poor housing in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. Written questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 28-15(4): Exemptions For Land Lease Only Policies

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

The land lease only policy was adopted by this government to ensure that an adequate land base would be available for the AFN upon completion of the treaty implementation negotiations. They have received approval for an exemption to allow for transfers of parcels of land to the City of Yellowknife, in fee-simple title, on February 7, 2006.

- 1) What discussions or consultations took place with the parties affected by this decision to make an exemption on the LLOP?
- 2) If any consultation was done, was an agreement reached, or formally drafted, that allowed all parties to have input and discussion over?
- 3) If the government deferred the city's land requirements application until January 2006, why was the discussion to dispose of land in fee-simple title rushed? What prompted this rushed discussion to take place?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters: Bill 18, Committee Reports 5, 6 and 7, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 16: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. When we left off yesterday we were on general comments for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. What is the wish of the committee today, Mr. Menicoche?

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. We wish to continue deliberation of Education, Culture and Employment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We will do that after a lunch break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. I call Committee of the Whole back to order. We're on Education, Culture and Employment, general comments. Ms. Lee. What? I'm sorry. That's the second time I've done that. Mr. Dent, would you like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, Madam Chair, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses in.

So we'll welcome back Mr. Devitt and Mr. Cleveland to the chamber. We are on general comments and I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a couple questions on the opening statement of the Minister and one has to do with the kindergarten funding. The government will now provide full-time kindergarten funding so that now the schools could have money for the program they have been providing for a little while. But I'm interested in the net benefit of this funding in that there are going to be some changes to funding formula. I believe the funding formula that requires 60 percent of student attendance, for example, is going to come into play this year. Also, there is talk of adult students over 21 will not be included in the funding formula. So I'm interested in knowing what kind of impact that will have on the school system, I guess in particular to Yellowknife schools, because school boards get a global budget and then they have to distribute it to the schools. It's not always clear when we're approving money here how these funds will translate. I guess what I'm really interested in is, how much increase would the school boards be expected to see from these changes? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure we have the detail of information by school board that Ms. Lee is looking for right now. We could provide that to her and members of this committee fairly quickly.

The actual changes -- not one where we are cutting off funding to school boards for students who are 22 years of age and over -- we are reducing the funding to 50 percent of what would normally be provided for a full-time student. But Ms. Lee is right, that we are also insisting that attendance figures change to reflect 60 percent attendance for funding, as compared to 40 percent attendance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. If I could have that net fiscal benefit, as Mr. Roland would like to say, for the school boards under these changes to funding formulas or funding rules ASAP, please.

The second question that I have with respect to the Minister's opening statement and the riding of Yellowknife is the school facilities issue. Madam Chair, there used to be in the books money for a new school, I believe it was about \$16 million. It was there when this Assembly started and I don't believe it's there anymore. Now there is actually money allocated larger than that for renovation. That study, those decisions, I think, are based on the Facilities Management Committee, which comes out of the 10-year education facility plan. I'm just concerned about where this is heading. I know the Minister has

informed me that he's appointed a new chair and he sees this as a 10-year long...It's a committee that would be set up for a 10-year plan, or for 10 years or whatever. I mean no disrespect to anybody on the board or the chair, that's not what this is about at all, but I am beginning to question the efficacy of the Minister studying these issues to death. I don't understand why we had a school set up and now we find that we don't. You know, it's not like these educational facilities report recommendations get adopted. In the end it's really up to us what we do with our facilities money. It's really up to the GNWT whether there will be a new school or not, or the money should go into renovations. I have to tell you that the experience that we are going through from the latest facilities review is not a positive one. I don't know if we're making anybody happy with this process. I'm not sure if there was any new information found there that could not be determined by the Minister and the department. So I just don't understand what the point is of this exercise if, indeed, in the final analysis, the final decisions as to where the schools go or whether there will be a new school or not or renovations and what renovations will take place and when, that all is decided in this House.

We know already that the latest facility reviews indicated that Yellowknife needs a free-standing Aurora Campus, but the Minister has decided that is not going to be his priority. There are lots of parents and teachers in the city who believe that there's a need for a new school, but that's not going to happen. I believe the review report said that the renovations to Sissons was as important as the renovations to St. Joseph, but the department and the Minister...I don't mean, like, all of what I say here is directed toward the Minister, not to any of the officials because I do believe it is the Minister who is accountable to us.

So I need to ask the Minister why he needs to...You know, this is his third year into the mandate. What more does he need to study when we already have the power to make decisions about what we can and cannot do? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go back to Ms. Lee's previous question, I want to make sure that she understands that the numbers that I can provide relating to the impact on the boards for the change in funding for the full-day kindergarten will be estimates, but we will endeavour to get that information to her as quickly as possible.

Madam Chair, in 2003, the expectation was that in Yellowknife, because of the population growth, that we would in the not-too-distant future need to see an extra school being built. However, it's become clear since that time that the population growth in Yellowknife is not happening in the kindergarten to Grade 12 population. This is something of a revelation to us. It's not something that was foreseen; the change in the demographic makeup. As a result, we were looking at what we needed to do with our facilities in Yellowknife.

There were different pressures. Three of the school boards in town were demanding new facilities. So in order to try and see where we were heading with that, we put together a group to discuss where we needed to be on a 10-year education facility plan in Yellowknife. That's not

dissimilar to the approach that was taken back in the early '90s when, again, there was some pressure for a new school and we got the school boards in Yellowknife to work together to develop a 10-year plan. It's also very similar to the process that has been undertaken in Inuvik where the community has worked together with different stakeholders to examine what they need for schools and have, through their process of discussion, come up with a different response to what we had initially proposed for the community as a result.

Again, we've had similar situations in other communities where, you know, like Tulita, where the community itself has had some input into the planning process to make sure that the plan reflects the wish of the community.

I was hoping, through this process, that we would get a better understanding of what was needed. The report certainly confirmed the issue that there was adequate space in Yellowknife, but it also indicated that we needed to redistribute students in Yellowknife. It says that very clearly in the report. It recommends that the School Facilities Planning Committee be convened to take a look at how that might take place. So I'm following up on the recommendations that were made in this 10-year facility plan. Which, by the way, was made up of representatives from all of the various stakeholders in the educational field in Yellowknife, as well.

In terms of why the college is not in here, we talked about that yesterday. The college wouldn't normally fit in because of the timing that we know for a typical capital plan it doesn't need to start until next year. As I have already said, it is my intention to bring the proposal for the college campus forward in the next business plan that goes before the Members. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have a lot of time left here, but you know, I just still don't see, I don't hear from his answers what he's prepared to do to make some decisions in regards to school facilities in Yellowknife. He has on his hands, I think, everybody unhappy. I just think that in the third year of his mandate as Minister, it is time for him to act on some decisions. He doesn't need to hire a chair to work with elected chairs of boards to talk about what to do about the space requirements in Yellowknife. He doesn't need any more study to tell him that the one school board needs a new school, or a new space and renovation to old buildings. Even if there was a study shown that there was no need for new schools, I could tell you that one of the schools that's there is 30 years old. That school's been there since I was a teenager, or younger. You know. I mean, chances are one of them is going to become, it's becoming a health and safety hazard, and the Minister is willing to just take a report that says we don't need a new school, and then send another group away for 10 years or whatever to talk about what they want to talk about with spacing. I mean, when is he going to act on, and what is his plan as to what to do about the demand for a new school by one board, and the overwhelming need for renovations to almost all schools in the other school board? What we ended up here is with the same money renovating one school and, well, more than the money for a new school, and then what we have is one very old school that is in desperate need of renovation that's not going to see a cent for renovations until the year 2009. He keeps

wanting to have this group going just so that he can show that he's doing something about it and avoiding his decision-making. So I'd like to know from him, as a Minister with one year left in his mandate, what is his vision about the facilities issues for Yellowknife? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I have done, and Ms. Lee's right, we've wound up in the capital plan with significantly more money than what was shown for the construction of a new school. There are a number of schools that are seeing renovation monies that weren't there before. But we have to fit everything into the limited capital plan. So the timing and the scheduling all gets worked around and massaged into that.

There are, I'm sure that Ms. Lee can talk to other Members of this House, there will be very few that have seen the projects in their communities, the schools advance exactly as they would like to see them advance. This government has a fiscal reality that it has to work within and we're doing our best to advance the projects.

However, I would point out that we have managed to add in funding in this budget for two other schools in YK 1 that were not there before, to conclude the renovations to Mildred Hall, as well as the renovations to Sir John. Previously, that money was not there. We've managed to find extra money in our capital plan for that, as well as making sure that they have money for the renovations to J.H. Sissons. Now, we're not talking about either one of them starting in 2006-07. The planning money for Ecole St. Joseph would be in 2007-08 and it would be in 2008-09 for J.H. Sissons. But that's, at this point, the way the capital plan is. At some point we may have some good news from Ottawa and maybe we'll be able to advance things from what we show right now. It would be my hope that we could. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. General comments. I'm going to ask the committee for their opinion. I believe Ms. Lee has spoken to general comments six times now, for a total of one hour of general comments. Quite often it has been our practice in the past to survey committee members as to whether it's the majority who wants to carry on with the detail, or stay on general comments. So I'll ask the committee for their indication on that. What's the wish of the committee now? Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a few general comments in regard to the opening statement by the Minister. Would that be fine?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. General comments.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to ask the Minister in regard to the advanced education and careers section in his opening remarks. I understand there's \$42 million to spend by the department under that program. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We've moved into detail. I'll have to open up my budget book to confirm that, but it sounds...I'm advised that it sounds right.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The exact amount is \$41.574 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going by his opening comments here. I'm taking it from his opening comment remarks, so I'm going by this document here. Okay. About \$42 million. I'm just wondering how much of that money is going to be going to the Beaufort-Delta in terms of the Arctic College. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: I'm not sure, Madam Chair, that we have a college budget with us. The college itself allocates its monies between the campuses. We fund the college as a whole and then the allocation of those monies between campuses is determined by the college board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to speak specifically in regard to the ASEP program. I know that is going on in Inuvik and there's been a lot of activity going on in terms of training in the Arctic for the so-called pipeline, I guess. So I'm just wondering, how does one access these kind of funds in terms of proposals for the college out of Arctic College in Inuvik? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The college isn't the administrator of the ASEP funding. ASEP is an independent non-profit organization. The college has one seat of, I think, eight on the board. They are often chosen as the delivery agent, but it's the ASEP board itself that makes the decisions about whether to purchase training from the college or from other providers. What's required is that the community put together a proposal for a training program that will be supported at the end, hopefully, by a job. Then that is considered by the training board and they make a decision on whether or not to fund it. So the funding would follow whether the proposal was with the college or with another provider.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on page 6 of 9 of his opening remarks, I just want to ask the Minister in regard to the Aurora College pilot distance learning program. Can you give us a brief description of what that program is about?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Cleveland to outline that program.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. The college has been working for some time with sister organizations in Alberta and across the country. One of the items that they've picked up on in their work with a college in northern Alberta is the ability to deliver programs by distance learning to communities. They are going to be piloting in the next year the expanded delivery of courses using that distance technology and the intention is to, as I said, make more courses available in smaller communities farther from the regional centres. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. In regard to the request for the distance learning, is that decided by the local education authorities, or is it with the regional divisional boards? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. These won't be by DECs. This is by college or adult educators in each community that will be looking at what the opportunities might be to provide that training in the community.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you. Just a couple more, Madam Chair. I'm going to go to page 7 of the opening remarks by the Minister in regard to income support. I know I talked to the Minister about this sometime back in regard to some of the programs, and that's the local appeals committees. I understand that they're going to go regional now, so is there a cost figuring into how much it's going to cost to actually go through a regional committee? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, we're not expecting there would be any increase in cost at all to do this. Madam Chair, we've had problems across the North finding people to sit on these local committees. It's been a difficult time getting a quorum often with community committees. So we've decided to try a regional approach in order to try and speed up the time at which appeals can be heard. We're going to be seeking nominations from Members and are hoping to have them set up fairly quickly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in that regard, I'm just wondering if some of the communities want to hold onto their local appeals committee, will they continue to do that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We really haven't had any local committees operating in the last while, so there aren't any committees that we could say the community could hang onto because there haven't been, they haven't been in operation. So our intention is to move across the North to a regional approach in order to ensure, like, for instance, what's happening in a lot of communities now, because we haven't got a local committee, the decisions are being made here in headquarters on appeals and we think that it would be preferable that we at least have a regional committee with regional people involved to make decisions. So we're going to try to move to that approach consistently across the Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Yes, one final follow-up. Thanks, Madam Chair. No.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Next on the list I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to, first of all, thank the Minister and his staff for being with us again this afternoon. One of the questions I have, it gets back to the social housing policy and the \$1.3 million that was liberated from the Housing Corporation. I just want the Minister, and it might even involve the Minister of the Housing Corporation answering this question for me, but by taking the \$1.3 million from the Housing Corporation, how does that parlay into administrative savings for the Housing Corporation? It's not very evident to me how that happens. I don't know if the Minister of Education can answer that question, or the Minister of Housing Corporation can answer that question. But could someone explain to me how exactly the administrative savings are going to take place by this \$1.3 million being taken? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Madam Chair, I can certainly outline the reasons why the extra funding was necessary for the delivery of the program by Education, Culture and Employment. I can't answer the specific question about the impact on the Housing Corporation of the loss of the money. But basically, the biggest parts of the money, or the biggest parts for the requirement of the money, were around regional staff to be able to deliver the program. There are some 1,300 cases now that income support people will be talking to about social housing that they are not seeing already through income support. That drives up the workload. Because of that, we're increasing not in one or two or three discrete positions in most places; for the most part we're increasing where we have a part-time worker who may now be working half-time, we may be trying to get them to bump up their day to three-quarters time. Or we may have situations where we can increase by half a position. Not so much by adding a person, but it's mostly going to be through increasing the hours of work for people who are already working for us. That's where the majority of the money goes, is increasing the regional allocation of people at the community level for staffing.

But in terms of the impact on the Housing Corporation, Madam Chair, I am not able to answer that question, no.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps with committee's indulgence, we could ask the Minister of Housing Corporation how the \$1.3 million that was taken from his budget to facilitate the Public Housing Subsidy Program within ECE, how that...What I'm trying to get at, Madam Chair, is where's the correlation between the additional people that are going to be needed. I know the Minister of Education said that the majority of the funding, the \$1.3 million, is earmarked for regional staff to carry out a policy that was already being carried out by the government under the mandate of the Housing Corporation. I'd like to see the evidence that the \$1.3 million that's been taken from the Housing Corporation will, indeed, show administrative savings. Because I haven't, the last I heard, Madam Chair, was the Housing Corporation was looking at an additional 20 bodies. I don't understand how this all takes place. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay, it would be the prerogative of the Minister of Education if he wants to refer any questions to the Housing Minister. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure that we can point to administrative savings with this transfer. I think that it's important to understand that because we were working to effect the transfer of administration without there being any impact on the recipients of social housing, it has required us to increase the administrative burden. That's the only way that we could accomplish it. So there is no savings in administration for the delivery of this program off the bat.

The purpose, though, is to start the process of consolidating all of our income security programs in one area. As Members of this House are aware, we're in the process of reviewing our income security programs and we will, at some point, be examining whether or not there should be changes to our programs. At that point, that may lead to the administrative savings that Mr. Ramsay is questioning. But in order to meet the requirement that there be no net impact on social housing recipients as of April 1st, it required an administrative work around that has actually increased the number of people working.

I have no problem with the Minister of the Housing Corporation responding to Mr. Ramsay's question about administrative staff, if that would help the House.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we realized there was going to be an overlap, but I think the overlap has been sort of resolved where as a tenant who comes to the Housing Corporation to be able to rent a unit off us, we do an assessment at the front end, based on their income and how much of a subsidy they're going to receive. But what's happening now is that those, that responsibility will now be transferred to the Department of Education and we will just solely deal with a tenant by way of working out an arrangement with them so that once they say they need a

unit, we'll identify there's a unit available, we'll tell them the amount of rent, and then from there they go to the Department of Education to receive the subsidy that we have transferred over to them and which then they determine exactly how much rent they will have to pay. They'll pay a portion of the rent or they will have a full subsidy. So that will be now the responsibility of Education. So will just solely be a tenant in which we'll be renting our units to whoever comes forward wanting a social housing unit to rent or who's already there instead of now filling out this application with us and us doing the assessment of how much of a subsidy you'll be covered for. That now will be the responsibility of Education, Culture and Employment.

With regards to the 20 positions we are looking at, we are looking at areas with regard to improving our responsibility on the maintenance side of our social housing and also looking at the land development side to get more houses on the ground, so we can assist social clients and also being able to have the ability to deal with the core issue problems, as everybody mentioned here; the condition and rating of our units. We have to either replace those units or make major improvements by way of renovations. I think now that's where a majority of where our focus will be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister of the Housing Corporation and the Minister of ECE for that.

What I want to try to get across -- and I have said this before and I will say it again today -- is that the \$1.3 million, it was quite some time ago we turned down a request for money through supplementary appropriation that would have done this. Now the funding is coming from the Housing Corporation. I can understand and appreciate why that is happening but, Madam Chair, I think the bigger question is how is this going to be funded on an ongoing basis? How are these ongoing positions going to be funded on an ongoing basis? You go to the Housing Corporation this year, take the money from the Housing Corporation. What about next year and the year after?

That gets back, Madam Chair, to the feeling that I have that this hasn't been thought through, or hasn't been planned or coordinated enough to use the resources that the government has to the best of their ability. This is just an example of a duplication, I believe, of money and of time and of effort. I can't really see it any other way; aside from the fact that it is \$1.3 million to get something done that was already being done. Yes, we have a lot of needs in our communities, housing being a particular real need in many of our communities. Here we are, as a government, spending another \$1.3 million when I don't really believe we need to be doing that. How are we going to fund this on an ongoing basis? Where are we going to get the money? Next year we are going to go back to the Housing Corporation and take \$1.3 million; actually, it will be three percent more, \$1.4 million, \$1.5 million. How is this going to be funded on an ongoing basis, Madam Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. This was an ongoing transfer with the function. So our targets for our budget have been changed on an ongoing basis. So it won't be going back to anybody for the money. It is a permanent transfer.

As I said, our plan is to review the Income Security Program and then come forward to the Legislature with some proposals for how we might adjust those programs and that's where, in the long run, we will see the economies of scale that we can achieve. The first step was to put the programs into the same department. In the long run, we will have to take a look at how we deliver our programs and see, with the Members of this Assembly, what sorts of changes we can make. I am confident there will be savings in terms of program delivery in the future. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next on the list for general comments... This is the order of what I have. I have Braden, Lafferty, Lee on the list right now. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not directly related, Madam Chair, to the budget before us, but of an overriding interest in this department with it seems it's ever widening social net, Madam Chair, is the commitment and the process that the whole government is engaged in to review all of our social programs, subsidy programs. I think they extend across at least six different departments and it really is a welcome initiative. I think it was undertaken more or less at the beginning of our term and is one that we're hopeful will result in a more streamlined process of social assistance, of support, to our communities and our people, Mr. Chair. This covers everything from student financial assistance to income support, housing, seniors' fuel subsidies, the power support program.

One particular aspect of this that has come up on numerous occasions for myself and constituents is the area of income support policy for adults with disabilities. In very broad terms, our policies are largely set up to provide income support assistance to able bodied people. The philosophy here -- and it's a good one, Mr. Chair, as long as you are able bodied -- is that the income support system is not there to become a lifestyle or a dependency, but it is there for temporary purposes to assist people to get on their feet and make their own way.

Adults with disabilities have a totally different set of criteria. Some adults, to some extent, are able to function and be contributing members of society in limited ways. Others, Mr. Chair, are far more severely disabled but because of our policies, some of these people are forever going to be disabled by our system, if you will, by our policy. They will have very, very little opportunity, if any, to make their own way and, Mr. Chairman, in situations where they are being cared for by family members, once these family members, these parents or perhaps other siblings or aunts or uncles, once these people are no longer able to care for them, they are really going to be in very dire straits.

I know there are models in other jurisdictions that do allow for various policies, for instance, like pensions to be established for disabled adults where the provisions whereby in some cases we claw back limited income some people may have an opportunity to make. This is

fine for an able bodied person. It helps promote the policy, but it really hurts those with disabilities.

So, Mr. Chair, in that context, I wanted to ask the Minister for a bit of a status report on the government-wide review of our support, our social support policies, and specifically to the area of adults with disabilities and how we are looking at modifying our policies with respect of these people, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are probably about halfway through the consultation process right now in the Northwest Territories which is involving non-government organizations, including the Council for Persons with Disabilities. So it's too early for me to respond to Mr. Braden's direct question as to what change we are looking at to SFA. He will be aware, from my comments before the standing committee, that we are aware that this is an issue. We've heard about the issue of supports for persons with disabilities and income support from other people. So it is one of the areas that is being examined, but I don't have any specific actions yet or responses to report. I would hope that by the end of March, or the first week in April, that we will be in a situation to start to look at some of the various options. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry; did the Minister say the review process is about half completed, but there will be some feedback invited as early as this spring? I guess I am trying to get a sense of the major time frames, for instance, by which time this Assembly would be presented with some new policies or new options. Will there be some other opportunity for the public to see these and have a say in them, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The public has an opportunity, or is being brought in through various meetings in communities right now, so that public comment is being invited. NGOs have been involved, very closely involved, in the whole development of the survey and the process for consultation. We are scheduled to meet with the standing committee the last week in March to report on where we are in this process and where it looks like we may be headed. We may also be surveying other jurisdictions to find out what is happening in other jurisdictions and see if they have some best practices that we might look to learn from. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I would like to highlight two issues. One is early childhood development, 2 of 9. Again, when we toured the community, this was one of the high profile discussions in the community, early childhood, and also the Head Start Program because it all

falls under this new Early Learning and Child Care Agreement that's been in place with the Government of Canada. It says one-time money is available through ELCC trust fund through the Government of Canada. Is there a plan or strategy in place by the department of ECE to continue negotiating or meeting with government officials to continue the flowing of this important funding to the North, especially going out to the small, isolated communities where it's heavily depended on with respect to child development? Mahsi, Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a conference call scheduled with the Ministers from Nunavut and Yukon for later this week. We are hoping to discuss our strategy for approaching the federal government with a view to seeing whether or not the new federal government might be willing to continue on with the same sort of program that was under negotiation. At this point, we have no indication from the federal government that they are prepared to consider that; but we are going to see if we can't take a position that will support them moving forward with the same sort of program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. The second item that I would like to highlight is page 6 of 9 on the community-based education programs. As the Social Programs committee toured the communities last year in December, and also in the early fall, at that time when we were touring the communities, we heard over and over about the deliverance of community-based training programs. I was glad to see that there was additional funding of \$240,000 budgeted for the pilot distance early access program. That's a long title. I am glad to see that in there. At the same time, if it's based on the 33 communities or however the funding structure is based, that will be approximately \$7,000 for community. Certainly \$7,000 will go far enough in a community. If we can highlight Behchoko, for example, there are 1,800 people living there and \$7,000 is just a small chunk of change.

The Minister mentioned that the college board approved some direct funding to regional campuses in the communities. Does the funding, the \$27 million approximately, Aurora College funding allocation, serve throughout the North? There has been ongoing discussion about the online programs the Minister highlighted earlier with various industries in the communities and also with various institutions from the South. I am sure there are partnerships out there that are willing to jump on board with this. Let's say Diavik, or BHP, or De Beers and the Mackenzie Valley pipeline; who knows, they may want to jump on board, as well. We are always striving for...Let's say there are some reports that went out: For a Better Tomorrow or Building on our Successes. I think the true focus should be on the community level.

I would like to highlight one area of Aurora College, the developmental fund, \$430,000. They will be developing new programs to address specific GNWT priorities. I realize and I am aware that the School of Governance, through MACA, is delivering these similar programs. It could be a duplication, but I think the \$430,000 should be committed on to the \$240,000, so \$670,000 that will be

geared towards the pilot distance learning access program. That's where the essential need is in the communities. I think the department really needs to focus in that area. Although the Aurora College has their own mandate and mission, but we've heard over and over in the communities that that should be the strive; to deliver more programs in the community, certification, diplomas, trades and various areas of interest in the communities.

We have three mining companies in our backyard, the gas pipeline is coming down the stream and we need to get ready. I guess I appreciated that \$240,000 was allocated, but another \$430,000 that has been highlighted should be geared towards the pilot project. Out of that, we will highlight for next year what we need to identify. If at the community level it's under \$10,000, the community is going to struggle with that. Mahsi, Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think Mr. Lafferty has some good advice about seeking partnerships and we will certainly keep that in mind.

The intent of the \$240,000 is not to provide this across the Territories. This is for pilot projects, so we will respond to community educators that come up with a plan. We will try it in some of our communities across the Territories and when we have some success to point to, that's what partners like to see. So we will be able to say look how well this is working, come and work with us and we will be able to do an even better job. My goal is to make sure that we've got the wrinkles worked out in this and then, if it is working, I will be seeking more funding to broaden programs across the communities in the Northwest Territories.

I just want to make it clear that this \$240,000, we had never expected that it would be able to service all of the communities in the Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. Again, I would like to reflect on the \$430,000. If we can get the...I am not sure if the right word is direction, but because it's based on the development stages to meet the specific needs of government priorities, we are already doing that through MACA, through the governance program. I just wonder if the department can allocate that \$430,000 to include it as a pilot project. It's different in the developmental area and also the pilot distance learning access program. There are different pots of funding, so if we can combine those two so we have a larger pot for our community to have easier access to have a pilot project in the community. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we have to be careful to remember that government priorities doesn't mean that we're training people to work in government. Government priorities include mine training, oil and gas training. So this is developmental training that's aimed at getting people ready for work. So I don't know that we'd want to necessarily retool that money this year for the pilot projects. I think we need to prove,

through the pilot projects, that this is the right approach, and then we'll go after expanding the funding next year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. You know, there will be ongoing consultation discussion on this Aurora College corporate plan. So I'm looking forward to reviewing that but, again, I'll be stating my position on this, that we need to focus more in the communities. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Dent, a comment?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hear what Mr. Lafferty has to say. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mr. Lafferty, 25 seconds. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to speak for the seventh time and hopefully this is my record. Last general comment, but, Mr. Chairman, I think we should be mindful of the fact that we did change the process this year for the budget review where we cut out the normal committee review process. I'm sorry to be seventh in a row to speak or something like that, but I can't help it if I have lots to address here.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to say one more thing, and I will reserve my questions for details and there will be many at that, but with respect to general comments on the Yellowknife Facilities Plan Committee I have to tell you, once again, for the record, how unsatisfied I am with this process, Mr. Chairman. If we are not careful with this, the Minister is going to leave behind a humungous, colossal mess here. I respect all the players that are in it, but this is becoming a symbol of what you do when Ministers don't want to make the decisions that a Minister is paid to make. Now he's hiring people to make his decisions. Board chairs get into this committee, I mean they're elected, they have things to do, they know what the space needs are and what the school needs are. They don't need to have a hired board chair to organize their meeting because other than that, what is the purpose of this committee? They can make all the recommendations they want to about what to do about facilities, but the ultimate decision is with the Minister and this House.

I tell you, there are lots of schools and parents advisory committees who spend hours raising money. I'm sure they could figure out lots of things to do with the money that the Minister chooses to spend to do study after study and to set up committee after committee and asking them to do things that he should be doing. He should get his sleeves rolled up and go in there and talk to these board chairs and get things done.

Minister Miltenberger has made it a process. He set up a Joint Leadership Committee where he meets with the chairs of hospital boards to find out what's going on. I mean, the Minister was asked to chair this committee and he doesn't want to do it because, I don't know what reasons, he wants to be neutral. I think that was the answer, and I think that's just another answer for indecision and inaction. I'm telling you, there's an emergency happening in the city. We have, as a collective, and we're all responsible for this, and I don't

want to leave behind a legacy where we walk in this Assembly, I walk in as a Yellowknife Member with the budget money there for a new school and I'm going to walk out of here with no new school and a 30-year-plus old school with no renovation money and every teacher, and every child, every student, and every board not happy with the process because the Minister refuses to do what he's supposed to do. He says that asking questions, you know, he accuses other people wanting his job, but he has no problem hiring someone else to do his job.

So I have a real issue with that and this facilities review is not going to be able to recommend to go with anything. The final decision is with the Minister. So I would suggest to him that he start doing his job in the third year of his mandate and sort this out, because otherwise it's going to be 15 months of a colossal mess that he's not going to be able to clean up. So let me just leave it at that and I'm going to wait for the line-by-line detail. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent, would you like to comment?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the record, I have joint chair meetings, very similar to the ones that Mr. Miltenberger has, twice a year with all the chairs from all of the boards, and that's been an ongoing process since day one. I have met with the chairs of the boards in Yellowknife outside of those meetings, as well. In fact, I met with the chairs of YK 1 and YCS twice in January alone. I met with YK 1 this past Saturday. I talked on the phone to the chair of YCS yesterday. There is a lot of communication happening between myself and the people who are involved in education, Mr. Chairman. I have a report that all of the stakeholders participated in and made some recommendations. I have followed those recommendations and, in the process, it's got significantly more money into the capital plan than what was there before. There will be, I'm sure, some discussion about how to resolve the issue that is outlined in the report. It clearly says in the report that a redistribution of students among available space is required, and the report sets out three different options. Well, I have tasked this committee to take a look at those three options, and I am going to give them an opportunity to try and get that work done. I know they've got another meeting planned for February 21st, and I am hopeful that the members of that committee will be able to come back with some recommendations in their first report to me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I just had a question, but I will pass and I will ask it again because I just lost it.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to get back to this and the more I think about this, the more I think there's reason to discuss this. I know the Minister knows I'm supportive of the concept of bringing all these programs under one roof. That is indisputable. I mean, I think that should happen and the sooner it happens, the better. But the fact of the matter, Mr. Chairman, that remains is it's costing the Government of the Northwest Territories more to do this than it should. Again, from an administrative point of view, this shift is going to cost us

more money. If you look at the government's track record in amalgamation of our HR department, if you look at the division of the departments, of ITI and ENR, it always costs more money and, Mr. Chairman, I don't understand why, as a government, when we're going to go into a process like this, we don't look at everything and put all the cards on the table, understand where it is you want to get to and go there. But why it costs \$1.3 million more to do the same work you're doing right now is beyond me. There's something about that that I just can't comprehend.

Again, I'm going to state for the record that I'm very supportive of what you're trying to do, but it should not cost more money. I don't understand that. We rush out at the drop of a hat, we rush out and hire people. That's always the answer, Mr. Chairman, always the answer. Just hire more people, just pay more money. Ultimately, Mr. Chairman, the thing that really bothers me about this is the \$1.3 million is not going to go to the people who need it, and that's really bothersome, Mr. Chairman. That's \$1.3 million that's not going to get to where it's needed.

We had a discussion in the House the other day about day cares and the inequity in day cares and how they are funded, how charity leases are allowed to take place, Mr. Chairman. We don't have money, we can't treat all the day cares the same way, but yet here we are, \$1.3 million, it's no problem, just rush out, do it, hire some people, hire the people that are going to look after this. There's something about this that, to me, is fundamentally wrong and it's not being fiscally responsible. We only have so much money and why we can't take the resources we have and direct them to do what we want them to do, I have no idea. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, the money has been transferred, so there is no increase to the budget to pay for this. This is being accommodated within existing resources. I

think that Mr. Ramsay says the government has a poor record and I would challenge him on that in particular when it comes to income support. Yes, when income support was transferred to ECE, there was a short-term increase in costs; but if you take a look at what's happened in income support, even in the administration of it over the years, it has reduced its overall cost to this government and significantly. It's not all just because of the better economy. I am quite confident that as we work through our income security review and we move to bring all of our subsidy programs under a common policy framework, that there will be the sorts of savings that Mr. Ramsay is anxious to see. But you can't necessarily accomplish them on the moment of the transfer. When you've got new people doing a new job and you've got a different group of people looking after the program, it sometimes takes a while for things to get worked out.

We made the promise that people who were in social housing would see no change as of April 1st and in order to do that, it does require some increase in staff from the Education, Culture and Employment side. Now, those dollars have been offset in the Housing side. So it's not a situation where we're asking for a total increase in the budget all across the board for the department. This is a transfer and we will accommodate the delivery of the

program, as I said yesterday, hopefully with no net increase in calls to the Members for the program. That is our goal, but it's going to take us a while to work through the income security review. The plan is to have that worked out with the committee and the Members of this Assembly, and hopefully through the next business plan you'll start to see some of those savings come into play. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask this question: Why can't the Minister, why can't the government if it's going to save us money down the road, why can't you paint us a picture, draw us a picture, show us how this is going to save us money? Then a Member like myself may be able to buy that, but we haven't been able to see a model or something to the effect that, administratively, and the numbers of positions to carry this work out, is going to decrease, we're going to be able to be more effective, we're going to be more efficient in the way we handle these programs. The picture, Mr. Chairman, hasn't been painted, and I'd like to ask the Minister why can't the government show us this? I know you're dealing with some numbers and things like that and there are different scenarios that might play themselves out, but certainly somebody can paint us a picture. That's all I'm asking for, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the department took on income support it couldn't paint a picture then, either, because it had to go through a consultation process with NGOs and stakeholders about what the program should look like at the end. But the program that came out in the end did save this government a significant amount of money and we are halfway through that consultation process right now. I'm confident that by the time we get into the business plan, that we'll be able to propose some ways in which we can accomplish some savings, and that's always been stated as the goal. The standardization in the program delivery is going to, I think, be one of the ways in which we will start to see some savings, but we have to get the program housed in the department, get the people experienced with how it's being delivered, before we can actually come up with some of the proposals for change. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd really like to believe the Minister when he mentions that, but we heard the exact same story when it came time to amalgamate our HR division under one roof. We heard the same story. Oh, it will save us money; it will save us money. I've had nothing but headaches dealing with the new HR. It's soon to be a new department. Nothing but headaches and that's the track record I'm working on. I hope that everything works out and I hope that we can save some money, but, again, I have to question that and that's my job here, is to question whether or not that's, indeed, the case. Given what's happened here the past two-and-a-half years, I'd have to say, no, it's not. Nobody has proven that this government is capable of taking a project and actually realizing some savings, realizing

some cost effectiveness, realizing some efficiency. It just doesn't happen, for whatever reason. I don't know; maybe people are afraid to hurt other people's feelings or something. There's got to be a big problem somewhere where the decisions just aren't made that are going to save this government some money. Nobody ever wants to save any money, they just want to spend it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't question Mr. Ramsay's responsibility to question all that government does. It's important that Members hold the government to account for what it does and I accept and agree with that. I would hope, though, that Mr. Ramsay would take a longer view than the time he may have been in government, and think back to when income support was transferred to ECE, and take a look at some of the changes that took place in that department in the mid '90s and how we've managed to actually rationalize the delivery of that program. So I think that I can point to some areas where we have had some success, and I believe that we will have this area to point to again in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: That's good, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking at the Minister's opening comments where he refers to student financial assistance, and I'll be requesting the detail of that. Thank you, Minister Roland, for helping. I appreciate that, Mr. Roland. The Minister cites that there will be new money in addition to the existing monies for SFA, and I'm trying to get a sense of value for money. Now, would the Minister explain to me on a typical grant a student would receive, would they receive the typical same grant they would get if they went to, say, St. John's, Newfoundland, Memorial University versus the University of Victoria in B.C., or would they receive the same amount of money if they went to Aurora College in Inuvik or Yellowknife? Would they receive the same basic grant? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When it comes to grants; for instance, the grant for tuition, that's a maximum number. So if tuition was less than next year -- \$1,925 -- then that would be the amount that would be paid out, whatever the tuition was for that semester. If it's more than \$1,925, then \$1,925 is the maximum that the student would get and that's not dependent on where the student goes to school, that's a maximum for the program. The same is true for the grant for books, and the maximum amount next year will be \$400 per semester. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let's set the cost of tuition aside for just a moment, but the basic grant

given to a student, now that we've established that the tuition can range, but the basic grant given to students, how would that change be reflected if you went to one of those three areas I pointed out? You know, basically coast to coast to coast, how is the basic grant reflected to the location of where you may or may not go? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no change. The amount is set the same for any student who applies for and qualifies for student financial assistance. This is an issue that's been raised in particular by people in the Beaufort-Delta and there was a concern that the higher costs of attending college in Inuvik is seen as an incentive for people to attend college outside of the Northwest Territories, and it's an area that I've agreed that we'll take a look at and may look at making some changes in the future. It's going to be too late for this year because of the timing, but it is an area that we are going to review and see whether or not there should be a difference in supporting students in particular for the college.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Okay, I think the Minister got it. That's exactly the point. How long has the Minister or the department been aware of the fact that there is a significant disparity between attending Aurora College in either Yellowknife or Inuvik versus any other academic institution across Canada? I mean, essentially the way that this grant is set up right now, it sort of discourages somebody to attend school either in Inuvik or Yellowknife versus somewhere else. I mean, the cost of basic living, how do we take into account of encouraging our students to stay north where it's feasible? I mean, let's take rent for example. Rent in a southern Canada institution could be a mere \$400 or \$500 a month. Rent for a single apartment here in Yellowknife could run you \$1,100. So how do we take a look at the cost of going to school and how do we recognize this? I'm glad you've put it on the record that ECE has finally recognized this, but how long has ECE recognized this because it doesn't sound like it's a new problem, it sounds like it's been around for a long time. So I want to understand how this department is not discouraging the youth or adults or whatever from taking education at the local level and encouraging them to go south because they can afford to live somewhere else, as opposed to live at home and learn? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This has been an issue that's really been raised mostly by people in the college system just in the last little while. So this isn't something that has been argued very strenuously for a long time and I think one of the reasons is that it's not just the cost of living that governs the cost of post-secondary education. The cost of a post-secondary education has gone up dramatically in a lot of areas, and, in particular, tuition in many southern institutions is way higher than what it is for the college. So a good significant portion of money that people would have to come up with

if they choose to go south would be above what we pay for tuition.

Again, there are other areas where housing is very expensive. So for instance, if a student wanted to attend the University of B.C., the cost of rent in Vancouver is probably higher than it is in Inuvik and I think that you'll find the same if a student is going to Osgood Hall in Toronto. The Toronto rents are also extremely high. So you have to take a look at the whole package and that's what we're going to do over the next little while, and we'll take a look at whether or not we can bring in some changes in the subsequent year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can absolutely agree with the Minister, that probably a rent in Vancouver or Victoria is probably very expensive, but the fact is, I mean, we have our institutions here. So what are we doing to help to nurture them because we could send anyone to a community college in the context of basic grants and it's probably significantly cheaper to send them there than the support we're giving them to stay home where they probably may want to consider that option seriously. I mean, to send someone to Aurora College can't be that cheap and it's almost like on one hand we're promoting Aurora College, on the other hand we're not ensuring that our kids, or our youth, wish to be financially able to do this. So it's almost discouraging in that context. How long has this problem been on the plate of this department? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The costs for post-secondary education have been increasing everywhere. It's not as if the college has been asking for support for housing for years. So I know that we've managed to respond in Fort Smith and Inuvik. It's a long-standing request for housing. This has been something that has been held up by the size of the capital plan, not because it wasn't something that we weren't aware of. Again, the same is true of demands for increases, for instance, like we're showing in this budget, to the grant for tuition and for the book allowance. I know I've had students ask about that for quite some time, but we've managed, in this budget, to find the money to be able to bring it forward and we'll continue to look at areas that we can improve the program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I'll say it's probably my fault to just nail rent down as the only problem of cost of living. The reality is a jug of milk probably costs a heck of a lot more in Inuvik and in Yellowknife than it does maybe in Grand Prairie or maybe it does at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, where you can pick it up at your corner shop. So cost of living goes a long ways and I'm wondering if our basic grant isn't keeping pace in recognition of where you may live to attend post-secondary education. I think and I appreciate the Minister's sort of olive branch and say we're going to start looking at that, but I would like to hear it as a clear mandate in the year 2006-07 that we're going to make

sure that we start addressing this type of regional disparity, because if our kids or youth or whatever the case may be can't afford to keep up with the cost of living on the local level, but yet it's cheaper for them to go to another institution, that kind of seems unfair just to think about it in the terms of pushing them away to go to school somewhere else, versus letting them get education in an area where they have family, friends, relatives, et cetera, whatever the case may be, an area that they're familiar with. So I'd like to clearly hear that the Minister is going to take this on as a real priority to recognize the economics and the disparity between going to school either here in the Northwest Territories or other regions of Canada. The fact is, yes, if you were living in downtown Toronto, your rent is going to be very expensive. But it's not just going to school in Toronto, it's not just going to school in Vancouver, it's the whole package of cost of living. Rent is only one element of these factors, Mr. Chairman, it's everything, it's the package. So I'd like to hear that, yes, that there will be a mandate and they're going to work to get to the bottom of it by the time we do our next main estimates a year from now, that we'll be looking at good news on how we're addressing this problem to ensure that every opportunity is afforded to our students to take education where they want and they can afford to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I said that that's what we were going to do. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. We'll move now to Mrs. Groenewegen. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've been talking a lot about facilities, and infrastructure, and schools, and the need for replacement, and retrofitting of certain schools that have been around for awhile, and I just have a few questions about that. There is some money in the capital budget this year for upgrades or renovations at the Diamond Jenness Secondary School in Hay River for the 2006-07 budget showing an amount of \$50,000. I also see in the following year, 2007-08, an amount of \$200,000. So that's a total of \$250,000. It indicates here that this is for a change room and I'm wondering has this been deferred, or moved, or postponed, because it seems like we've been talking about this little bit of money now for quite some time? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Devitt to answer that question if we have the information here with us.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, the Member is correct; it is to renovate the change rooms at DJ School. I don't believe that this project has been moved, no.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So \$50,000 this year and \$200,000 next year. I guess that's all the budget allows for, but I'm really disappointed that's not all being done at once. I mean, if it's just for the change room, you'd think that \$250,000, considering that's just about the entire extent of capital being spent on education facilities in Hay River, that could have been done over one year as opposed to spread over two years.

I want to talk a little bit, or ask a little bit, about the half-year assessment. It wasn't so long ago in the 20-year needs assessment there was a capital project item in there for the replacement of Diamond Jenness Secondary School at a dollar value of \$12 million. That doesn't appear to be anywhere on the radar screen anymore. What is the policy of the Department of Education with respect to starting to think about replacement at mid-life? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Devitt has informed me that the construction for the change rooms will take over a one-year time period. It's just that the starting of it will show up in two budgets. The way that it's working, between the planning and the actual construction, it will be a shorter period than two years. It's just that it's going to cover two budgets.

In terms of planning for, at one point I think the department used to say after 20 years we would take a look at whether a mid-life retrofit or building a new building was required. I'm afraid that fell by the wayside when the capital plan got to the point where we couldn't spend money as we once did, and we're now working on a process where the facilities are examined on a regular basis and then, as required, they move into the capital plan for renewal and renovation.

The Member's quite right that DJ is getting to be an older facility, but what we're finding right now is that, for the most part, it's somewhere between 25 to 35 years before we can look at renos or replacement. It depends on what sort of condition the building is in whether it's a 25-year or 35-year cycle. So we are going to stay on top of the situation and we depend on our partners at Public Works to tell us when we need to start looking at moving a project into the capital plan. But it's no longer become one of those automatic things, or it's no longer one of those automatic things that it used to be automatically 20 years do a review. We have to wait for signs that it's required now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, the Diamond Jenness School is 33 years old, so if the mid-life assessment has been moved from 20 years to 25 to 35, we're on the outside edge of the new time frame because we're 33 years old. I have women about my age in Hay River telling me that some of the carpets in Diamond Jenness were in there when they went to high school. And I believe it's true. I'm sorry, but when I drive down the streets of Yellowknife and I see the beautiful renovation on Sir John, and I see the beautiful renovation on Mildred Hall, and I see Weledeh...I mean, the nice new upgrade and retrofit that was done on St. Pat's school there. I look at DJ, it's looking pretty tired; pretty worn out,

a 33-year-old school, and we got \$250,000 in capital on the books for the foreseeable future.

So I'd like to ask the Minister, when was a facilities functional review done on the Diamond Jenness School in Hay River? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can certainly talk to our colleagues at Public Works and ask if they have another look at that school and advise us as to what the condition is. I'm aware that in 1997 there was two or three million dollars spent on the renovation of the school, and that would probably be some of the more important things structurally, or mechanically. I'm not sure, at this point, what it was. There has been some money spent on it. In Hay River we've done, in the past decade, renos to PA, to Harry Camsell, we built the Ecole Boreale, and we've also built a new college facility in Hay River. So it's not as if education facilities have been ignored in the community. But I'd be happy to ask my colleague from Public Works to ask his staff to have a look at DJ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. That was very observant of the Minister to pick up on those capital projects that did take place in Hay River and for which we're very grateful; and our Ecole Boreale. We just attended the opening not so long ago. It's very beautiful. The PA upgrade retrofit was about an \$8 million project and came out looking fairly nice. Harry Camsell hasn't had that much done to it, but it's not that old. The adult learning centre in downtown Hay River does still seem quite functional. However, back to Diamond Jenness. Someone has just reminded me that shag carpet may come back in style sometime soon.

---Laughter

But definitely DJ is looking very retro these days and it's not particularly a design motif that we're interested in. So I would really appreciate if a functional review could be done of the facility and that information could be shared with us, and, hopefully, we'll get DJ back on the capital projects list in a big way in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, I will ask my colleague from Public Works to have his department have a look at the building. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Anything further, Mrs. Groenewegen? Before we get to our next general comment, I would just like to draw Members' attention to the gallery. We have with us today nine, actually, I think there's seven at the last count, senior federal officials who are here to observe us today. They're part of the Canada School of Public Service. I'm going to go through their names: Sylvie Du Pont, Roger Ouellette, Therese Roy, Alice Born, Gilles Saindon, Murielle Belliveau, Jean Claude Piedboeuf, Collin Reaney,

and Mary Jane Armstrong. I'd just like to welcome you all to our proceedings this afternoon.

---Applause

Thank you, committee. We'll now move to Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We should show them our unique style of government with a minority over there and how we muscle through...

---Applause

...how we muscle through all our objectives. Mr. Chairman, if the Minister of Education could supply me the numbers, referring to Aurora College, that is both Inuvik, Yellowknife and Fort Smith, if you could refer or find some numbers for the last two years only required, the number of students that attended our schools that are from the North and are from the South. In essence, the Northwest Territories students and the anywhere else students. So if the Minister could supply that information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be happy to ask the college to provide us with that number. We don't have it, but we can ask them if they can provide it. My expectation is that there would be very, very few students from the South. I know when I attended the grad in Fort Smith I was approached by one student who said he'd come up from Ontario to take the course there and was very complimentary of the wildlife technology course and said there was nothing like it in southern Canada. But other than that, I've not run into any other students from southern Canada. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, that's really nice to hear. It's probably because we do have the wildlife students to get engaged with. If the Minister could further supply some more detail which is, in essence, a success rate of the two groups. I'm not asking for individual success rates, but I'm looking for the success rates of the southern students coming north to attend our Aurora College in those locations, and as well as general success rates of our northern students who attend those locations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can ask the college if they can provide that information. I don't know if they track that sort of statistic, but we can ask.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the note of the wildlife course, as Mr. Dent had just mentioned previously, which brings me to my last question, what are we doing to promote Aurora College south of 60 and why do we have so few students, from his very words, that attend our college? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I suspect that it has to do with the budget of the college. Again, I would have to ask the college board because they are the ones who decide how to allocate the monies for promotion. When I met with them just a few weeks ago, I very strongly suggested to them that they should look at promoting more in the North because, you know, I'm aware that the colleges from down south are in our high schools promoting attendance at southern institutions, and I don't think the college is doing as much as it could or should to promote kids from the North attending the college and what it has to offer. So I've encouraged them to increase their recruiting efforts here in the North, but I think that should be our first priority before we start worrying about heading south. That's, you know, we want to make sure we're filling up the space with northern people if at all possible. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. I've got Mr. Villeneuve next. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a couple quick comments on the opening remarks from the Department of Education. It's good to see that there's probably going to be an increase in the overall education funding, anyway, for community-based distance learning college programs and student financial assistance.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the income assistance or the income support programs that ECE manages. Just with respect to some of the policy changes that were going to be reviewed and looked at by the Social Programs committee with the Member about eligibility requirements for persons with disabilities and handicapped individuals. I know there's a list of about eight eligibility requirements that were in the application forms for handicapped and disabled peoples in the NWT and, whereas, we did mention at some point in time back in the last session, I believe, that the Alberta income assistance programs had four basic eligibility requirements for handicapped and disabled people to receive income assistance. Has there been any constructive dialogue or any review processes formally conducted over the last year that this has been an issue, I guess over the last two years, with the Standing Committee on Social Programs and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to make any policy changes that would help alleviate some of the inconsistency that handicapped people and people with disabilities have to abide by? Has there been anything constructive done to date?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There have not been any changes made to the program in the past year. We have a meeting scheduled, I believe on March 29th, with the standing committee to talk about where we are in the review process. As I said earlier to Mr. Braden, the non-government organizations have been involved in this process of reviewing the income security plans that we have in place now and we will be looking, hopefully, to make our changes as part of the next business planning process. So I'm hoping that by June

we'll be in a position to propose some changes to the programs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Okay. Good. We'll be looking forward to something coming out in June, hopefully. Again, just on the Income Support Program, I know there was some information between my community and the department about the establishment of some community-based appeal committees. Has there been any movement or any action on that front?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are hoping to have the regional appeal committees up and running by April 1st this year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess, I know they were talking about regional appeal committees being set up, but people in the communities don't want to, like, people who are appealing from Res don't want a committee that's established in Yellowknife, or Fort Smith, or Hay River, to hear their income support appeals. I think the appeals should be heard at the community level, whether it's a three or four-person volunteer committee, which probably, you know, no honorariums attached, but I just believe that it will be just more client favourable, I guess, for everybody in a community if there are actually people in the community who know the people, who see them everyday and know their situations to be on this appeal committee. Is there any appetite for addressing that need instead of going by regional appeal committees? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd welcome the Member proposing some names from his community to be on the regional committee because we are looking for representatives from all the communities. But to be honest, the problem we've had is almost none of the committees that have been in existence have been able to function on a reliable basis. So what's been happening is the vast majority of appeals are being decided in Yellowknife right now. That's what we're trying to get away from. Because we haven't been able to keep local membership on these committees active and it's been a real problem. It's slowed down the appeals and it's important that we be able to hear these appeals on a timely basis. So we're moving to this regional structure in order to try to improve the service because that's been a big concern for us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess just to clarify, one of the good reasons that these appeal committees are hard to get together to sit down and hear these appeals is because many times these appeals just go as far as the committee, and any recommendations the committee makes really gets overturned by either the

income support worker or the regional supervisor of the Income Support Program. Because of the inconsistencies with probably the training program that the volunteers have to go through and with just changes in the information that clients are getting from income support workers, I think each community...It's a great idea to hear the appeals in the community. I think if these regional appeal committees are established in the regions only, is there going to be a travel budget for them to actually hear appeals in a particular community when...Are they going to be able to travel to that community to hear the appeals of a particular community, or are these appeals just going to be heard in one particular community at certain times of the year? How is that going to work?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're anxious to make sure the appeals are heard on a timely basis, so they will be heard quickly, in accordance with legislation. In some cases the committees will travel. In other cases I have no doubt that in order to make decisions quickly, they will have their meetings by teleconference or by some other means. There may be some members who travel and some who participate by teleconference. It's entirely flexible in terms of how the process is handled, but the goal is to make sure that decisions are made on a timely basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know, I guess it would be kind of in a dilemma here if, because I know the income assistance cheques, you know, people want them right away, yet if you have to go through an appeal process, you want it done within even a quicker method of 30 days at the most. Cheques usually come out within 48 hours after your application gets processed. So I think we're going to, I think with this appeal process, the way it's set up, and it does sound very flexible, which could be good and it could be bad, but I'm just wondering, you know, are we not setting ourselves up here for some real backlashes as far as income support appeals when they do come in, and people get their appeals heard in a community where they are not even from and another person gets their appeals heard six months later when the appeal committee happens to travel to their community? Roughly the same appeal around the same circumstances, but one gets accepted and one gets turned down. I think we are setting ourselves up for a real problem on that front just with some inconsistencies on how these appeals are going to be handled on a regional basis.

Speaking of consistency, how are these people in Colville Lake, as opposed to people in Fort Resolution, have totally different income needs and the Income Support Program addresses those needs in a different fashion? How are we going to regulate or even set some across-the-board standard appeal policies that are going to make it fair for everybody? Where are these policies, if there are any, for this appeal committee if it is going to roll out here in June? Are there any policies in place already for these appeal committees? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there are policies in place right now. Appeals don't happen six months later. They happen within seven days. These are done quickly. Our goal is to make sure that we don't have to have the appeals heard by people here in Yellowknife, but that we can have them heard by people from the region.

People from Colville Lake will not be sitting on the regional committee that would hear appeals from Fort Resolution. It would be people from that region that we are hoping to have set up on the regional appeals committee. They have to be able to hear appeals quickly.

I would be happy to share the policies with the Member. We will make sure that we get those circulated to him right away so that he can see what the policies are. He is absolutely right; in order to ensure consistency, we have to make sure that training is provided to members of these regional appeal committees. That is one of the things that we will be doing in order to try and ensure that there is consistency. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Villeneuve's time is up. Next on the list, I have Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to make a few quick comments, and then we can get into detail.

---Applause

I am pleased to see that the department has set up a fund for full-day kindergarten. Hopefully, some of the local boards will use some of this money that they were using for kindergarten to supply bussing so our kids don't have to walk to school at 40 below and two feet of snow uphill in a raging blizzard. The increase in SFA, I like that. It is a good start. Everybody could always use a bit more. One of the things I have always tried to do is get kids that I know to try and go to school and take advantage of the government because they will put them through school. They don't have to worry about working their way through school. They can just concentrate on their studies. So we have a pretty good system.

Anything we can do to help the seniors is more than welcome, help them to be a little more independent. I have always been a big supporter of the Apprenticeship Program. I believe we still have one of the best apprenticeship programs around. One of the problems I have heard, talking to a few people, is one of the requirements they have is Grade 12, I believe. A lot of these guys decide early on they want to get into trades and some of them don't have Grade 12. I remember years ago, it wasn't that way. I know now they have to pass a trades entrance exam. There are all kinds of opportunities for kids up here to do anything they want. A lot of times, the government will take care of it. I think, sometimes, the income support, as one of my colleagues said before, is supposed to be just a temporary solution until people can get back on their feet. I still think that a lot of people treat it like it is a birthright. There are some people who do need it. I agree with that. I have seen people who are disabled try and work rather than collect income support. It also bothers me when I see people who do try and earn a living seem to be worse off than people who are on income support. I have a real problem with that.

A few comments I thought I'd throw in there, Mr. Minister. I don't expect you to comment to any of them. There are still a lot of questions that I have. I will ask them at the appropriate time. I like some of the programs that run out of ECE. I don't think anything is perfect, as you obviously hear about all the time. I was actually planning on asking the Minister how this new human resource amalgamation was affecting some of the district boards' ability to do their job, but I changed my mind and decided not to ask it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Those were comments. Did you want the Minister to respond to any of those comments? No questions there in Mr. McLeod's general comments. Are there any further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Details.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Then we will proceed to detail. Before we do that, we are taking a break for 10 minutes. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I will call the Committee of the Whole to order. We have finished now with general comments and we are ready to go on to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under general comments, I just have a few further questions. I just want to know, I heard through the media that the standardized testing that we had done on grades 3, 6 and 9, the results have been finished and correlated, but they are not being released. Have the results been released? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The results may have been released. I am not sure yet. The issue that I think has been a concern to some people is the manner in which they are being released, and we are insisting that the results be released on the divisional education council or board basis only. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is the Minister saying that the results won't be released or is it a suggestion that the board keep them private? I am just trying to get a sense of what he meant from that comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, the results will be released. We are looking for the results as a snapshot of the territorial-wide performance. The results will be released on that basis.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. When can we expect the fullness of that release on a territorial-wide basis? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not exactly sure what date is planned for the release. I will have to get that information for the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. This next question came in from a constituent. I guess it kind of made it relevant. Is the Minister able to tell me how many students we have in the education system, in a precise way? Is he able to tell me, as of today, we have X amount of students in our education system? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can tell the Member how many students we had as of September 30, 2005. That was 9,082.8. I know that .8 may be surprising, but we have different levels of part-time students. So as we have part-time students, they get added together to make fractions at times.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is the Minister saying that we only sort of structurally take their attendance once a year from the point of view of ECE? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, the DEC's will track attendance throughout the year and on a regular and ongoing basis. But the report to us, specifically on September 30th, because that is the figure on which the school year funding is based.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I am to understand it correctly, the department has a \$10 million computer program system that organizes students and is able to correlate them and keep track of them. Is that the system? I don't know the name of the system. So is there a system that exists that does that, takes care of the number of students, monitors them, and keeps track of them? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know how much the computer program might be worth, but I assume that the Member is talking about the CMAS program which has a number of sub-systems, one of which does track or record student performance.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Does this system work to its fullest ability? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not sure that it is used to its fullest capability. It has grown over the years. It has changed to accommodate our needs. It does fulfill the needs of the department right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Madam Chair, would this system be able to tell us how many students we have in our education system? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The answer is yes, but the only numbers I have with us today, because I thought the ones that would be of importance are those from September 30th because that is the number that the budget is based on.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just changing gears for only a moment, what program do students have? Now, this is sort of on the heels of what I was asking about yesterday when I was concerned about Pathways in the essence of not being able...if a student's only choice is to go into Pathways or it is seen as the most favourable; let's put it that way. Let's not argue why or how they got there, but they are in Pathways and I was concerned about them being able to go to school on a post-secondary level. I would also like to maybe focus the attention, continuing that theme I talked about yesterday, to continue the theme along the lines of adult education; whereas, what if kids don't fit into that group. So what we have here are students that didn't graduate in a couple of mainstream types of programming, you would to graduate and you don't fit into the Pathways Program, and you basically drop out. What do you do if you are an ex-student at that moment and you want to take some adult level training courses? Say you want to go to Aurora College or Mount Royal College. What programming dollars or pots of money do we have that help that person get back in the groove of education and move forward in their life? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Students have a number of options once they have left school. Some students, in fact, return to high school after they have left and may, when they are 19, 20, 21, come back to finish courses. That is one option the students have. A second option is to enrol in adult upgrading programs at the community level if those are available. Third is to attend a college campus. For example, the Aurora College offers upper level upgrading and also access programs that are linked to specific career choices students might have. The fourth option is really attending some form of upgrading in another jurisdiction. The

Member mentioned Mount Royal. In some cases, that is also done, although not very many of our students follow that path.

The courses and programs offered by the college have been developed to ensure that students develop the skills they need to then enter into generally vocational skill related training although, on occasion, diploma programs as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is a person to do? I wouldn't want to call him a student just for the sake of discussion because they wouldn't be a student at this moment, but what would a student do at the moment of the age of 22? Because the deputy minister said, if you were 19, 20, or 21, you could return to the high school. So what would someone do in the city of Yellowknife who is the ripe age of 22 who wants to enrol in upgrading? Where would they seek funding in order to seek upgrading possibilities by attending some type of educational adult learning upgrading? Where would they seek funding? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Member is asking whether or not there is an equivalent to student financial assistance for those people in that age group, the answer is no. The 19, 20, 21 year olds can go back to the school system. Those who are older could still go back if the school system was prepared to take them, knowing that they would get half of the per student amount that we would provide for a student younger than that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not to belabour the point, but if you are 22 years old, you have a job, you have fallen out of high school for whatever reason, there are no funding opportunities for you. How do we help these people upgrade their skills? I know they can go to income support if they were at that sort of bracket, if they were in the income support bracket. But because maybe they have a job, they don't qualify for income support. I have heard of UCEP funding out there, but there are only a couple of seats for UCEP funding on the federal level, so that would mean that they wouldn't apply for that. If you are 22 years old, relatively working to some degree or not, you don't qualify for income support, you don't qualify for maybe one of the 10 particular federal funding UCEP seats, and you want to get out there and improve your standing in life which you are sort of tied to at that moment. As I see it, the education system may, in essence, fail you.

Because I see my time is up, I will make it very quick. SAIT offers a program on the type of methodology that they use that if they fail you in the sense that their programs have failed you, you can't get a job in the faculty you have studied under and graduated under, they will bring you back and retrain you. What does the education system in the Northwest Territories do when someone has fallen out of the system and the blessed tree of the education system and they have nowhere to go? You are

22. You are working. You can't get funding anywhere, but you need a basic minimum to get into upgrading, but nobody helps support you. So what are you supposed to do? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Hawkins has outlined some of the options that are available, like income support. There is also a program called UCEP, or University College Entrance Preparedness. That is a program that is available to status and Inuvialuit residents of the Northwest Territories. As I have said, somebody could go back to school, but we don't offer a wage replacement program for people who have not been successful at school previously. There may be some alternative programs available through employment insurance for upgrading. Our counsellors could certainly work with residents in order to see if they can find those programs. At this point, we do not have a program that provides wage replacement for people who are looking to upgrade. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. What is the wish of the committee now in terms of general comments or going into detail? Detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Page 9-7, as we are going to stand down. We are going to defer that page. We are going to go to 9-8, department summary, information item, active positions by region and community allocation. Page 9-10, department summary, information item, revenue summary. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On the Canada Student Loans Program, this is the pot of money that we use to fund our SFA partly. That amount from the federal government has stayed the same for as long as I know. It is a million dollar pot there. Has there been any movement in the federal government that might make it possible for us to get more money? Is there any room for growth here? What is the Minister doing to get this pot bigger? I don't think that has moved in a very long time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am advised that there have been some approaches, over the years, to the federal government to see about having this amount adjusted, but the approaches have been rebuffed. I would be quite happy to follow up with the new government and see if we can achieve some changes now that we have a new government in Ottawa. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: I am beginning to think maybe they should pay somebody to negotiate rather than work on a committee that really has no job to do. Madam Chair, this department didn't get anywhere on the deal on day care. I don't think we got anywhere on the aboriginal funding because we will see later on that aboriginal language funding, we have struck out on that, too. I don't know the

details, but the last government had a lot of agenda items on post-secondary education. Unless it was all funnelling through federal programs, I think we need to know more than just saying we tried but didn't get anywhere. What are the reasons? What was our negotiation position? Why can't we get any money that the federal government would have had?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. All the post-secondary programs that the federal government has had in the past few years have been just that, exclusively federal programs. There was no opportunity for us to get into those. They were typically a result of negotiations with the COF, or the Council of the Federation. In terms of the Canada Student Loans Program, we opted out of the program and, in return, the federal government has offered us this million dollars. In fact, under the CFO program, we are probably not spending that million dollars, so we have a very weak argument when it comes time to try and get more of that money from them.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I went through grade school here and took advantage of the SFA. It was one of the most generous programs back then. I think it still is now. It has been improving every year. It is a very generous program compared to Canada student loan or comparable provincial loan programs. We are paying for that. It costs us money. We make decisions to put more money into that. We have a huge portion of the beneficiaries for SFA are also our aboriginal students who have either entitlements and rights that gives them extra funding. I just don't want to take that. Can we not do more? As a jurisdiction that has chosen to make advances in this area, I think that we need to get more active on that. I am wondering if the Minister could provide us with chronology or information on the background of our agreement under CSL, why we chose to opt out of that and why is it that we are not able to spend all the money on that? If the argument we are making is not strong enough, why can we not think of...I don't understand why items like this are not on the agenda for the First Ministers and such. When we don't have enough money to do everything, we are constantly talking to the federal government about the fact that we don't have enough revenue to pay for the things we need, but we are choosing to enhance these programs. If we can't get it at a global budget and working out of resource revenue sharing or whatever, then we should be negotiating it on an item-by-item basis. I would like to see information from the Minister that tells me that he has been working on this file. I would like to know what he has taken, what the issues are, where the problem areas are, and what he thinks should be the area that he needs to work on to open that blockage somewhere and see how we advance that. I don't think without that, I am not going to be comfortable that he is going to make headway with the new government. You have to know what you are talking about. Just having a new government is not going to automatically make it better if you don't have your argument handy. I would like to get that information from the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The federal government has no responsibility in the area of education. It is an exclusive jurisdiction for the provinces and territories, but the Canadian government does offer a program called Canada Student Loans. They are available to Canadians across the country. They are typically offered to those who have trouble qualifying for the provincial programs or territorial programs. We have opted out of the program and opted, in the past, to take the million dollars, because we didn't think that many people would, or that was a better deal for us than to have northern residents applying for the Canada Student Loans Program.

I would be quite happy to give a chronology of the program and why we have made the choices that we have here to the Member. The last time an assessment was done, we found that we were still farther ahead to take the million dollars than to opt back into the program. It is not likely that we will see the federal government getting into direct funding of this kind of program again. In other words, we don't have anybody in the federal government we can go to, like an education Minister, to say you should be helping us out more.

Having said that, the Council of the Federation has brought up the issue of post-secondary funding with the previous government. I know that they are quite interested in seeing this situation addressed in some way largely because, in the mid-1990s, the transfer payments to provinces were cut significantly in the area that they were using for post-secondary funding and health and social services. The Premiers have all been addressing this issue. That is the table at which this is being discussed. The Council of the Federation is having a post-secondary skills session at the end of February. There will be some of the Premiers and Ministers of Education from across Canada participating at that in order to discuss with stakeholders where it is we should be going in trying to re-engage the federal government to get back into providing some funding in this field, because they pretty well dropped out in the mid-1990s and have not ever come back in this area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We recently have gone through an election campaign that was largely agreed as one that contained one of the most rigorous debates about various policies. One of them was post-secondary education policies. We have a federation; provinces have jurisdictions over education and health; but the beast of federalism we have is such that there's lots of pockets of money under the federal government even in the areas that the federal government is not supposed to be responsible, like post-secondary education funding. You know, provinces are supposed to be responsible for health, but there's lots and lots of pockets of money that the federal government still is in control over and that can be said about lots of other stuff. So I really think we could just ratchet it up a bit, and change the gear, and get more aggressive, and see how some of these policy ideas could translate into our benefit. Not to mention the fact that we're not winning the battle on loan programs available to aboriginal students like the

programs that we provide here that the federal government is not willing to pay for.

Also, the Liberal Party suggested that they would pay for half of first-year tuition fee and half of the last year of the post-secondary program, and I don't know what the position was of the Conservative platform. I can't think of that off the top of my head, but I think it would be very much worthwhile for us to do an analysis of that and whatever deal that the new government has that they're going to offer to the provinces, we should be trying to get that same share or more, because he thinks that we have to fight for everything on the basis of what's unique to us.

So I'd like to hear from the Minister, as soon as possible, about what is out there that we could tap into. None of this is going to be easy and we could justify forever about how we can't get something because it doesn't work for us, or it's not geared for us, or blah, blah, blah, but I would like to hear more about what we can do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think in my last reply I did say that we were working with the other jurisdictions in Canada, all of them, to try and get the federal government back into the field. That's the reason for the meeting with the stakeholders, and the Premiers, and Ministers of Education at the end of February. So we are working on that. This is something that was started with the last federal government and it's one that's continued with the new federal government. We have thrown our weight in with all jurisdictions in order to try and accomplish the goal of getting the federal government to engage.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if I could continue, we're speaking on the revenue summary and the bigger picture of our student loans and it causes me to question why don't we consider the option of...The Minister suggested, I think, he's not prepared to cover wage loss for adult learners or people who want to go back and take adult education, but that's not what I suggested. Would the Minister look at considering the option of allowing SFA to be able to cover the upgrading costs of those students we've failed? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess that's an interesting choice of words. I'm not sure that we have failed everybody who fails. Somewhere there has to be some personal responsibility for achieving success as well, but we are certainly taking a look at what we can do in order to fund other programs. Right now, the Student Financial Assistance Act in itself limits what we can do, because it stipulates in the act that the funding can only be for post-secondary. I can certainly discuss with my colleagues on the standing committee whether or not there's an appetite to change the wording in that act, and then we could broaden out the approach; but outside of that, I've also told the standing committee that I am looking at options for funding adult training programs, or funding support for adult training programs, and we're

hoping to look at that in the next business plan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well that's good news to hear that we're going to make changes potentially in the next budget, but that's also a year away. Could the Minister sort of highlight how many people go through the UCEP program in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure if I have those numbers with me here. I can certainly make them available. Typically, the money runs out before we run out of applicants.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, we discussed earlier when I said that I'm aware that someone on income support could take upgrading, but the bottom line is if you don't qualify for income support, then that closes that option off and if there's only a limited amount of funding through the UCEP program and I haven't suggested at anytime that if you're working maybe a \$12 an hour A&W job and if you're lucky to get \$12 an hour without a high school education, you know, I haven't suggested at one time that we should worry about trying to cover their wages, but we should be figuring out how to get these folks into school. If you're 22 years of age, how do you get back into upgrading and how do you get back into the system? In Yellowknife, if you're 22 years of age, you're tired of flipping burgers, but whatever the job may be at minimum bottom barrel wage and you want to do something with your life and you've fallen through the cracks through the education system, how do you get your life in order and how do you pay for upgrading and how do you get back into the system to get going? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, as I said, we don't have a program now that is aimed at funding to support people in that situation. It is something that we are prepared to take a look at, but we'll have to examine what the costs would be and where we might find those costs.

Mr. Hawkins has asked previously about the UCEP program and moving forward in the budget to that page we were able to get some detail. There's \$295,000 shown in the budget for this year and that would fund about 30 students. It looks like it's down from the previous year, but I understand that that was a rollover of funds from a year even prior to that and the ongoing amount is \$295,000.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We have a little rule in this House about saying things about people who aren't here to defend themselves and I just feel compelled to say to those people who work for A&W that perhaps they haven't all fallen between the cracks

and we need people in all sectors of the workplace and in the workforce, in industry and in the private sector, and I would not care to characterize them as bottom of the barrel. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there was a misunderstanding of the point that you're now qualifying you're in a bracket I was trying to describe. Madam Chair, I'd like to ask the Minister if we could get some type of commitment. He said he'd look into a program or look at because there is the existence of the program, or sorry, there is a lack of existence of a program. When is he going to get some numbers together to look at a strategy to come up with some type of program for the next budget year of how we can help these folks get on their own two feet and move forward in their career? Could the Minister also comment on if you're in a small community that has a learning centre, are you able to take adult upgrading for free in one of those small communities, or do you have to pay? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. All adult literacy and basic education courses are free of charge all across the Territories. I have already committed that we are going to take a look at the program and attempt to bring one in in the next business plan.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is there free adult education upgrading in Yellowknife?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm advised that the answer is yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all for now.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We are on page 9-10 -- thank you for helping with my job -- revenue summary, information item, revenue summary. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Page 9-13, activity summary, directorate and administration, operations expenditure summary, \$6.527 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay, agreed, thank you. Page 9-14 and 9-15, activity summary, directorate and administration, active positions. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Madam Chair, I had a question on page 9-13 and I was looking for \$3.33 million, but I only heard \$6.527 million so I didn't raise my hand there.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay, does the committee agree that we return to page 9-13?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed, thank you. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a short question on the other expenses under \$3 million. I see that almost all items there is less than what was budgeted, or what were the actuals for 2004-05, except for the fees and payments that is going up for \$500,000. I'm just looking for confirmation even as to whether this is an exercise in part of the 10 percent or one percent cut I think that all departments had to go through, because this is going to be a pretty conservative budget. Travel is going to be less than last year. Everything is going to go down except for the contract services. Yes, I mean it's comparable to last year, but I just want to know what explains the cuts there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, compared to the 2005-06 revised estimates, we're looking at an increase, not a decrease, from the current year. So expenditures will be going up under fees and payments. All the others we're expecting to keep the same.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I guess that raises the questions about how it would come the 2005-06 was less than 2004-05, but I'll just limit my question to what constitutes or what's included in the fees and payments and in particular the \$500,000 increase from 2004-05? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Devitt advises me that the largest part of that would be the chargeback for central systems.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: I don't understand what central system is. Could I get that information, please?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The chargeback to TSC.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. That's good enough.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Directorate and administration, operations expenditure summary, \$6.527. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Page 9-14 and 15, activity summary, information item, directorate and administration, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed, thank you. Page 9-17, activity summary, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$147.207 million. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thanks, Madam Chair. This has got to be one of the biggest single numbers that we sign off on, \$147 million on one budget line. Madam Chair, obviously there's one very large reason behind it and this is all of the school authorities and education authorities that are funded through this page. Madam Chair, a couple of areas that I wanted to explore a bit here. In the area of the culture and heritage division, which comes under this section, is a description of the department's job here. It looks after museums and archives, archaeology, heritage, education and support through the Arts Council, community culture and heritage groups, et cetera, and I'm wondering if this would be the appropriate area, Madam Chair, to ask about the Arts Strategy that this department shares. It's a rather unique arrangement, Madam Chair, between two departments to share responsibility for a single policy or a strategy document. ECE shares responsibility for the Arts Strategy with would it be Industry, Tourism and Investment? Have I got that right? Yes, thank you.

Now, when this strategy was rolled out, Madam Chair, and I think this was last spring, it took a few hits sort of in the public as being a loose document without a whole lot of specifics and targets and real tangible deliverables. One of those deliverables, Madam Chair, was funding that might go along to help achieve the objectives of the strategy. So I wanted to ask the Minister to what extent are we seeing some funding, or human resources, or other kinds of support coming in to back up the Arts Strategy and its holistic approach to a vibrant arts sector, Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amount of funding that we have in the budget this year for the Arts Strategy is the same as in the current year. So we're not showing in this budget an expansion in the programming, and, yes, we have heard some expressions of concern about the thrust of the Arts Strategy, but what we've done is we've agreed with ITI that we will review the Arts Strategy probably by bringing together some of the members from the panel who were involved in the first go-round after the first year of its implementation, which is this spring. So we'll have a full year of that implementation in place and it is our intention to then work with ITI to see how we can better respond to the needs that are found through that review. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thanks. Madam Chair, the Minister said that the amount of money allocated was the same as last year. How much was that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 9-19 its \$426,000 and I can probably anticipate the next question. There were 73 grants approved last year.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Have we moved on to another page? I think right now we're on page 9-17. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister is anticipating a couple of things there. So how much of that is going to the Arts Council for distribution, and then how much of it is going to help out with other areas of the strategy's purposes, Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The primary focus for the Department of Education for the Arts Strategy monies is around the Arts Council. So that's where the money is going for distribution. Now, having said that, we are also embarking on an arts education curriculum for NWT schools. We're working currently with the province of Manitoba to modify their curriculum, which looks like it might be quite interesting to us, to be relevant and make sure that it's relevant in the Northwest Territories. But this \$426,000 is all designed to go out to organizations as contributions and we will be using our own internal funds for the curriculum and to support the Arts Council in its work.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, also on that page is a description of the department's mandate as regards to the official languages division. It's responsible for observing, promoting and enhancing official languages. Madam Chair, in the last Assembly, near the end of the last Assembly, and this goes back about two-and-a-half years now I think we created considerable complexity and expense to new boards to administer and oversee the implementation and the enhancement and preservation of languages, official languages. I wanted to see if the Minister could give us a bit of detailing here. Where is the implementation and the delivery of those boards, services and requirements in this budget, Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Both the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board are up and running. I have met with both boards when they've held their sessions on a couple of occasions. I've talked to the chair in the last little while and I'm expecting that we will have more communications on a regular basis. The boards have sent me one letter with some advice and, as I say, I am expecting that they will continue to provide advice to me on a regular basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, is there any part of this budget that is sort of attributed or assigned to these

boards or whatever duties or responsibilities they may have? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. There's no discreet number in this budget that refers to the work of these boards. It's within the amount of monies, it's within the division itself in the department and the department provides the support for the ongoing operations of the boards.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: That will do for now, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Now I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under operations expenditure summary, \$147 million, I have to move to page 18 because that's detail of the item on page 9-17 and I'm just wondering about the downward trend we're seeing in the funding for the schools. For example, under schools we allocated \$104 million in the year 2004-05 and then last year the actual revised estimate is \$99 million. So that's \$5 million less and we're budgeting \$101 million this year. I'd like to know why that downward trend. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Does committee agree to go from page 9-17 to page 9-18 for now?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I could ask Ms. Lee to clarify exactly which number she's looking at on page 9-18 so that I'm sure that I'm answering the question correctly.

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

MS. LEE: Okay, how about if I stay on page 17 and I'll ask those questions on page 9-18 when we get there. Let me just ask questions under activity description, education and culture. I'd like to know if this is where I can discuss question about PTR in that I'm assuming that the money that we give to the schools here are calculated on the basis of PTR, and in this Legislature we have increased funding or lowered the ratio of PTR over the last number of years. But as the case I feel is with the special needs funding, I'm not sure if we're seeing as much tangible improvements on the ground as we like to see. I mean the more money going in there has to help some in many ways and we have had discussions in the past about reviewing what positions we use to fund PTR because there are lots of positions that are necessary in the school system that are not funded under PTR such as I think librarian and language coordinator. I'd like to know if the way we figure out our PTR is in line with the other jurisdictions and whether or not it is time for us to review that, because I think we need to look at not only how the special needs funding is being applied and what sort of benefits that is having, but we need to look at the overall

funding arrangement to see if there are some gaps there that we need to be looking at filling. So I'd like to know if the Minister could tell us how we stack up in terms of how we calculate our PTR for the needs in the school. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm advised that we use the exact same definition as all other jurisdictions in Canada for pupil/teacher ratio. That allows the divisional education councils and DEAs the flexibility to determine how they want to allocate the positions in the schools. The question of who gets excluded or not included, again, like I say, the flexibility is there to allow school boards to determine whether or not they want to put in librarians or computer specialists or those sort of specialist positions that we don't stipulate in any situation have to be provided. In terms of the allocation of monies between the different boards, there is a committee that includes representation from the boards that determines how the money will be allocated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This leads to chronic problems in many of the classrooms in Yellowknife and I'm sure it's the case in lots of other schools. You will see grade 5 and 6 in combined classes of 31 students, and you may see another grade in another school that have only eight kids, or you may see two kindergarten classes at 18 each, which is like an absolutely perfect class. I think every class would want to be a size of 18. Then you go to another floor in another school and you see a French immersion program with 31 kids. That would all be in the same school district. I understand that we need to give enough flexibility to school boards to make those decisions, but, at some point -- and the same argument applies here as I stated with respect to special needs funding -- at some point as I sit here and work to increase funding that goes to schools, I'd like to have more clear parameters defined about how the monies we allocate are going to translate into classrooms. I appreciate that we're using the same formula as every other jurisdiction in the country, but could it be time for us to look at it differently? Could it be a time for us to look at it and see if we should continue to follow what other jurisdictions are doing, or is there anything unique about what we do in our communities, or our Yellowknife schools are small, large, medium communities, wherever, but something unique to the North that might suggest that we need to do something differently? Because I'm telling you, even though we have increased PTR funding by as much as I think three to one, by now, in the last five or six years, I think we went from 19 to one or 18 to one to 16 to one. What can we do? Would the Minister look at that, please?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to take this issue up with the chairs of the other boards. I guess I can say honestly that I have, over the last couple of years, discussed this extensively with board chairs and they would agree with the Member that we need to try to do what we can to increase the money

that goes into PTR. However, most of them, I believe, would prefer that we leave the flexibility in the situation. I think that a number of them have expressed some concern about how we've started to limit the funding already around special needs, around how the aboriginal language and culture directives have limited their flexibility. I think the flexibility issue is one where we need to allow local communities to reflect what is going on in their communities. I know that in talking to them, they agree that we need to, as a first step, try to improve access to physical education. I have talked to them that if we were able to find some money for a decrease in the PTR, they are quite agreeable that that should be the first area of focus. We know that kids who are active during the day tend to have a better chance to learn. They also tend to have healthier lifestyles which, in the long run, will greatly improve their chances for success.

The other area that they have told me that they would like to see some focus on is in trades training. I think those are the two priority areas that we would like to be able to move with our partners at the schools to improve the funding for PTR; to focus on those two areas. Thanks.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to ask the Minister to get back to us with the information on what positions we fund at the moment. I am sure I was given this years ago, but I don't have it on me. I need to revisit this and see what the possible areas are for us to look at, whether they be training or trade schooling or phys ed, the room for flexibility. There might be some essential items that we are not funding for and not including in PTR that should be declared essential in every school in our territory. I think that's the kind of thing we should look at as a Legislature.

For my remaining seconds under this section, Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask questions on the early childhood services. This is where the day care program fits in, but I would like to know what other services we provide under this program across the NWT. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are the language nests, as well as day cares. There is the healthy children's initiative. The healthy choices framework would be aimed at early childhood and a full-day kindergarten, and licensing of day cares may be areas that would be considered in there, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much there, Mr. Chairman. With respect to this activity description, one of the program areas is the NWT Teachers' Association professional improvement costs. I am just not sure how applicable this is to some of the concerns that I raised with the Minister with respect to providing incentive for our aboriginal teachers to each Dene as a second language, or upgrading their skills to become a teacher of an aboriginal Dene language. One of my concerns was that we say we are bending over for aboriginal languages, yet when they do take professional leave to take their training certification, they are only funded at 80 percent of their

salary. Granted, based on I don't know which standard, it might seem satisfactory. However, when there is a gap or a perceived need to fill a void, often employers or industry add additional incentive to get people trained in specific areas. I think we did it three years ago, Mr. Chair, where we offered, in the law field, employees 100 percent of their salary to attend law school. That's the kind of incentive that I think we should be offering our teachers. The Dene languages in our schools, schools are falling way behind. So once again, is this a category wherein our government can provide incentive and further assistance to our teachers in expanding their skills in the Dene languages? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The money that the Member refers to could be used for that kind of training. This is a fund that is negotiated as part of the Collective Agreement and the teachers apply to take advantage of the funding for upgrading their skills. There is a committee that allocates the money to recipients.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. We are going to have a power outage...

---Power Outage

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Good afternoon, Committee of the Whole. I will call the meeting back to order. We are on page 5-17. I had Mr. Menicoche speaking. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that we will just continue our discussion with regard to the professional improvement fund. For further clarification, this will be the line item in our budget to ask the ministry to look at some improved incentive to our aboriginal teachers to learn aboriginal languages so they can go back to our school to teach the aboriginal languages. I believe, just to confirm, that this is the line item for the professional improvement fund, to request such a thing there, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Member is asking if we could ensure that there are incentives like aboriginal language bonuses, that's certainly something we can take a look at, particularly as we get into Collective Agreement time. It may interest the Member to know that on page 9-18, we are showing \$1.232 million for NWTTA professional improvement. That does include the new \$50,000 for aboriginal language training, so that has been added specifically for that purpose. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad the Minister pointed out that there is a new allocation just for that specific area for growth in our aboriginal languages. I see on page 9-21 there is further discussion on official languages, so I will leave my discussions for that page.

I do want to address our support for culture and the arts. It's something that has grown in the Nahendeh region and

Fort Simpson. We have good organizations there where they have lots of good initiatives. They have Open Sky which originally started as a festival on a yearly basis, but now they've grown to where they are a year-round organization providing and stimulating arts and culture in Fort Simpson and for the region.

One of the barriers that we are facing lately is that even though there is lots of accessible funding, they are finding that getting funding for their organization as a non-government organization for O and M, which was to keep the organization funding, we are having barriers getting that. I don't know if we have specific funding for O and M for such an organization, but I see there is lots of programming funding and, quite often, if you get the right manager, they can keep things going by applying to 20 different funding proposals and garnering enough money out of each of them to pay his or her salary. That's not really supporting or stimulating growth for arts and culture for any organization. I am just wondering if the Minister has looked at that gap there and seen what kind of funding would be available to a group, an organization, in terms of helping it continue to foster arts and culture in their specific regions and providing O and M funding for their specific organization. With that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't point to a specific program that provides base funding or core funding for organizations. In those instances where we've got an organization that is providing a service to the region, it's always useful to sit down with the regional superintendent and discuss what possibilities there might be for support in various ways. The Member is right; it often takes a good executive director or somebody with some application ready skills to get some of this money, but it helps, too, to work with the people in the department who can help point you in the right direction. Our staff would be prepared to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On a totally different note, I notice that this line item, or this activity area, also does geographic place names. I don't know how applicable it is because I think the intent here was for changing names, but does this take care of maps and mapping?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like Mr. Cleveland to answer that, please.

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

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it is through this section of the budget and specifically through the work in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre where the place names activity or function is housed. If individuals do have interest in identifying place names and a potential for them to be put on the maps, then they should be in touch with the Prince of Wales or, as the Minister just indicated, they could contact our regional

superintendent. Our superintendent would put them in touch with the right people at the museum. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a single point here and it's a bit further to the discussion we had about the Arts Strategy earlier on. The Minister indicated that he's willing to address some of the concerns the arts community has expressed about the strategy and that one option of doing this would be to invite the members of the original advisory panel to come together again and see where some of their concerns or their ideas lie.

I wanted to see if I could press the Minister a bit more on this to see if he would give committee the commitment to do this. I understand that there has to be some collaboration with his colleague, Mr. Bell. But it has been a good 10 months, Mr. Chairman, since the strategy itself was released in the fall of 2004, response from the arts community came in over the course of the winter. All of this has been in play for about a year now and I would like to get a commitment to bring some kind of a process into play that would address some of these concerns and see if we can lift this Arts Strategy out of the corner. Mr. Chair, a commitment to call in the panel members. Can the Minister give us some assurance on that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly think that's the way to go, to bring in the original panel members and ask them to provide us with their advice again. I am certain that ITI will be interested in cooperating the same way. So I am confident we will be able to do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's all on this page. Just to confirm with you, we are still on 9-16 and 9-17?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. That's correct. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one more follow-up on the early childhood services. In my last round, the Minister called out different programs that are under this area. In his opening statement, he states that he is allocating \$4.7 million for this and also 900,000 and something in trust in day care money from the feds. I am just wondering if we should look at this program to see if we could somehow rationalize it better, or are all the programs allocated so exclusively oriented and serving the niche that we can't somehow try to see how we could combine this, or just make it more refined, so we can serve more kids with that money that we have? I am asking whether it's time to review it, or is it so specialized that we can't really touch it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: I believe that we told the committee that we are actually taking a look at the program right now. I hope to have some suggestions for revision to the existing program to improve services to children and parents very quickly. I would hope that we would be able to see that perhaps as early as the next chance I have to meet with the standing committee.

We are constantly looking for ways to improve the program and the fact that while we are a bit uncertain right now as to what may shake out from the federal government, what we need to do is start working on different options so that we are prepared to work quickly once we see exactly how the new federal government is going to structure their programs.

So we have done some of that primary work and we are trying to position ourselves to work with our partners from the other two territories to see if we can move things along with the federal government and then be prepared ourselves to improve our program.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I chose not to do the preamble on that, but I should just explain what I am trying to say. There is so much need for children this age all over the North and for the money that we spend, there is so much inconsistency and discrepancy in what is available in each community for the early childhood education at this level; preschool, pre-kindergarten. We need to come up with a system where every community has some kind of a place available for the preschool children. I would really like to see some consistent application of what we have and I don't think we should just...The funding that might be available from the federal government is one thing, but that is an ongoing exercise on its own. It went on and on last time and it may go on again this time, but I think what I would like to see is us, within this Legislature and this jurisdiction, trying to figure out what the needs are, what is available now and what can we change to see that even if some programs have to be downgraded, if it means upgrading some programs in other communities, so that we can say, looking at it that in our communities, there is some kind of a standard for the preschool age kids where they can have a leg up and everybody could be exposed to some sort of preschool education program that everybody has a place that they could go to if they need to. We should include the funding in there for some kind of a physical place where the kids could go. We shouldn't have a situation like Lutselk'e where the children are having to be in an adult gym and move in and out of there. There are situations all over Yellowknife where there is a lack of consistency as to what is available where.

I think it's time that we look at a very comprehensive strategy, even if we can't meet them all. At least we get a picture of what we want to accomplish as a society for the preschool kids. I believe our territory has such high needs for those aged kids and we should make that a priority. We should state, as a stated goal, that we want to intervene at a very early stage, so that our children preschool age could have an early start in life. I think our size might be small enough that we should be able to identify all the kids at that level and see what we can do, whether it be to get included with the school. I mean, every community has a school. If it's a policy statement that we want to build in, with every school in town will

serve as our preschool, early childhood support service place, I think that would be a good start.

I know that the Social Programs committee has allocated I think the end of March, and we're fastly booking all the briefings. But it would be really good to have this kind of discussion at the end of March. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree 100 percent with the Member, that investments in early childhood are the best investment the government or society can make. So I'd be quite happy to prepare a briefing for the committee on what some of the options might be. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: My question is on page 9-18, so I'll...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. We're on page 9-17, activity summary, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$1147.207 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): We'll go to page 9-18. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have questions about some of the trends that I see here on the item number one, two, three, four, five, six, for example, for schools. We allocated \$104 million in the year 2005-04, and last year the allocation was much lower, at \$95 million but the actual expenditure is \$99 million, and now this year it's \$101 million. So is this where we're funding...What explains that downward trend, I guess? I want to know what's included in this item. There are lots of other downward trends in this area. Are we looking at a lower number of students? My understanding is that we are funding better in many areas. We're funding for kindergarten, we're funding more for special needs. So could I just get that explanation, please, just on that item to start with?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, the main reason for the difference between the \$104 million and the \$95 million in the two columns would be the contribution for Mildred Hall, which is actually shown on page 9-22 and it's approximately \$5.8 million. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: So does that mean the capital and O and M is included in this altogether for schools?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chairman, the reason government capital is not included in these amounts, but this is an amount that is contributed to another organization; in this case, the public school district No. 1, and they own the facility so it's not amortized on our books. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Could I, then, ask questions on administration costs? The actual for 2004-05 was \$2 million, and now we're looking at \$1 million. So what's that allocation for? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: That would be an amount that was recorded associated with the claims for residential schools. I believe it may have been the Horne case.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then the next item, instruction and support services, we're seeing a difference of \$5 million between 2004-05 to 2006-07, and we see a consistent trend of increase in 2005-06 main and 2005-06 revised. So could I get some explanation on that? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Could I have Mr. Devitt answer that question, please?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, we are required in the current year and in the past years, we were required to fund inclusive schooling, which is included in this area, at 15 percent of the overall contributions. So these amounts are growing with the overall contribution. In the 2006-07 year, there's an increase in the percentage to 17 percent. So that explains the increases. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. But that amount isn't just for special needs, I assume, because it says instructional and support services, so it must include special needs plus something else, because we're seeing about a \$5 million increase from 2004-05. But that's enough information there, Mr. Chair.

I just have a last question on official languages. We see quite a bit of fluctuation there. The budget was for \$1.7 million in 2004-05; last year it was a little more, but actual money spent, I'm assuming that's what the revised estimates is, is \$3 million more than that, and this year we're going to be going back down to \$2 million. I'm wondering if this is the area where the GNWT negotiates with the federal government for aboriginal...No, actually, I'm not going to assume that. I'm going to ask the Minister what that's about. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chairman, the Member I think answered the question. Yes, it is the funding related to the federal agreements that are still under negotiation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe this is a good place, then, to ask what's happening with that negotiation, because last time we talked about this, the Minister, I believe was talking to Minister Frulla, and there were some discussions as to what the federal government was requiring. What does it mean now that we have a new government? Is the negotiation on hold? That's going to be a pretty big cut there of \$3 million this year; actually, 3.4, 3.5 from last year. Although the year 2004-05 was substantially less. So what do we do? What kind of things do we fund under that program, and what kind of impact would that have, and could the Minister give an update as to where do we see this negotiation going?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The biggest funding here would be for the language community itself; there's some for schooling. But just in response to the Member's question about whether or not negotiations have stalled, in fact, we're engaged this week with the Department of Canadian Heritage to try and resolve this. We've been assured that the agreement will be concluded for this current year, and there's a commitment to continue with negotiations for next year. At the annual meeting of the FFT, the director general for the department was there, Mr. Lucier. I talked to him about my discussions in the past and how we were anxious to move this file along. So we are continuing to work on trying to conclude the negotiations.

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

MS. LEE: A follow-up to that, Mr. Chairman, I believe the sticking point with this negotiation was that the federal government wanted to separate the French language component and aboriginal language component which would not work to our benefit. I'd like to know if the Minister could give us an update on how he's doing in that area. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the current year, we will have an agreement that is similar to what we've had in the past. So it is still our position that it should be a government-to-government negotiation, and we will continue on with that position as we negotiate near year's funding.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think it was clear there as to what inroad we're making with the federal government in terms of keeping it together. Is that still the sticking point, or is that still the department's negotiating position? I'm not sure if the Minister answered that question. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not a sticking point. By the way, it's one we've discussed with Nunavut and share with Nunavut, so they're taking the same position that we want to keep the French and the aboriginal language agreements together. The concern arose out of the report that was done for the previous Minister that made the recommendation that the funding be moved to a non-government agency. So we've made it clear that that is not what we see as the best way to ensure that the funding continues to flow properly for the North. At this point, it's not a sticking point. It was a suggestion that had been made by the previous government. We made it clear that we're not in favour of that position, and we've not heard that the current government is advancing that position at all.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. Just to conclude that, then, is the Minister...Does he feel safe in assuming that the new government will not pursue that, or we could expect some kind of confirmation from the new government that they would not be suggesting that?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know what the new Minister will take as a position on this. Since the paper or the recommendation was prepared in a paper that was done for the previous government, I'm not certain that they would automatically to adopt it. But it is a situation that I will discuss when I have the opportunity, with the new federal Minister. At this point, though, it hasn't made any change in our process for negotiation. We are conducting negotiations with the Canadian Heritage this week to try and move this process along.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. On page 9-18, the reference to the NWTTA professional improvement fund shown in the main estimates for the coming year, \$1.232 million. Mr. Chair, two years ago, or in the last fiscal year, this amount was \$957,000. So showing, by my rough math, somewhere between a 25 and a 30 percent increase. I know this is a negotiated item in the contract with the teachers, but I'm wondering if the Minister or his people could give a little bit of background in terms of what is the objective, or the function, of this allocation, and how is that we're seeing a 30 percent hike in such a short period of time, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This amount is set as a percentage of total salaries paid to teachers. So, for instance, as teachers win new collective agreements that increase the global amount that's being paid out in salaries, that impacts on the training fund and that will be the biggest factor that has driven the amounts over the period. As we increase the amount of funding for reducing PTR, that also has an impact because that money is going into salaries. So as we increase, that percentage grows, that also increase what is put aside for training.

As well, there was an additional \$50,000, as I explained to Mr. Menicoche, put into this program to specifically be allocated to aboriginal language training.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Okay. Thank you. I guess I still don't fully appreciate the cause for almost a 30 percent jump over the course of two years. Was the percentage...Okay, it's a negotiated percentage of the salary dollars paid. Did the percentage change? Have we renegotiated something here, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm advised that in the last round of negotiations, the percentage did change, and that would account for...Oh, I'm sorry. The previous round it did change, so part of this, apparently, could be reflected in that amount or in that percentage.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: At the risk of going into straying into negotiating territory here, how much did we negotiate the percentage up then?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm afraid we don't have that information with us right now. We can confirm. We think it's in the area of 2.25 percent; or it went from 2.25 up to three, but we can confirm that and make sure that we get that information back to members of committee.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: If those numbers hold, then, that would explain, because that is about a 30 percent increment that we allowed for an increase, then, by my numbers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. We are on page 9-19. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question in regard to...Oh, I'm sorry; on the next page, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Committee, 9-18, and then 9-19, activity summary, education and culture, grants and contributions, grants, \$52,000, contributions. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Agreed. Now we're on 9-20, and we're going to Mr. Pokiak. Page 9-20, Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question in regard to the community library services. I know last year when we had the Youth Parliament here, my little friend there, Shalene Lundrigan, indicated to the Members here that the Mangilaluk School doesn't have a

library. So I'm just wondering, can that fit under this program with the renovations coming up for Mangilaluk School? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The renovations to the school will, I believe, make sure that the school library is open. But this money is an ongoing operations contribution to those that are in operation already. As you can see, last year we were able to allocate some extra money. We are continuing to look for extra money, but we don't show any growth in the program this year. We are managing to carry on with the expansion that we funded last year, and I'm hoping that we will soon be able to expand even further. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Yes, thank you for that information, Mr. Minister. I'm just wondering, I want to go down to education authority contributions. I'd just like to ask the Minister, I know that the operation for the school programs is based on numbers. I just want to ask the Minister...There's been a number of families moving out of Tuk because the parents are taking on Arctic College. Does that enrolment the numbers for the Mangilaluk School? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the children were present in the school for the month of September, then the answer to that question is, yes, it could impact on the schools. Funding is calculated according to how many students are in a school on a specific date.

Having said that, in the funding year, if the school winds up with a sudden increase in student population, we do try and accommodate that, but it has to be over a threshold I believe that is an eight percent threshold. So if a school sees an increase that is eight percent more than what was expected, we will find a way to accommodate that money and help them out.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one last comment. It's too bad that that happens because we are trying to keep our enrolment back home in our community. It's unfortunate that we have a place like Arctic College in Tuk and that's something I would like to pursue down the road. Again, thanks for the information. I sort of felt that that was the reason why, but I hope the numbers can come back after the parents move back to Tuk. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. We are on page 9-20, 9-21, education and culture, grants and contributions. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question on page 9-20. In the Early Childhood Program, we see a decrease of \$188,000. I am told that the reason for this decrease is because of a lack of uptake, which is kind of

hard to understand because childcare spaces are very high in demand. For me, I went through a situation in the last Assembly where we were seeing the closure of day cares and places. I know the Minister would argue that was for a different reason, but it's hard to understand why this can happen. So could I ask the Minister why it is that we have this kind of situation? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually, this isn't a reduction as a result of the decreased uptake for the funding. We were actually seeing an increase in pressure on the program for core funding because of new day homes and so on. What this is, is it's a \$188,000 planned reduction in language nest funding. When the program for language nests was introduced over the three-year business plan, this amount, or what is left in the budget this year, is the amount that was projected in the first year that we proposed it. So this is a reduction in that budget. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's good because it's not a lack of uptake of day care centres and such. I am not sure if I understand the Minister's answers about the Language Nest Program. I understand that's a program that is high in demand, as well. I have to be careful when we agree to cut like this in this House and we usually get told by officials or Ministers -- I don't want to attribute it to anybody -- but we usually get information saying it's because there is not enough uptake. Then we put it through and then, as soon as we get out of this chamber, we start hearing from people saying what do you mean you are cutting this because there is no uptake? There is a lot of demand out there. Could I get more information about if there has not been enough uptake to the extent that we need to cut it, what has the department done to see if we know why the money is not being taken up? Are there gaps in the way the program is being delivered? Can he give us anything? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we came forward with this proposal, it was on a three-year basis. We went in and asked for money over a three-year basis to put into language nests. The money was approved by FMB and was to be presented to the committee on that basis. It was a three-year funding process. So, in fact, I have to go back now and justify all of the money for the program and justify the money in the next business plan process. I am quite comfortable that we have seen these programs be a tremendous success.

We will be submitting a proposal that we continue to fund the language nest programs at an increase, if possible. The funding, though, was shown as reducing over the three-year period because we had initially said the expectation said these programs would become more self-sufficient as time went on. The first year of the funding was substantially higher because of training needs and the requirements for setting the programs up. The second year, the funding was reduced somewhat and again in the third year, the funding was reduced somewhat. I am not sure that we have seen the self-sufficiency grow in the

community programs that we had thought when we, three years ago, proposed this program might see. I guess that was based on what had been seen in other jurisdictions. Be that as it may, we know that the programs are being successful. The assessments have turned out to be extremely positive, so I will be going forward in the next business plan with a request for increased funding.

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

MS. LEE: Okay, Mr. Chairman, he hasn't given any reason as to why we are cutting this. Is he cutting this because he needed something to cut and this is the one that is getting the axe? Let me ask him, what has been the... (inaudible)... to this program? Did we spend all of the \$2.2 million that was allocated?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There has been no cut to this program from what was proposed three years ago when we proposed the funding. The funding was always shown in this way as rolling off somewhat. One of the reasons would be that, obviously, the amount that would be needed for training should reduce over time and so that is where it is expected. This year, the programs that are operating will need to spend less money on training and that should allow us to accommodate the same number of programs.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. Okay, I get it. He is saying that it was approved for three years and this is the end of the year and we could possibly see this continue next year. Is that the similar situation with the healthy children initiative, which might suggest that it might be a good time for us to do the review that we said we were going to do in committee? I think I can understand the Early Childhood Program section there. I hope we are not going to be cutting this. Does the Minister know if he is going to have this program next year, or are we looking at this sunset? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, the healthy children initiative is a different situation. That program did run as a pilot project for a number of years. It was found to be a good program and it was then approved for base funding in the department. The language nests we proposed as a pilot project. It is base funded now, so it's part of our base funding. The healthy children's initiative, we came in and said we think this is a good idea and FMB agreed that we should take a look at it, but it was approved as a pilot project, so we were approved for funding for three years, which means that, yes, I have to go back to FMB and to the committee for the funding approval next year to continue the program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Page 9-20, 9-21, education and culture, grants and contributions, questions? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. I would just like to follow up where Mr. Pokiak left off on the education authority contribution at \$120 million. The formula is based on enrollment. I guess they determine the majority of payments. I am just wondering if the department has taken into consideration the cultural programs or cultural activities and being out on the land? When September comes around, there will be a lot of students. Even the adults are in school. They will be out on the land. In our history, the Tlicho Community Services Agency has always gone out on the land with a school. That's fine. But some students go out on their own with elders and community members. They do miss school due to the fact that if they are absent from school, would they be excused because they are supporting, and reviving, and keeping our tradition alive out on the land? I think this will have repercussions in the communities, especially with the small communities. We are trying to keep our heritage alive, the cultural program. We are trying to boost it up, even encourage other schools to take that into consideration.

Even this year, I have seen in the newspaper that YK schools, the Catholic School Board and YK 1, I believe, are encouraging and supporting students to go out on the land. I was very happy to see that in Yellowknife. We are hoping to see all of the schools take those initiatives forward because they are boosting up the cultural program, even our language. During the fall time, especially the fall time, people go out on the land. The spring and Christmas, there are breaks in between. We are fully aware of the two weeks' break, but one cannot predict the migratory season and also the break-up where trapping and hunting doesn't always happen during the spring break, so students may go out after a spring break or before the spring break. Would those students be excused? If there is a cut in funding due to students being absent for the month of September or October, then it has an impact on schools' enrolment I guess, the contribution they receive from the department. If the Minister can elaborate on that. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to be absolutely clear, that an excused absence doesn't count as not being present. An on-the-land trip that is arranged in concert with the school and is part of the on-the-land program would not see the kids being counted as absent. Those kinds of programs are quite acceptable. We used to do the official count for the month of October. We counted on October 30th. School boards asked us to move it to September. One of the reasons they said is that their attendance was typically better through the month of September than in October. They tend to have more dropouts as you get closer to Christmas. The department was responsive in this case in moving the timing, and excused absences are counted as presents, if you will, for the purposes of counting the attendance. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi for that clarification. At the same time, there is a change coming on the 60 percent versus 40 percent attendance. I'm just wondering what kind of impact it would have on the schools. Right now, we are hearing issues already in the community that if there are

changes from 40 to 60 percent, some schools may struggle. I am sure the department has done their research and homework. What kind of impact would it have in each region? Before I sign off, just getting back to my first question is, the students who will be absent and excused. I guess there are two different areas where they are in school and on the land. They are excusable for sure, but aside from the school, let's say Tuesday to Friday, they decide to go out on the land with their elders and they are supposed to be in school, but the elder goes to school to say I would like to take out my granddaughter or daughter because we need to go muskrat hunting, or whatever the case may be. That was my initial question. If they will be excused in that area where we, as a community service authority, know certain people that go out on the land. The teachers would know if the students were lying, that they will be sleeping in or whatever the case may be. Small schools know elders that usually go out on the land. That was my initial question. I think the Minister answered during the school program. That is fine, but when they are excused from the school to go out on the land, are they excused? Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is one of the reasons that we have the local administration through the boards or, the Member's region, the Tlicho Community Services Agency. They can set up policies that would allow for an excused absence, including the reason that the Member has brought forward. That sort of flexibility is already built into the system. The agency will have to make sure that the student still gets the schooling that is required during the year, but that can be an excused absence as long as it fits within their policy. That is what we leave to the agencies, the DECs and the DEAs, to set those policies in place to make sure that can happen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. I have Mr. Hawkins next on the list.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It sure looks like a typographic error on page 9-20 under the NWTTA professional improvements we have listed in the 2006-07 main estimates is \$1.112 million but on page 9-18, it is actually \$1.232 million. Could I get some clarification that it is just a typo? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Dent passing it over to Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, the Member is correct; there is an error on page 9-20. The NWT professional improvement fund should read \$1,232,000. The offsetting change should be the education authority budget should be \$120,000 less, so it would read \$120.038 million and the totals in contribution pages would remain the same. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Devitt. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question to the Minister with respect to the official languages, both aboriginal and French. Is there any foreseeable funding arrangement with the federal government to keep these two programs alive in the near future? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we are confident that we will be able to continue on with these amounts in this; similar amounts to what you have seen in the current year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are talking \$2.14 million. That is quite a significant amount of money in grants and contributions. Has there been any constructive dialogue with respect to any funding arrangements that the Minister is confident that we will receive the funding from the new Conservative government? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. All of the indications that we have had from Canadian Heritage are that they are prepared to continue to negotiate. So we are continuing to expect that we will see something in the range of the same amount, but with about \$1.9 million of it being for aboriginal languages.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Alright, committee. We are on 9-20 and 9-21. Are there any questions on education and culture, grants and contributions, activity summary? Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Sorry, Mr. Chair. We are on 9-20?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): We are on 9-20 and 9-21, yes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question to Minister Dent. The education authority contributions, it says it is based on a formula. I am assuming this includes the teachers' salaries and all that. I'm hoping the formula is different for the education authorities across the NWT like in a place like Beaufort-Delta with eight communities over a vast area. That is all taken into consideration? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. McLeod. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it is.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Thank you, committee. We are now still on 9-20 and 9-21, education and culture, grants and contributions. Are there any questions? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 9-22, education and culture, grants and contributions, continued, infrastructure contributions, \$129.994 million and a grand total of \$130.046 million. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps under this page I could ask a question about a long-standing infrastructure issue with Sir John Franklin School and that is the eventual demolition of Akaitcho Hall. This has been something that has been talked about for at least a couple or three budget cycles now. Is this the place where it

should appear? What is the status of that request, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Because it is a GNWT asset, it is not shown as a contribution here. It is in our funding under this activity, but the money is there to have the building demolished this year or this coming year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question. I see Mildred Hall has some major facility improvements in the tune of about \$1 million to complete their main upgrades, and Ecole St. Joseph renovation, major facility improvements of \$10,000. Can the Minister just tell me what major facility improvements are going to extend the life in \$10,000?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is just to start the program planning for the project. There will be significantly more money in subsequent years. But as you can see, we only see in this line here, the last year we see is 2006-07; 2007-08 doesn't show in this budget, so we don't show the whole amount on this page.

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

MS. LEE: Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Minister just one more time about the facilities that review committee because this St. Joseph renovation is allocated for many more dollars and there still remain outstanding issues in the city about what to do about our school infrastructure needs. I don't think I got the answer from the Minister as to exactly what he is trying to get at with this ongoing committee and where he has appointed the chair. What we got is we have one board who has spacing needs. They will get money for renovation but there is still spacing requirements. We have another board with old schools but they have more spaces. The Minister knows as much as there is to know about what the issues are. It is time that somebody here gets on it and tries to figure out what to do and not leave it out there for everybody to get frustrated. I fail to see where the purpose of this exercise is. What is he trying to get at? I would like to give the Minister another chance to explain that because it is important. It is an ongoing issue there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have elected boards in the community. They have the primary responsibility for making decisions about education. I think we have to respect that they have to be involved in the decision-making process. It sounds to me like Ms. Lee is recommending that I make a decision to do something unilaterally. I guess I would be interested in her advice as to what that should be. I would like to hear that from the other MLAs, as well. I would point out that the report that I received clearly states in it that, given the

situation in Yellowknife, redistribution of students among available space is required. To address the imbalance, the space either...and then three options are offered. Either space has to be shared between the two boards, or space has to be transferred from YK 1 to YCS, or YCS has to enforce priority enrolment to maintain their enrolment within their school capacity. What am I expecting? I expect that those are the issues that this committee will engage on. That is what I am looking for. Does it mean that we can't move things around in the capital plan? Of course, that is possible. We have to make moves in the capital plan all the time. I am quite anxious to see what the recommendations are that this group comes up with. Having said that, I welcome Ms. Lee's advice. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the Minister wants to give me his job as Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and ask me to make that decision, I would be happy to do that today.

---Laughter

He has the job. He gets the big bucks. The school boards have authority over running the schools and school programs. They have absolutely no control over how much money they get for their school building and infrastructure. That is within the control of this Minister and this government. It is inherently not fair to just string them along and put them in a room and have them keep talking about which they have no control. It is just not fair. I am just giving the Minister notice. He can continue to keep saying I am not going to do my job. I am going to pay someone else to do it or you can do it. I am prepared to take that tomorrow if he wants. I don't want the job. I want him to do the job. He has been given full notice. If he makes that offer one more time, he may just get his dreams come true.

---Laughter

---Applause

He should consider himself well advised. I am not going to see this committee go on and on. March 16th is the day that the committee is supposed to get the report. I expect that the Minister will make some decisions that he is paid to do.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. I didn't hear a question there, so we are back on page 9-22, education and culture, grants and contributions, infrastructure contributions, total of grants and contributions \$130.046 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. On to 9-24 and 9-25, activity summary, education and culture, active positions. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 9-27, activity summary, advanced education and careers, operations expenditure summary, \$41.574 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. 9-29, activity summary, advanced education and careers, grants and contributions, contributions. Are there any questions on 9-29? Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see that the grants and contributions under student success centres are being cut this year. There was \$173,000 allocated for 2004-05. It was cut quite substantially last year and now we see that there isn't anything at all. I think this is a program that is placed in Aurora College campuses in Inuvik, Fort Smith and Yellowknife, I believe. I am not sure if it is in all campuses, but it is in Aurora College and it is a place for them to gather. This is a pretty big amount; not a big amount in our books, but I am sure it is big for the campuses. I would like to know if there is any other program that is meeting this, or why is it being axed? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was part of the overall reduction process in the last couple of years. There is no question that it has proven to be a useful program, but when asked where our savings could be at the college, they suggested that this could be the area that it could happen. They are also looking at other opportunities where they could provide ways to accomplish the same program. While we are not showing any funding here, that doesn't necessarily mean that the program will disappear.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. 9-29. Are there any further questions? Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On that page under college contributions, the definition here is funding for training opportunities for northern residents including science and technology. What are we funding? Is that an arm of Aurora College or some other type of college function? Could the Minister give me an explanation of what program this is or where it's held, organized, et cetera? I would like some definition on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Aurora Research Institute is part of the college.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: That's fine. Maybe it should be noted that that's what it's for. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question on the ASEP program, does this fall under advanced education and careers? If so, where is the one-third contribution that the GNWT is supposed to be part of?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The ASEP funding would come under income support.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: I may have been misadvised. Just a second while we look at this.

---Laughter

If I could, Mr. Chairman, I need some time for Mr. Devitt to try to find the appropriate location here.

Mr. Chairman, part of it does come up on this page. There may be another pocket that does fund ASEP. The \$350,000 comes out of the \$763,000 that is shown for oil and gas industry contributions on this page.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Back to page 9-29, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): The motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress. Thank you, committee. I would like to thank you, Minister Dent, Mr. Devitt and Mr. Cleveland for being with us this afternoon. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Is there a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 15, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.:

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

8. Returns to Written Questions

9. Petitions

10. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

11. Tabling of Documents

12. Notices of Motion

13. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

14. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2005-2006

15. Second Reading of Bills

16. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act

- Bill 15, Court Security Act

- Bill 16, Tobacco Control Act

- Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act

- Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007

- Committee Report 5-15(4), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

- Committee Report 6-15(4), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

- Committee Report 7-15(4), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

17. Report of Committee of the Whole

18. Third Reading of Bills

19. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 15, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 17:56 p.m.

