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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 19, 2007****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, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Hon. Kevin Menicoche, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 71-15(5): Heritage Day 2007**

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. The third Monday in February each year is recognized across Canada as Heritage Day.

This year, the national theme is the celebration of "vernacular architecture" meaning those structures built by ordinary people, rather than by professionally trained architects. In the Northwest Territories, this term encompasses everything from the archaeological remains of tents in the forest and driftwood dwellings on the Arctic Coast, to still standing residential and commercial buildings built by people who arrived in the North more recently. These structures are a record of where we settle, where we grow, what we need, where we live, where we work, where we do business, where we learn and where we worship.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, in partnership with the Government of Canada, is helping three communities recognize and conserve their historic and culturally important places.

In Aklavik, the Ehdit'at Gwich'in Council and the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute are documenting the vernacular architecture of local cultural places.

In Tsiigehtchic, the Gwichya Gwich'in Council and the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute are working to recognize the history and architecture of Church Hill.

The Tulita Dene Band Council and the Fort Norman Historical and Heritage Society are preparing a conservation plan for the old Anglican Church of Tulita, a territorial historic site. The old Anglican Church of Tulita is one of the oldest standing buildings in the NWT. Its finally crafted dovetailed log structure is an excellent example of the vernacular building style of local craftsmen in the early 1880s.

The City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee is celebrating this year's Heritage Day theme concurrent with the celebration of the 40th anniversary of Yellowknife becoming the capital. Yellowknife is well known for its home-built architecture. The heritage committee has organized an art show at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre featuring that aspect of Yellowknife's history and character. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Minister's Statement 72-15(5): Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre - Resumption Of Services

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Members of this House are aware, the labour dispute at the Nats'ejee K'eh, NJK, Treatment Centre has been resolved. I am pleased to announce that treatment services will again be available at the centre the week of March 21st.

---Applause

I would like to thank both parties for their dedicated efforts, particularly over the last few weeks, in negotiating a successful conclusion to this labour dispute. Sometimes resolutions to such disputes are difficult to achieve, and this was no exception.

NJK Treatment Centre is an integral part of an overall mental health and addictions strategy that focuses on community-based support and counselling. Each year over 150 northern residents are referred to Nats'ejee K'eh for treatment. The treatment centre provides co-ed, gender specific and couples programs, as well as follow-up and support programs. NJK also operates a 24-hour crisis line for clients that have gone through the program.

I am pleased that a long-term agreement has been reached and I expect this will bring the stability we need to this important service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Taking Responsibility For Energy Consumption Impacts**

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the number one identified priority of Canadians has recently been cited to be the stewardship of our natural environment. One could argue that the population in the Northwest Territories and the population so minute in the grand scheme of world greenhouse gas generation that what we do doesn't really matter. If we have a vast and pristine country with unlimited clean air and water, why would we concern ourselves with the amounts of greenhouse gases that we contribute?

Just look at any major highway in southern California on any given day. Look at the number of jets flying the global skies; look at the concentration of industry in developed

countries and then look at us, a little speck of people on a big map.

Some would make the argument that no matter what we do, we are still going to be the place where a lot of pollution ends up. I am sure some of the contaminants that have been detected in our free-ranging wildlife in the North isn't from pollutants that were generated by anyone living in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that if everyone took an attitude of not me, no one would go first in addressing the consumption of energy and how it is affecting the world that we live in. The world is getting smaller every day in terms of travel and communication, and actions in one part of the world significantly impact another part, even if it's far away.

We have a lot of good reasons why we should conserve energy. For one thing, it would save money. For another, it would preserve the environment. Every time I hear about the energy-hungry markets for natural gas and oil in southern Canada and the U.S. market and the need for jurisdictions like ours and Alberta's with natural resources to respond to that demand, I think to myself why don't we slow it down, build more energy-efficient buildings, drive more energy-efficient vehicles, find clean alternate energy sources.

How do we get off this merry-go-round of thinking we need more consumables, bigger homes, bigger cars? We spend our lives in the pursuit of things that consume our money, our time, our life and, ultimately, our environment.

Mr. Speaker, I resist the theory that more is better. I think that's what we all need to do if we're going to lessen the impact of this generation on our environment. I don't know how we get buy-in for being more minimalist in our expectations and our wasted resources, but this government and the people of the North definitely do have a role to play. We need community energy plans. We need personal energy plans. This government needs to be the leader, create incentives and assist people in making choices which are more environmentally and economically sound, and where this government is the designer, builder and owner of much infrastructure, we also need to implement strong principles of conservation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Energy Efficiency In Remote Communities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, being the day for this side of the House to try and energize this government to address the high cost of energy here in the NWT, I would just like to speak on the energy issues in smaller communities and more remote centres, where the impact of small changes in energy costs have a real large impact in our remote communities in relation to the overall cost of living here in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the energy efficiency issue always presents many challenges for private homeowners and private businesses in our remote communities; issues like the

access to information and technology on energy efficiency and some methods to reduce it. There are only certain times of the year where businesses can afford to bring in such large pieces of equipment like freezers and coolers, or households bring in slightly smaller equipment like washers and dryers, or dishwashers, hot water tanks and other similar energy-efficient appliances, because of the high cost of moving freight here in the NWT. Other huge challenges in small communities are the lack of qualified people in these remote communities. When there's no one to install your energy-efficient furnaces or your energy efficient hot water tank, or your wood pellet stove, why buy one? If there's nobody to install your energy-efficient doors or windows or put on your energy-efficient siding, why purchase those? Even to find somebody to tune up your vehicle to make it more energy efficient in these smaller communities is always a challenge. Getting any of these things done in a timely manner is one of the things that all these small communities are faced with.

I'd just like to see many more of these types of costs included in all these energy efficient loan programs that are proposed by ITI and ENR, and also in the Housing Corporation's new CARE Program to provide grants to renovate or upgrade homes for great energy efficiency and conservation. These are all good initiatives with good intentions, Mr. Speaker. I persuade this government to expedite the rollout of these dollars and encourage all residents in both large and small communities to take full advantage of these initiatives that will only benefit everybody in the long term.

Just for the homeowners' information, Mr. Speaker, 1,000 litres of heating oil in your home roughly produces two to three tons of emissions. Just for some people to think about out there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

MR. LAFFERTY: (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one thing I'm going to touch on is regarding energy efficiency. The price of heating oil and diesel has drastically increased over the years and will continue to rise. People are starting to look into alternative ways to heat their homes just so they can get by during the winter months. That's why the people in the communities, that's what we're looking into. What can we do to make it much better, to really look at it? This is what they call pellet stove. It is costly. To buy a stove it costs over \$4,000 something. How can we help these people? That's what we're talking about. Mr. Speaker...(Translation ends)

...energy efficiency is a very important and worthwhile initiative here in the Northwest Territories. This has been an issue in the communities during our pre-budget consultation in the north and south sections of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the price of heating oil and diesel has drastically increased over the years and will continue to rise. People are starting to look into alternative ways to heat their homes just so they can get by during the winter months. Mr. Speaker, I realize that the GNWT has

subsidy programs to deal with energy efficiency, which is great to see. I think we need to go further, be specific on our subsidy programs. There may be some subsidy programs out there, but people are still confused as to where to turn for these so-called subsidies and what's available to them here in the Northwest Territories,

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time that this government invests in subsidizing wood pellet stoves and regular wood stoves. The installation of these stoves is very expensive. Some stoves can range from \$4,500 to \$10,000, depending on the size of the area to be heated and other considerations. Mr. Speaker, some elders and community members simply cannot afford to purchase an energy-efficient pellet or wood stove, let alone the additional cost for installation. This is where the GNWT needs to step up to the plate. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Leadership In Energy Efficiency Initiatives

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In the world of energy consumption and the consequences of it, there is incontrovertible evidence, Mr. Speaker, that we are the ones causing it. There should no longer be any doubt whatsoever that we have got to take the responsibility for this. We can't go on blaming it on natural causes or thinking that, well, if we study it a bit longer or try and avoid it, it will go away. We have got to take responsibility for it. This is where we have to take on the responsibility and the mantle of leadership. We are the ones who collectively got ourselves into this mess, and we have to get ourselves out of it.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hay River South pointed out that northerners and Canadians in the big global picture may not make much of a difference to the impact of climate change and greenhouse gasses, but we have got to, for ourselves and for our families, for our future generations, show the leadership that is going to be required. Even if our overall impact is small, we've got to be able to demonstrate to ourselves and to the world that we are taking responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Here in the Arctic we are the ones who are being impacted the most and the quickest by greenhouse gas accumulations around the world. Let's step up to the plate and show that we want to take responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, here in the North there are already some very good examples of that. Ecology North and the Dene Nation led a climate change leadership workshop last month to help us leaders learn more about climate change and what we can do about it. The Arctic Energy Alliance has been in place for some years now, established by this government to provide leadership and be a catalyst for energy innovations. Mr. Speaker, our Department of Public Works and the Department of Justice should be congratulated for showing their leadership when they installed a large wood pellet burning stove at the North Slave Correctional Centre. Mr. Speaker, I'd like unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays?

There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, further to the wood pellet technology installed at the North Slave Correctional Centre, we're also seeing leadership from the private sector in the company Arctic Green Energy Limited, which pulled this technology from around the world and showed what benefit it can make. Mr. Speaker, I understand that we could be seeing savings from this in the neighbourhood of at least \$50,000 in subsequent years.

Mr. Speaker, 95 percent of the electricity for the city of Yellowknife comes from hydro generation but each of us still emits 19 tons of carbon dioxide per person annually. That's just a little bit less than the average per person of our American neighbours. We can do something about it. Let's step up to the plate and show the leadership that will get us there, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Alternative Energy Solutions

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, MLAs on this side of the House have been speaking on energy efficiency and potential alternative solutions to energy use. We know that government has conducted community hearings to discuss alternative solutions for energy use within communities across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, some ideas government has put forward is hydro expansion and, more recently, the use of wood pellet generation at the North Slave Correctional Centre in Yellowknife. These are just some of the examples that government is considering for alternative energy which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the importance of alternative energy sources and, as one user of a diesel power heating system, we are looking at how we can reduce energy efficiency in our home. As a private homeowner, some work that we have done to date is replaced our electrical hot water heater to an oil furnace hot water heater system. Mr. Speaker, by converting to this, it has reduced our power by an average savings of about \$200 a month. Other options we've done is conducting regular oil inspections on our furnace and by replacing the air filters regularly. Mr. Speaker, we've even spruced our lighting by converting to energy-efficient light bulbs. These are just some of the small items that we do to save energy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if government, industry, business and homeowners can do so much with small items in finding ways for alternative energy use, we will enjoy cleaner air and environment for the detriment of us and for our children in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm going to speak about the cost of energy and the role it plays in the lives of all residents of our territory today and the importance of energy for the economic and social well-being of our territory into the future.

I want to start with power rates and, Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand why some communities in the Northwest Territories today pay 25 to 35 percent more for power than other comparable communities. True examples of this are, firstly, the community of Trout Lake where power distribution is handled by Northland Utilities. When you compare that to a similar sized community which happens to be in the same region, such as Nahanni Butte, which has their distribution handled by the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, the rates are 20 to 25 percent higher than in Trout Lake. Another example, Mr. Speaker, is the community of Wekweeti, where again Northland Utilities is responsible for distribution, and the community of Whati, where NTPC handles the distribution, and rates are again 20 percent lower in Wekweeti, which has a much smaller population. I believe that as a government we have a responsibility to deliver the best, most affordable power rates possible to our communities and the residents who live there. I think there should be an investigation or an inquiry as to why this discrepancy exists, why in some communities residents are paying 20 to 25 percent higher rates than in other comparable communities. Something needs to be looked at, Mr. Speaker.

As a government looking into the future, we must move ahead with our partners in expanding the Taltson hydro facility. We need to look at other smaller hydro developments to power our communities. Wind power should also be thoroughly explored to power our communities.

The Power Corporation has a general rate application into the PUB and rates are proposed to increase. How can our residents continue to keep paying more for power? Our Power Subsidy Program, Mr. Speaker, is going to need to be re-evaluated. This government needs to take action on developing possible new energy resources and ensuring our people are getting the best possible deal on power. Our future depends on it, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have questions for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On High Cost Of Utilities In The North

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today with the high cost of utilities across the North we continue to try to find solutions to make houses more energy efficient as possible. We try to conserve energy, Mr. Speaker, by using energy-efficient appliances and finding alternative ways to heat our homes. I still find it unfair to northerners that we have land that is so rich in resources we have to continue to pay extremely high rates for all our utilities. Without many of the subsidies provided

by the government, Mr. Speaker, people would have a difficult time up here to earn a living.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people today that try hard to earn an honest living, yet they seem to be the last to qualify for many programs because of their income. Many are taxpayers who help subsidize many of the programs. All they ask for is a fair opportunity to take advantage of the money being offered by this government. Are they asking for free money? I don't think so. But interest-free loans to help renovate their houses, because by the time they're done their mortgage payments, their utility payments, buy their food, there's not much left over for renovations and these are usually the last people that money is provided for.

I continue to commend the government for doing what they can to help with the high cost of living in the North, but we have to look after our hard-working and taxpaying citizens. A road down the valley would help bring some of the costs down across the North, Mr. Speaker. A percentage of the resource royalty money could provide interest-free loans to those who want it and will pay for it. We must give all northerners, Mr. Speaker, equal opportunity to take advantage of the programs being offered by this government. As we continue to find ways to save energy, we must protect the consumers from utility providers who will continue to raise the rates because of all of the energy we're saving using some of these initiatives. We have to continue to protect northerners, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support For Assisted Living Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to jump on the energy debate later on in the motion, but for now I would like to speak today in support of an assisted living program in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, this would be for those in our communities with disabilities or health conditions who don't require constant medical attention and can live an active, independent life away from more expensive institutional care if they could only get some help for a few hours a week to take care of their basic everyday needs.

Mr. Speaker, a case in point is one young, very intelligent woman in my constituency who is almost completely blind. She does quite well taking care of herself, but she can't do everything. She needs help with getting groceries once a week and help with cleaning her apartment, especially getting rid of garbage down the stairs. When I visited her, she spoke of the difficulty of using her vacuum cleaner. She also had problems with her freezer, which had to be taken care of by third-party intervention.

Mr. Speaker, she gets volunteers and assistance from the Council for Disabled Persons, but without an established program of assisted living, it's asking a lot to expect the volunteers to do all these chores constantly. Same goes for the extended families. It's especially more taxing for those who don't have any extended family in the city, Mr. Speaker. I could tell you that such assisted program could also be helpful for seniors, as well as other people with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there is a full-time assisted living with those who are severely disabled, but it seems that there is not anything if you're not completely disabled and I think it's in the interest of the government to set up a program for those who can live on their own but need some help.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to point out that this is quite separate from home care and respite care that the government currently provides, but I know that a lot of extra demands that are being put on the home care and respite care are something that should be expected to do through those programs, but one that could be addressed by such assisted living scenario. I know the resources for the government are limited, but I think that in the long run this will be more economical in that we'll be able to keep these people out of institutional care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to wish everyone Happy New Year in Cantonese. We've just started the lunar Year of the Pig, so to all the Members of the House...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to talk about my concerns regarding the massage therapy business in the Northwest Territories. I'm referring to the concern about the registration and licensing of massage therapists or, better, the lack thereof. More and more Canadians and northerners are receiving massage therapy as an important component of their health care. It is of great concern that the NWT has no registration or licensing process in place recognizing the credentials of persons offering massage services.

What we have here is a public health and safety concern with a lack of rules and regulations. Many massage therapists voluntarily register through other jurisdictions, like British Columbia where the practice of massage therapy has been regulated since 1952, but there are no such requirements in the NWT to do so and it's pretty easy to get a business licence and hang a sign out your door.

The NWT has a registered massage therapist association affiliated with the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance. The NWT association has no self-regulating jurisdiction over their profession like nurses and doctors, and membership is voluntary.

Practicing massage therapists are not required to register with the Department of Health and Social Services. There are no minimum requirements for their credentials or for their education.

The Canadian Massage Therapists Alliance and their members are lobbying provincial and territorial governments to establish legislation that would regulate the profession and introduce minimum standards. Members of the organization must provide proof of a minimum of 2,200 hours educational curriculum, adhere to

continuing education requirements and code of ethics, and the professionals must have liability insurance. These requirements point in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. These are steps to protecting the people seeking massage therapy and to protect the people who are providing the service. A legislated standard would also assist people with their medical insurance claims and then they directly would be provided with health care provider services.

In the unregulated waters that exist now, we cannot guarantee that safe and complete coverage is out there. So all that we need to do, Mr. Speaker, it's in the best interest of the government to do what it does well, which is create regulation to protect citizens. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions at the appropriate time for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mr. Tim Durkin. He's in the gallery and he's a Rotarian with Mr. Dent and I. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, this government does have a large role to play in the conservation of energy in the Northwest Territories, whether it's providing incentives to private homeowners or looking at the infrastructure in the buildings that this government owns itself. This government is a very significant owner of infrastructure that consumes energy.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many years the excess power from the hydro at the Taltson dam has been flowing over the dam untapped, but it's got to be a long time because I've been talking about it in this House for 11 years. I don't know who to direct this question to, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to know when, with all the public buildings that have access to the transmission lines from the hydro at Taltson, when is this government going to tap into that and heat and light some of our buildings in the South Slave with hydro power? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of looking at the feasibility of certain buildings in the communities. I mentioned that we are looking at three buildings in Fort Smith this year. There's also the possibility of 14 facilities that could be put on electric heat. But again, Mr. Speaker, it comes down to how much surplus is there and exactly the grid system we have in those communities, can they take the extra load, and also ensuring that we do have a long-term accessibility question to ensure we have the long-term ability to access that surplus power over a long period of time. So we are doing a feasibility study along with the Department of Public Works and Services and other government agencies. Again, this is one of the initiatives that we are putting forward in regards to the energy plan to ensure that we look at this in other communities such as using residual heat off power plants, taking a look at the biomass project we're looking at in regards to other facilities. So we are looking at other alternatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is it's about time. Energy and fuel has been costing a lot of money for a long time now and we've had that excess power at the Taltson dam for a very long time. We talk about consistency and continuity of availability of that. I mean, we're talking about expanding the Taltson, for heaven's sake. So I mean, it's a waste. I'm sorry it's taking so long. I'm glad something's being done. Would the Minister also commit to looking at public buildings in Hay River as well for conversion or a dual system that would be partly hydro and perhaps have a backup system of some other form of energy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will attempt to look at other facilities again. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to point out that we do have roughly about eight megawatts of surplus power, but we have to ensure that the grid systems in those communities can take that extra load. A good example is in Hay River, we were looking at the possibility of a pipe coating plant. Again, in order for that to work, we had to upgrade the whole grid system in the community because the system that we have now does not have the capacity to take on that extra load. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I know the pipe coating facility would have taken a considerable amount of power in an industrial use, but we have government

buildings in Hay River. We have the courthouse, we have our schools, we have the hospital, we have many facilities. We have an existing transmission system within the community for hydro. It seems like it should be a simple question to answer. Do we have a capacity to put an interruptible service or a dual service into those buildings? When could this be looked at? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to commit to the Member that we are working with the communities. We are working with the different agencies in those communities. There is a push now to develop community energy plans and that's where we're hoping that working in conjunction with community governments, community businesses, that we are able to expand our potential energy savings by way of heating facilities using hydro. So again, we are working together. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 352-15(5): Utilizing Surplus Hydro Electricity

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought we only got three questions today. I'm getting confused. I'll just pass on the fourth. Thank you.

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

Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue on for my friend Mrs. Groenewegen, on the Power Corporation's pilot projects that they're doing in Fort Smith right now, and also I'd just like to get Fort Resolution on the bandwagon. We have lots of Public Works buildings there that could go on this residual power pilot project. But with what, I just want to reiterate what my friend Mrs. Groenewegen was saying, that it's way past due that we've looked at this. But I think one of the first steps that we have to do at the Power Corporation is we have to develop an interruptible power rate or residual power rate. That's the first step that we have to do to get any benefits out of these pilot projects, because with the price of fuel right now it's not really that high and with all the riders and everything and this equalization of power through the NWT, we're almost paying the same all over the place. So those pilot projects are going to really come out, in my eyes right now, really borderline energy efficiency in the eyes of the government because we don't have any other power rates. Can we get a residual power rate set by the Power Corporation or something looked at in that effect in order for these pilot projects to look viable? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, we are developing an energy plan for the different communities. We're looking at the possibility of the energy used, regardless if it's from diesel heat or electric heat. We do also have to keep in mind there's a cost to changing the infrastructure that we do have in place by way of a single electrical grid going into a lot of these communities versus a heavier grid which goes to a lot of the larger centres. Also, we're realizing we're having more usage of power in communities by community expansion. So we have to build that into our capital planning process. So we have to work together, find ways to also look at saving energy, but also keep in mind that we will have to put a major investment in upgrading our grid systems into all our communities. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize there's lots of work involved with switching over from diesel to electrical power. But I want to ask the Minister again, can the Power Corporation look at setting some kind of a residual power rate which not only will apply to public works buildings but everybody in general, so that homeowners, private citizens can make the investment to switch over from heating oil to electrical power at certain times of the day, evenings, weekends, whatever it takes, and take advantage of a residual rate which we could use this eight megawatts of power that's left over for the last 20 years at the Power Corp that's been in the territorial government's hands. Can we do that as a first step to get everybody on the bandwagon to saving energy, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, we all know the process we have to go through to find power rates and exactly what's acceptable to everyone. Again, this is a new concept that's being thrown out there. We do have a rate application process which we put forward basically every two or four years. It goes through the Public Utilities Board process, and also we talk about one-rate zone, two-rate zones, and at some point we have to make a decision on that so we have a system that's fair to everyone, but also realizing we do have different types of energy communities; diesel, hydro and residual communities. So I think we do have to look at it in a context of how we basically develop our business case, but also realizing we do have a regulatory process we have to go through. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the Power Corp did set a residual rate or an

interruptible power rate today, I can guarantee you that we'd have a lot of buy-in from private businesses and residences alike. You know, if we hooked up the whole South Slave to a residual power, an interruptible power rate, the whole NWT benefits. You know, less power subsidies, less power rates for the South Slave, the North Slave, everybody. It's a win-win situation, Mr. Speaker. I just don't understand where the Power Corp or the Minister is coming from when he says we have to go through a process to set the rates, to do this, we're looking at that. You know, this is something that we should do and why can't we just do it and let the general public either follow up with the initiative or not? You know, it's a win-win for everybody and I think everybody will buy in. Why can't we put an application in for an interruptible power rate in the South Slave region or everybody that's on hydro as a first step? Can we do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I fully support the Member's endeavour to this, but again if we can get support from this House, from the government and also submit a proposal forward to the PUB making them aware that this is something they should seriously look at, I'm more than willing to do that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the PUB has had access to many of the reports that have come out of this government that have been tabled in this House over the last 10 years on how we can save on power and how we can use all the residual power at the Taltson. Not to mention with the expansion, I'm sure we will still have some residual power with mines shutting down...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have another question, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: ...seriously look at some of these reports and putting some recommendations into place today? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 353-15(5): Residual Interruptible Power Rate

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad we're having this debate today because I believe it is important that we do have to take some major steps to ensure that we have a decision on where we're going with energy in the Northwest Territories. I strongly support the Members for coming forward with some ideas and suggestions on how we can look at it, but again we have to develop a policy within this government, this Legislature, so that we know where we're going with power use. So again, Mr. Speaker, we are trying different attempts, we are coming forward with the energy guide, communities are developing their energy plans and

hopefully by doing it together we can come to a solution. Thank you.

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

Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I highlighted in my Member's statement the need to take pellet wood stove into consideration as a main source of subsidy program within the government subsidy program, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment what is the department's current subsidy program that deals specifically with energy efficiency when it comes to purchasing pellet or wood stoves? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My department has some programs for commercial ventures we've been funding through the Arctic Energy Alliance for some time. But, Mr. Speaker, I think the main point is that we know we've got to do more in this area both for residential and commercial customers. We are proposing in the energy plan that we'll be rolling out soon -- we're hoping to table it in March -- a number of initiatives that would look at the kinds of things the Member is talking about. We do want to help people get their costs down and we want to work as a territory to instil a conservation ethic. So I think there are a number of good examples. Converting to wood burning or wood pellet stoves is one such example, and I believe we will have some programs that target that sort of initiative. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a good example in the North Slave Correction heating system, an energy efficiency initiative. It's a great initiative that's been undertaken by the department. Great for the commercial perspective but, at the same time, we must take residential homeowners also into consideration. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, are there plans in place to deliver the same system as North Slave Correction initiative into smaller communities? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, that was an initiative that was targeted. We needed another boiler system at the North Slave Centre and we thought that this was a great way to tackle that problem. I do think we need to be doing this in homes. We want to have that discussion with committee, about how we can apply this to residences and I think there are a number of things that we want to tie into, as well, including the eco funds that

have been announced by the federal government. We don't have all the program details but understand some of that money will be available for renovations in homes. We think we can marry that with some help for people buying wood pellet stoves and probably come up with a comprehensive program that helps us save money and be more efficient and friendly for the environment. So that is one of the programs that we will be trying to develop over the coming weeks. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since I've touched on residential and the Minister spoke on commercial, I'd like to find out from the Minister about the commercial perspective, if that initiative is also going to be delivered in the smaller communities. I realize it's been very productive here in Yellowknife with North Slave Correction. So is that initiative coming forward to the smaller communities? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we will be, as part of this energy plan, talking about setting internal GNWT targets for greenhouse gas emissions. That's going to mean we're going to need to do some things right across the territory in order to meet those objectives. But in terms of assets outside our own inventory, yes, we want to work in small communities to look at options for improving efficiency and lowering costs. We know one of the biggest factors that inhibit business in our small communities is the cost of electricity; stories of stores; the local store having a 70 or 80 thousand dollar power bill. You've got to charge a lot for milk and bread to make it up on milk and bread for what you have to pay for in power and we don't think that's sustainable. So we're going to have to work to help small communities through that problem. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the key question, I guess, of when can we see this residential heating system initiative going into the smaller communities? When? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 354-15(5): Energy-Efficient Home Heating Systems

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we're going to move very quickly. I know that the committee members have been urging us for some time now to bring in a green financing program. We think we've got a program that will meet the needs of small communities and large communities right across the North. We're proposing to be able to roll that out in March, if we can table the energy plan. We'll have further discussions with committee

around this, and let me say I know that committee members have been urging us to do this and we will respond. Thank you.

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

Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to my Member's statement from earlier to get my questions for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. I want to start off by saying I do believe the government has a responsibility to the people it represents to get the best possible rates in our communities and, Mr. Speaker, that's not evident today. I spoke earlier of two examples: Trout Lake and Nahanni, 20, 25 percent difference in the rates there; one serviced by Northland Utilities, the other by the NTPC. In the Dogrib region, in Monfwi, the community of Wekweeti serviced by Northland Utilities, Whati is serviced by the Northwest Territories Power Corporation; 25 percent difference. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation how it is possible, or if he can explain how it is possible, that comparable communities in the Northwest Territories have that great of an extent of a difference in power rates. Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, we do have two utility companies in the Northwest Territories. I think you have to also realize the cost to operate the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, which covers more communities in the Northwest Territories and also it has a larger workforce. It also has a unionized workforce. We also have a system where we have regional offices in different locations throughout the Northwest Territories, so you have a larger overhead cost to administer the Northwest Territories Power Corporation than they do with Northland Utilities.

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

Supplementary To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that gets me to the bottom line, and the bottom line is delivering the best possible power rates in our communities. If the Minister is suggesting that because they have regional offices and larger overhead, that doesn't bode very well for the residents in the communities who are paying exorbitant power rates. I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide this House, or go through a process that would supply this House, with evidence about why the communities are, like I mentioned, Nahanni Butte and Whati, why are they paying 20 or 25 percent higher power rates? Can he supply the House with that type of information?

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

Further Return To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, every community is based on a postage stamp power rate which is based on the cost to produce that power in that community, what infrastructure has been put in that community, have there been upgrades, has the Power Corporation made a capital investment by a new power plant or put in a new piece of equipment. All that is assessed when they go through the PUB process. So the actual cost to operate the Power Corporation by community is given to the Public Utilities Board and they make the decision on exactly how much that pot cost to produce the power in that community and what can the customer pay for. So at the end of the day, it's the PUB that makes the final decision on what costs are based in each community in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement, I think people should start thinking about this. I believe there are other communities out there in the Northwest Territories who would see a reduction in their power rates if power was distributed in those communities by Northland Utilities. The examples are there. I gave them to the Minister today. What other communities in the Northwest Territories can we look at taking and putting with Northland Utilities so that residents pay a lower power rate? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I would just like to reiterate exactly what I just said. Every community is different, based on what it cost to produce that power and what it cost each resident to pay for that power. Also, we can't lose sight that a majority of these communities we are talking about are subsidized up to 700 kilowatts per resident, which is subsidizing the majority of their high energy communities. Again, at the end of the day, we have to make a policy decision on exactly how we can find a fair system for all residents in the communities in the Northwest Territories. It has to be a policy directive given by this Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister talks of a fair system. I would suggest that a fair system would be an investigation of power rates that residents are paying in the communities. I would like the Minister to make a commitment today that he will investigate this. It shouldn't be allowed to happen; why comparable communities pay that much of a difference in power rates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 355-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that process is basically going on right now, which is a rate application that's been put forth to the Public Utilities Board. We've gone through their first phase and basically they are going through the second phase which is already in place. They have interventions off in two communities, municipalities, individuals, that want to have an opportunity to talk about the issue of rates and what they pay in those communities. So we do have a process in place. It is ongoing and it's the Public Utilities Board process where there is an application presently in front of them. Thank you.

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

Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for Mr. Bell as the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment and as the Minister responsible for signing off the socio-economic agreement for the Mackenzie gas pipeline project. Mr. Speaker, one of the legacy visions that the people of the North have had for this mega project is that we will see some residual and long-term benefits from extracting this resource from the NWT. One of them, of course, is to supply natural gas to communities along the route or, for that matter, any community that might be a viable customer for Mackenzie Delta or Mackenzie Valley gas. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister advise to what extent does the socio-economic agreement, the recently signed SEA, address the potential legacy of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline?

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

Return To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to say that the project proponent has agreed to essentially make gas available up and down the pipeline right-of-way to any community that's interested. Some communities may be interested for utility purposes. Others may have viable commercial propositions that they are pursuing. It could be forestry, we don't know. The bottom line is the proponents have made a commitment to make that available and that is something we hope to be able to take advantage of. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would like to pursue this a little further. It's good news, but what does "make available" mean? Are there going to be charges or tariffs that these communities will have to make investments? I just want to find out to what extent is the pipeline project going to work with us to make it happen, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they've agreed to apply reduced tolls to NWT customers so we won't pay the full cost of transportation that southern customers will. We think that's only fair. It doesn't have as far to go.

In terms of the conversion and actually having communities have access to the gas, they have agreed to provide valves along the way. The National Energy Board will be the determining voice in terms of what exactly the pipeline will have to pay for and what communities will have to pay for if they want to convert. What a valve means exactly, where the cut-off point is between what the pipeline will pay and what communities will pay is still to be determined and the National Energy Board will provide us some guidance and advice on that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, this is good news. These are long-range, long-term investments. The conversion of our communities largely from diesel and heating fuel technologies to natural gas would be a significant part of enabling this to happen. What steps is the GNWT undertaking to begin to scope this out and make it doable, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have done some work. We commissioned a study on gas to communities. We've identified three communities that we think have the likelihood of making a viable goal of this, at least initially. A lot of this depends, Mr. Speaker, obviously on the spread between the price of diesel in that community and natural gas. So it's hard to know going forward which communities will have the potential, but that's why we've got the marker on the wall and the producers have agreed that any communities that wants access to gas can have that. But those are the three communities, Good Hope, Tulita and Simpson initially that we have identified that seem to have some really good potential. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To what extent is the government factoring reduced greenhouse gases into the economics and viability of this? Natural gas, of course, is a much cleaner burning fuel than diesel. Is this part of our overall factoring in our calculations, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 356-15(5): Community Access To Natural Gas Supplies

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point, we are largely looking at it from the perspective of reduced costs. One of the principles in our energy plan is to try to provide affordable power to all of our communities. We think natural gas to communities can help us do this in several communities, so that has been the driver behind this. But, yes, of course, we would like to see every single community in the Northwest Territories not have to rely on diesel in future and there are a number of options for that depending on the community and where they are located. Gas to communities will have that effect, we believe. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to just follow up on my Member's statement and ask questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It's with regard to the feasibility of setting up an assisted living program. Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned this to the Minister, I believe, during our budget review. I believe that the department may be doing a little bit of work on it. I wonder if I could take this opportunity to ask the Minister to commit to looking at this seriously. I am not sure about the cost implications and the extent to which the government can jump into this, but there is definitely a need to fill this gap for those who are really in need of a little bit of living assistance from the government, so that they could live as independent a life as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an area that we have been working on as a government over a number of years. In fact, we just recently signed a new four-year contribution agreement with the NWT Persons with Disabilities in trying to continue our working relationship with them in the area of disabilities. A steering committee was also formed comprising of a number of government departments and non-government organizations to look at the work done in this area. There is the specific area of the Respite Program, there is a program here in Yellowknife that we are looking to see if we can unroll in communities as well. There has been work done on the NWT action plan for persons with disabilities. It's looking at developing more living options that would be available, and training as well. Consistent homecare is one of the areas as well. So we've been trying to work along with this with the steering committee to improve our services to persons with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know this is a complicated area. I don't want to get mixed up with all the homecare and respite care. I have visited facilities in Yellowknife where there is full-time assisted living for those with intellectual abilities, for example. I don't believe there is a program that addresses assisted living issues and it's completely different from homecare and respite care. Could I ask the Minister to make a commitment to look at this in a very narrow scope to see what it would take to have an assisted living program possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we review this, I can commit to having a further look at this area, but it's got to be tied with the overall level of service we do provide. I will speak with the department about this one particular area to see how it is being fit in or if there has been discussion around that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask the Minister to either respond to me as a Member or to our Standing Committee on Social Programs on his findings by May/June or sometime like that or sooner?

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

Further Return To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will look at what we have available and if there has been that discussion, I will aim to have some information back to the chair of Social Programs before the end of this session. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

MS. LEE: Just one more question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister advise as to whether there have been any discussions with respect to assisted living programs at any of the national tables that he sits on as Minister of Health with other of his counterparts? Are there any existing programs from the federal government for such assisted living programs?

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

Further Return To Question 357-15(5): Assisted Living Program Review

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had opportunity to be at one

federal/provincial/territorial Ministers' meeting on health and social services, basically on health. They break them down, but in our jurisdiction we have them both together. We haven't had a discussion on this particular issue and as we provide to get that information to the Member I committed to earlier, we can include what's available through the federal government.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow up on my Member's statement made today regarding the lack of industry regulation to protect our citizens. Mr. Speaker, does the Department of Health and Social Services agree that non-regulated and non-licensed massage therapists in the NWT is a concern for public health and safety? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue, of course, when it comes to health care being provided in the Northwest Territories is one we take seriously and this one particular area, we do not have work going on in this area. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Department of Health and Social Services agree that we need to recognize accredited therapists in order to provide the public with the assurance that they are not at risk when they are seeking massage therapy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about issues of health care and the delivery of health care in the Northwest Territories, we do take it seriously. The issue is looking at the timeline we have in this Assembly, there are a lot of legislative priorities that we focussed on as a government. We need to meet the ones we have on the table. At this point, we are not prepared to put additional items on the legislative proposals. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will thank the Minister for answering my third question while I ask the second one. Mr. Speaker, my second question is, yet again, does the Department of Health recognize that accredited therapists need to be provided out there and there needs to be some assurance that there is support and industry protection? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue has been looked at. We've looked at other jurisdictions in this area and at some point, we will have to move on this area. As I stated earlier, with the workload that's faced now on the legislative calendar in trying to meet the commitment we have on there, in this government it would be very difficult to meet, but it is something we recognize needs to be reviewed. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the Minister recognizes this is an issue and it needs to be reviewed and nobody wants to put their constituents at any type of risk or worse, Mr. Speaker, so this is a safety issue, it's a priority issue in the sense of putting our constituents first, would the Minister at least commit today that he would take a look at what other jurisdictions are providing and come back with maybe a piece of paper on a direction this government may intend to go in or where they can refer the next government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 358-15(5): Accreditation For Massage Therapy Profession

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated, looking at the workload on our legislative calendar and this issue in particular, we will gather some information on the work done and just provide that to Members as to where things sit. Thank you.

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

Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board. Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly has enacted legislation that establishes the process for utilities to advance and receive approval of the revenue requirements through the PUB. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister, through this latest general rate application that the Power Corporation has submitted to the PUB, would it be possible for the Public Utilities Board to investigate how one utility can distribute power at 20 to

25 percent less than the other utility company in very comparable communities? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a utility company applies for a rate increase or sometimes there is a decrease to the Public Utilities Board, there's a two phase application. One is the phase one general rate application and the other is the phase two. In phase one, the application actually asks the Public Utilities Board to...They actually make a case, Mr. Speaker, to the Public Utilities Board, saying that there's a need for an increase, and the NWT Power Corp has a community base rate system where each community's rates are set individually, and that's the structure we have right now, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, I want to understand the process a little bit better. I think the Public Utilities Board is responsible for, again, making sure that communities are receiving the best possible rates and today they're not, and if they're not, I think the Public Utilities Board has to take some responsibility in that as well. So I'd like to ask the Minister again, what type of investigation can take place to see what other communities are paying 20 to 25 percent more in power rates than they have to? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In terms of our utility board as compared to other jurisdictions in Nunavut, they've got their structure set up whereas their Legislature actually sets the rates and they do it a little bit differently. It's kind of like a social rate structure where the government does take up the cost for most of their communities. In the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, they've got the Yukon Utilities Board. It's structured a little bit different. The Legislature does have some say. The Legislature actually approves the final rate structure that's there; whereas our system, Mr. Speaker, our Public Utilities Board is structured at arm's length legislation. So the utilities board actually looks at the rates and agrees with them, and then there's a phase two which they actually help set the rates.

I believe last week in this House, too, a Member asked if there has ever been a refusal of a rate increase. There hasn't been, but the Public Utilities Board did look at the case and did make some changes to the original application, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, as the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, does the Minister have any direct input into the process, or is he just a figurehead? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 359-15(5): Community Power Rates

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member brings up a good question. As the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board and as our government does have input into the Public Utilities Board system, but it's only as Cabinet we can give general direction, Mr. Speaker. That is about our input into our current system. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay. Thank you. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. He is well aware that we do have 11 official languages here in the NWT, and in some instances in the health centres around the NWT and in mine in particular, in Deninu Kue, we have employees of Health and Social Services who are employees that work at the hospital but also provide interpretive services at the centre. It's not even in their job description, Mr. Speaker, that they provide the service and I don't know if they even receive compensation for it. But with more seniors coming online, more seniors that go to the health centres these days, the two-way dialogue has got to be clear and concise, Mr. Speaker, and some of the seniors aren't comfortable with talking about their medical history or what their ailments are. I want to ask the Minister if there's any avenue in his department to develop an option for seniors who go to health centres here in the NWT to either request that they find their own interpreter, somebody who they're comfortable with, somebody who they can talk with and somebody that knows them, if they are available to bring them to the health centre and let them provide the interpretative services instead of having somebody there that they're not sure of, they don't know, and providing that service for them? Is that a possibility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ability to seek services in your own language has been worked on by the department in a number of fashions. One, as the Member stated, is having some of our staff within our health facilities and health centres in

communities speak the language of the community. As well, through our Tele-Care service ability to seek services in your own language is available. There's always the option for individuals, when they go to a health centre or one of our facilities, to also take family members with them to help them in that service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to know that there's the option there and the Tele-Care service in our own languages. But I want to ask the Minister, does the staff that is working with the department in the nursing stations and also providing interpretive services whenever it's required, are they compensated for that service even if it's not in their job description? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've looked at this area and tried to have the ability to have their own language in their health centres in communities, it's something we've worked around. If it's included in the job description, it would be evaluated along those processes. If something was changed, then we'd have to look at that job description once again and see if there's an evaluation that would have to be done in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just with respect to getting back to the issue of seniors visiting health care centres here in the NWT and the issue of receiving the proper treatment for your ailments that you're trying to explain to the doctor and you're having a hard time with the interpreter, some of these staff people that are providing this service and may be even receiving compensation, I'm not sure but I'll provide that in a written question, but I want to ask the Minister what sort of training, even if there is any available, that these people can access in order to ensure the patients and get confidence in the physician that they are interpreting the right form or fashion? There's always the understanding that, yes, they will understand what they're talking about, but then translating it, getting the methodology correct is a really crucial interpretative service, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Minister what kind of training does the department provide to ensure that the correct methodology is being used by these interpreters? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 360-15(5): Interpretation Services At Health Facilities

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just as part of the earlier question, I believe that

those who are offering the service for translation in a community are remunerated for that specific area, as well. So that is addressed, is my understanding. For the actual training, I will get that information as to what's taking place for training, for example in medical terminology and so on, to see if that's part of the training aspect that goes on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a question of Mr. Menicoche under his Transportation portfolio, and I'm referring, Mr. Speaker, to the government's response to the pre-budget consultations. This was a report that was tabled a few days ago here. The report outlines that the Government of the Northwest Territories is undertaking a joint study on the effects of climate change on transportation in the Northwest Territories. The project began in 2004 and will continue until 2007. I was wondering if the Minister could advise the Assembly of the nature of information that we can expect from this report and how its recommendations may be implemented, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Member is talking about a climate change action plan project that the department has undertaken. It's a joint study. The project began in 2004 and will conclude this year, 2007. The status of the project right now is that Dillon Consulting Limited is assisting the department in completing the project. Stage one and two, which are to document climate change impacts and the modelling future physical impacts related to climate changes, have been largely completed up until November and December of this year, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just what difference is this study going to make? What value is it going to bring to the travelling public, Mr. Speaker, or the transport industry, the road transport industry here in the NWT?

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

Further Return To Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This study will help us answer very, very important questions as to how climate change will directly impact our transportation systems and identify the high risk areas in which we're going to have to focus on and target for future improvements, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the survey or the study going to require the government to re-look at its whole infrastructure plan? We know, Mr. Speaker, that climate change is already causing significant problems for roads in some communities, for airstrips. Have we looked at this in terms of our long-range infrastructure commitments, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 361-15(5): Climate Change Action Fund Project

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The action that is being undertaken, there are two other steps that the department and the consultant are looking at. There will be further workshops at the end of this month or perhaps into March. Mr. Speaker, steps three and four definitely look at forecasting the cost implications to future department operations as well as methods of adapting and looking at some best practices in order to mitigate any climate change impacts on our infrastructure. Mahsi.

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

Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker...(Translation) I'm going to talk about the mini hydro, working on that mini hydro. The Premier, Minister, they went to visit the community. (Translation ends)

The Premier met with Whati leadership on the new initiative, the Nailii project, the mini-hydro project. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to find out from probably the Premier, about the status of the Whati Nailii project, where it's at since our last initial meeting. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since our last meeting, the Power Corporation has been looking at what funding might be available to assist this project to move ahead. Mr. Speaker, we're currently looking at some detail on the recent federal announcements on the eco-energy funds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for those remarks. It's a moving forward initiative. Also, I'd like to find out from the Premier, even though we're waiting for the federal funding, what kind of contribution will be on the GNWT's

perspective on this new initiative that's energy efficiency in the community of Whati?

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

Further Return To Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The total cost of this project is somewhere in the range of four to six million dollars. We hope to cost share that with the federal government through their program. Mr. Speaker, I might also add that as we look at community energy plans and develop those, that there is a section in there that will deal with mini hydro projects like this one. Mr. Speaker, I can't say exactly how much we will be able to contribute, but we're certainly looking at the federal plans to figure out how we best use our dollars along with any contributions they are ready to make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Tlicho Government, also the community of Whati, community government, are waiting anxiously and patiently for this project to move forward, especially with the proposal being submitted. I'd like to find out from the Premier, upon the good news of the federal government, when could they meet again with the community of Whati to move forward with this initiative? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 362-15(5): Whati Mini Hydro Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make one correction to my earlier statement. The total amount that the community gave us as being the estimate of the cost of the whole project is closer to \$10 million. They are asking for governments or other agencies to provide support in the four to six million dollar range.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're waiting to hear more detail on the federal programs. Our departments and the Power Corporation are both looking at those to try and get enough detail. I would hope that within the next month or two that we will know the details so we know what contribution the federal government is willing to make. Mr. Speaker, this kind of project clearly fits within the interests of the federal government and I did discuss this project with Minister Baird a couple of weeks ago when I was in Ottawa and he seemed quite interested in these sorts of projects. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the residents in Inuvik continue to pay high prices for natural gas and now there is a rate application to raise the power rates. The trouble that they have is the natural gas

is from our backyard and they still continue to pay more than they do in Edmonton. I'd like to direct my questions today, if I may, to Premier Handley, as leader of the government. I'd like to ask him what can the government do to protect the residents of Inuvik from rising gas and power prices? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that we are limited, to some extent, by the agreement that was originally entered into when gas was brought into Inuvik. It's my understanding that it is not fully regulated, so there may be some avenues for us to intervene or take a look at this one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Premier, again as head of the government, there are many government buildings in Inuvik that are tied to the natural gas grid and natural gas is also supposed to be supplying our power. I would like to ask the Premier if the government has seen any significant savings from the conversion to natural gas. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are savings, definitely. I don't recall exactly the percentage less expensive than home heating oil, so there is savings, definitely. Mr. Speaker, as well, of course, the savings is on the fossil fuels and the greenhouse gases and so on that go out the chimneys. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Inuvik is doing their part to help with the greenhouse gas emissions but they're more concerned about their gas bill and their power bill. I'd like to ask the Premier if he would commit to getting me the numbers from the savings that the government has realized since the conversion to natural gas. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 363-15(5): Protection From Rising Gas And Power Prices

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes. We can find out exactly what it is. I believe it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 15 percent, but we will confirm that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. Written questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We'll return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a constituent, a local artist, carver, Mr. Bob Kussey, and, as well, Ms. Arlene Hache is sitting to his right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mr. Marvin Zaozimy from airports. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 48-15(5): Interpretive Service In Health Centres

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. How many health centres have interpretive service readily available in the NWT?
2. How many health centres have employees who provide interpretive services but this service is not included in their job descriptions?
3. What sort of remuneration does the department provide to these employees?
4. If there is no staff to provide interpretive services available, do family members or individuals requested by patients to provide interpretation get remuneration? If not, why do they not receive this?

Thank you.

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

Written Question 49-15(5): New Deal Community Plans

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

1. How many communities have completed capital investment plans due March 31, 2007?
2. How many have completed an integrated community sustainability plan due March 31, 2007?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to Written Question 38-15(5) asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 7th, 2007, to the Honourable Kevin Menicoche, Minister of Transportation, regarding the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk ice road.

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to Written Question 39-15(5) asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 7th, 2007, regarding the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk all-weather road. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 38-15(5): Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Ice Road

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 7, 2007, regarding the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk ice road.

The annual cost for the last five years incurred by the Department of Transportation to construct and maintain the ice road between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk is as follows:

- 2001-02 \$405,000
- 2002-03 \$413,000
- 2003-04 \$534,000
- 2004-05 \$550,000
- 2005-06 \$450,000

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 39-15(5): Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk All-Weather Road

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 7, 2007, regarding the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk all-weather road.

As far back as the release of the 1990 Transportation Strategy, the construction of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk all-weather road has been a priority of the department. This was reiterated in the 1995 Transportation Strategy update and in the 2000 Highway Strategy, Investing in Roads for People and the Economy. It should be noted that the

construction of new roads in the NWT is still the responsibility of the federal government.

In 1999, the Department of Transportation undertook the Highway Strategy initiative. This initiative dedicated resources for background planning studies on new roads, including the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk road. Studies related to engineering, economics, environment and land issues were completed.

In March 2001, the department made a submission to DIAND under the regional partnerships fund for the construction of a 22-kilometre access road from Tuktoyaktuk to gravel source 177. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation also indicated that they would be willing to contribute \$1 million to the project. However, the federal government would not commit to the significant financial investment required to fund the project.

Since 2002, the Government of the Northwest Territories has released three funding proposals to the federal government for investment in transportation infrastructure: Corridors for Canada, Corridors for Canada II: Building on our Success, and Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast. Construction of the 22-kilometre access road from Tuktoyaktuk south to area gas deposits and gravel source 177, as the first phase of a road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, was included in both Corridors for Canada documents. Connecting Canada included the all-weather road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, in support of a national sovereignty, oil and gas development and other economic opportunities. All three proposals are available on the Department of Transportation's website.

As part of the department's overall assessment of the construction of the Mackenzie gas project and post-construction era, the need for an Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk all-weather road has been proposed as one of the legacy infrastructure projects that the proponent should consider.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Petitions. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 99-15(5): 2007-2010 Business Plans

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled 2007-2010 Business Plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 14: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 18-15(5): Energy Efficiency Loan Program

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, March 5th, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that government bring forward as soon as possible a proposal for a \$5 million energy efficient loan program to provide interest-free loans up to a maximum of \$5,000 per household on a

non-means-tested basis to assist homeowners to finance upgrades aimed at reducing their energy consumption costs, including but not limited to wood stoves, pellet stoves, high-efficiency oil heaters, solar panels, improved insulation and siding, and more energy-efficient windows.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will seek unanimous consent to deal with this motion today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, whereas NWT residents live in one of the harshest climates in the world...

---Interjection

MR. LAFFERTY: Sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion he gave notice of earlier today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may continue with your motion, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 18-15(5): Energy Efficiency Loan Program, Carried

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker:

WHEREAS NWT residents live in one of the harshest climates in the world;

AND WHEREAS the cost of living is significantly affected by the cost of energy for power and heat;

AND WHEREAS energy conservation not only saves consumers money, but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and benefits the environment;

AND WHEREAS environmental stewardship is the highest priority identified by Canadians at this time;

AND WHEREAS there are many readily available fixtures, devices and appliances that have been refined to operate using minimal amounts of energy;

AND WHEREAS the upfront costs of such fixtures, devices and appliances, while initially high, can generally be recovered through energy cost savings;

AND WHEREAS access to capital would provide a means and an incentive for private homeowners to upgrade their homes to be more energy efficient;

AND WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommended in its 2006 Pre-Budget Consultation Report that the government establish an Energy Efficiency Loan Program;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends the government bring forward as soon as possible a proposal for a \$5 million energy efficiency loan program to provide interest-free loans up to a maximum of \$5,000 per household on a non-means-tested basis to assist homeowners to finance upgrades aimed at reducing their energy consumption costs, including but not limited to: woodstoves, pellet stoves, high efficiency oil heaters, solar panels, improved insulation and siding, and more energy-efficient windows.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you know, we've been discussing this for quite some time now in this Legislative Assembly and also our pre-budget consultation. This has been a main topic in every community that we visited. It has been an ongoing issue and I have to commend the government that there are programs in place to subsidize various initiatives. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we must keep in mind that the oil price is going up, even at the community level. Especially the most isolated communities, the high cost of living itself is a huge burden on the communities, especially those that are fragile: the elders that have low incomes, the pensioners.

Mr. Speaker, part of the reason we put this motion forward is to identify that we have to conserve energy. It's energy efficiency. We talk about wood stoves, the pellet stoves, the North Slave Correctional Centre that we talked about today, how productive the choices were, the government's initiative, and we'd certainly like to see those kind of initiatives into small communities as well, whether they be commercial, whether it be residential. So those kind of initiatives will definitely be available initiative from this government, the 15th Assembly, the 16th Assembly, and years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to highlight that with this new initiative, the energy efficiency loan program, we talk about the household income through the Housing Program, but this is also beyond the Housing Program, where there's a burden where we relieve all people that make money that are average earners, there's let's say 80,000 cap and this is going beyond that. We're assisting Northwest Territories residents, and this will be very beneficial for the community members, especially those who are living in the most isolated communities as well.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd just like to highlight the positive initiative that this government has done and there's more to come. Especially with this kind of motion I think we need to move forward. I certainly hope Cabinet will take this into consideration as one of their high priorities.

I realize the Department of ITI and Department of ENR are working on all kinds of initiatives to conserve energy and promote even more energy efficiencies in the Northwest Territories. There's also news from the federal government that money is coming forward on energy efficiencies and we, around the table here, are looking

forward to that initiative, also, Mr. Speaker. With whatever the outcome is with the federal budget, whether there be the 1.5 billion that's been thrown around, then we need to move forward. This is one of the initiatives that we want to move forward from our government, the Northwest Territories government perspective. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, too, in support of this motion that we put forward today. It's well known that we all believe the price of fuel is very expensive and it's costing a lot of homeowners a lot of hardship, especially when you have a diesel rider on top of the cost of power. I think for homeowners, Mr. Speaker, it's important that a motion like this that the government on that side can listen to a motion put forward here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of little things that we can do as government, and I think putting this motion forward is just one of those steps that will address the homeowners that really require assistance to make their homes more energy efficient. Putting the wood stoves into the public housing units might be an answer for government, but these are just some small solutions that need to be addressed.

I thank my colleagues here, you know, for coming out with a motion like this. I think we've done a lot of homework in terms of what we're trying to accomplish. I just want to stand up today and say I am in support of this motion and I hope that government will listen to the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. To the motion. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I, too, stand in support of this motion. I think it reflects very well on the themes that most of us talked about earlier today in our statements and our questions on energy and climate and what can we do to make a difference. I very firmly believe that one of the expectations and one of the mandates that we have as legislators here is to show leadership where we can put taxpayers' money to good use, demonstrate that leadership, and provide as this motion really amounts to, Mr. Speaker. This puts an incentive at the hands of homeowners, and I hope of all consumers in the Northwest Territories, to be able to do their part for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to become more efficient, become cleaner in the way we live and in the so-called footprint that we have on our environment.

Mr. Speaker, I was able to take advantage of this as a homeowner and a family in the NWT last year. My wife and I decided to do some upgrades in our own home here in Yellowknife. We added an extra inch of insulation, we put some new siding on, changed all of our windows and doors, put in two new clothes washing appliances. It was a considerable investment, Mr. Speaker; just over \$25,000 or so. But through the EnerGuide program that the federal government up to a certain time and then our territorial government assisted in, I got the benefit of some expert advice on what I could do that would really make a difference in my home. I also got I think it was just under \$700 back as a rebate that was proportional to the

investment that I made. So it wasn't a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, compared to the overall outlay, but that's not what I was looking for. It provided me with, as I say, that incentive. The government was showing leadership and I got some good advice out of it.

I'd also like to say, pass on a compliment, Mr. Speaker. In respect of that program I was able to take advantage of it and I know that others in the NWT, were able to do that, even after the federal government pulled the pin on it. Our government, the Department of ENR last year said this is important, we're going to continue it. Even if those scoundrels in Ottawa backed out of it, we took up the cause and made it happen. So let's continue on with this, Mr. Speaker.

The motion calls for interest-free loans up to a maximum of \$5,000 per household. It includes stoves, high-efficiency heaters, solar panels, insulation and siding, the kind of thing I did in my house. But it's not limited to that. I hope that in taking this motion, Mr. Speaker, motions of course do not result in direct action, but they are strong signals of advice and suggestion to the government and I hope the government takes the intent of this and looks at any and all possible ways that it could implement it.

I'd especially like to see this program apply, Mr. Speaker, to vehicles. We have the availability and the success of hybrid vehicles now being shown. Even in the area of recreational vehicles, Mr. Speaker, snowmobiles and outboard motors now have much more efficient and cleaner four-stroke technology. Could we potentially make an interest-free loan available to assist people to buy these? They're very much a part of our northern lifestyle and, indeed, livelihood for some people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my statements there. I believe this shows leadership and I sincerely hope that the government will take this up and come back with something that reflects the efforts that we're trying to put into it today, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, will be supporting the motion that's before us today. I think it's a step in the right direction. We need to give advantages to our residents and opportunities to our residents to access a pool of money so that if they want to look at energy-efficient upgrades to their home, they have another option. I think it certainly is a step in the right direction, although I would say it may not be enough. The motion calls for a proposal of \$5 million with a maximum of \$5,000. I would suggest that might be on the low side. If you're doing a major renovation such as siding or insulation work on your house, \$5,000 doesn't go too far.

The other point that I wanted to make in supporting the motion is I do hope the government takes this motion seriously. They haven't taken every motion that has come before the House as serious as they probably should, but this one, I do believe, deserves their attention. I wouldn't want to see the government rush out and have to hire 10 people to administer a program like this. I don't think that's necessary. I think we have the wherewithal within our ranks at the Housing Corporation or at BDIC to carry out a program such as the one that's being proposed. I wouldn't

want to see a blank cheque to the government to rush out and hire 10 more people to administer this.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I do want to say we are on the road, most of us here, a couple of times, north and south to communities. The biggest thing we heard in the communities we went to was the cost of living, the cost of power; that was first and foremost on many residents' minds. This is a direct result of those consultations that Regular Members took in the communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion that's before us today and it is nice to see our work that we've done in the territory come to fruition today with this motion. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am in support of this motion. Since I have been here, I have often talked about bread and butter issues about trying to make sure that we can help the average citizen do good. This motion speaks to the fact that our side of the House says we need to develop simple programs that everybody can jump on board and do.

A lot of people out there know we can come up with energy-efficient appliances, but the problem is it's always the upfront cost. They know it's the right decision, but it's always the cost. This motion speaks to that, to help people make the right decision. It helps steer folks in the right direction and I am very proud that this side of the House is recognizing this. Above all, average citizens qualify for this. Whether you can afford something or not, it helps steer people in the right direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I support this fully. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to offer my full support of this motion for all the good reasons that my colleagues on this side of the House have already provided. I just wanted to just touch on a couple of issues that I would like to address with respect to the department which carries out the motion. I would like to see some cost-free energy efficient audits for private homeowners at no cost that access this program. So the government can go out after everybody's done their renovations and access money to make energy efficient changes in the household, we actually have a monitoring system in place that actually measures the success of the program, so we can come back and say we did get our money's worth out of this program, the \$5 million we got back within six months of energy savings here in the NWT. I think that could be easily measured.

Like my friend Mr. Ramsay was saying I don't think we need 10 extra staff people in the GNWT to go out and do this. I think communities can take it upon themselves to carry out this energy efficiency audit that the government will be proposing on a lot of its own public commercial buildings.

Also, just with the motion, it also states that the \$5 million for the program, to me that's on the low end, but we have to start somewhere and I think the \$5 million is a good start. The \$5,000 on a non-means-tested basis, I have pros and cons on that because of issues I did raise earlier with respect to remote communities. If they were going to attach freight costs associated with these energy-efficient appliances being shipped into the communities, then that's great too, or over and above this \$5,000. I think people who access the \$5,000 and use half of that money just to get the appliances into the community is not going to do them much good. So a lot of people in the small communities are not going to bother paying back the loan, should they have access to it.

So I would like to see that portion of any energy efficient costs that are incurred over and above this \$5,000 like freight and shipping and handling, installation and maintenance. I think that's something we have to take into consideration when looking at a loan program like this.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a good start and we have to get the ball rolling and we have to be chiefs of our land, stewards of our land, and we have to show the rest of Canada that we only do produce .3 percent of total emissions here in Canada, in the North, but on a per capita basis we produce twice as much as the average Canadian. So numbers can always be juggled to make us look good or bad. I think this is a good start on a good path to energy efficiency here in the NWT and cost savings for everybody. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. To the motion. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, stand to support this motion. I think it's a good motion. I thank the Members for bringing it forward. I was looking at the one whereas here where it says "provide the means and incentive." They will provide the means but the incentive is going to be realized in the long run where you make savings over a long period of time. I fully support the energy efficiency loan program. We have \$128 million in subsidies. A lot of programs are run by the government. A lot of programs are means tested, so a lot of people do not qualify for that. I think this is a good start to having taxpayers qualifying for a lot of the programs and subsidies that they are paying into. I think that's a good part of this motion. I fully support the motion. I think it's a good motion and it's a start. The more we can do, Mr. Speaker, to provide programs and some subsidies to a lot of people out there that do work hard but are just over the threshold, the more we can do to help them and they are not asking for handouts, like I say, they will pay it back. The more we can do for them the better it is for us and those people we represent.

So I do support the motion and I thank the Members for Monfwi and Nunakput for bringing it forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the motion. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to stand and speak in support of this motion today. I think it is a good idea. I think it's simple. It doesn't

have to be complicated. I think, as a government, sometimes we like to make things complicated, but I think people would understand and buy into the principle that it is a non-interest-bearing, interest-free loan over a period of time with the intention that this money you would save on your utilities would be what you would use to pay back the loan. It would be like a revolving fund. It would go back in and then once they've paid it back, of course that makes the money available for someone else to take advantage of the same program.

I think it could be very successful. I agree with Mr. Ramsay; I don't think we need to hire an army of people to administer it. We saw a few years back where we did the Expanded Downpayment Assistance Program where a lot of people accessed that program. It was fairly easy to determine and ascertain who actually was going to put the \$10,000 towards the purchase of a home. I think we should keep it simple. This does not mean that there will not be other things to add. For example, the Housing Corporation with any programs for their folks or federal government programs that come out. This is tangible. So much of what we have seen on energy so far has been studies. I think we spent \$1 million in the last government studying and consulting. This is tangible.

This is something that can go into somebody's home and I can tell you from firsthand experience, Mr. Speaker, a pellet stove is very nice. My husband had one installed while I was up here last time and I went home this weekend and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It can be aesthetically pleasing. They are energy conserving and they are all natural. The pellets are just held together by the natural residue from the woodchips and the sawdust, so it's a very environmental product. Of course, there are other ways people may choose to conserve energy. So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say a few words to this motion. Mr. Speaker, let me just start off by saying that I support the motion in principle. I am approving this as instruction to the government to look into this issue. But having read this, there are some boundaries and parameters that we need to ask the government to work on.

Mr. Speaker, we, as Canadians, live in a paradoxical location because while the environmental issues are such a hot issue right now and certainly an urgent issue for us to address, I think it's a very complicated issue for us because we live in a country that is mostly cold with far distances. It makes us probably use more energy than any other people in other parts of the world. I think in the North, that situation is even more intensified because we are colder than the rest of Canada and a lot of our communities are remote. By virtue of that, we do use up probably a lot more energy and produce a lot more greenhouse gases per person.

Mr. Speaker, I learned recently that a house that burns 4,500 litres of diesel fuel or fuel produces six tons of gas. I don't think my house uses up that much energy, but even at half of that I didn't realize I was producing that much energy by just living. I think this motion is in order for the government to act on something that would reduce the use of fuel and energy and to reduce the cost of that.

There are certain things I think we should keep in mind. I am not certain right now how we can apply this. At \$5,000, if everybody taps into this, we are looking at about 1,000 households. So I will be looking at the government to see how we can make sure this gets distributed between larger cities and smaller communities. Also, I will be looking to see how this would be divided between the house owners versus tenants. I will be looking to see how this is going to be administered, because I don't know how we can set up a program without having to have people run those. I don't know of any program that can run on its own.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I did take advantage of buying energy-efficient appliances and when you take it to the dump, they will give you a little certificate and they will give you some money back from Arctic Energy Alliance. I will be looking to see the details of the layout, I mean of how this program can be delivered.

Now I have a question also about wood pellets. I think a pellet stove is great. I think the North Slave Correctional Centre has something there that the government should spend a lot more attention to. I think that's actually not a government project and it's not owned by government. There was a boiler that was needed. This guy with the know-how came and we have to look at the supply of pellets. I would be looking to the government to look further into the potential of increased uses on pellets and other added sources.

We have a very interesting situation also, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing this energy issue, I am not even sure who the lead Minister in government is on this. We have the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, we have the Minister responsible for greenhouse gas, we have the Minister responsible for big industry who is also responsible for energy issues. I think it actually might help for Cabinet to sit around and see if they are going to roll out an energy plan, how they are going to work on coordinating that.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that at least half of greenhouse gases that are going to be produced over the next number of years will be from the major industries. That's another paradox of our country and our region, in that we want to save and we want to reduce the use of energy but we are the biggest beneficiaries of extracting resources and energy sources. If that is the case, that pipelines and the diamonds and all the big industries are going to be producing most greenhouse gas, obviously that's one area that the government has to look at. I support the industries, Mr. Speaker. I support development, but if we are really going to make an impact on how to use energy efficiently and how to reduce greenhouse gas, I think that's one area the government has to look at as well.

I do look around and I am surprised that the boiler that we have at the North Slave Correctional Centre, I don't think the government has really looked into how we can use this for other buildings. What I am saying is this motion is just a small part of the bigger picture that we need to work on. I have not seen the government working as comprehensively as possible, but I do look around and see it is so expensive to fuel houses and run vehicles, but I just don't know why we have such big houses and big vehicles.

I could see for the safety of roads, maybe vehicles, the bigger the better. But the houses? I don't want this

program to be an incentive to have bigger houses. I don't mean that, but not to have it means tested, I think that's something we want to review. I am going to approve it in principle. I would like the Minister to look at this possibility, look at the details of how this can be delivered/administered. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I do support it, but I am going to want to see the details about how this could be carried out.

On that note, I will conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lee. To the motion. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first say that we applaud Members for taking this initiative to bring forward a motion that speaks to an issue that we've been grappling with for some time here. As Members know, we are preparing to table an energy plan, a comprehensive energy plan, that will have a number of different initiatives within, but one of those certainly will be energy efficiency financing/assistance of some nature. We are going to sit down further with committee and talk about how that can best be achieved.

Let me say, though, that we are certainly listening on this side of the House and we agree with Members that the administrative burden in such a program must be kept to a minimum. The end goal here has to be to get money to people to help them make these choices that cost additional money upfront, but pay themselves back over time. We think government has a role to play.

So whether or not it will be a forgivable loan program, interest-free loan program, I am thinking we are leaning more towards having some grants available to homeowners. Also for vehicles, potentially. Mr. Speaker, I think that we want to ensure and take the Member's point, that these shouldn't be means tested, but I would also urge Members to keep in mind that there is a lot of federal programming. It's good timing. There's a lot of energy programming to be rolled out; eco efficiency funds. We don't have a handle on the detail of those programs yet, but it is our hope that we can marry some of our initiative and programs with those federal ones so that our money and the money of our residents will lever additional federal investment. We think that's important here.

So we've heard what Members have said and let me assure you that we agree this can't be administratively burdensome, it has to get money into people's pockets to help them make those choices whether they are replacing their appliances, putting in a wood pellet stove, a wood stove or in fact making a decision to buy a hybrid or a Smart car.

Mr. Speaker, let me also say that in line with our custom and since this motion is directing Cabinet to take action, Cabinet will abstain from the vote on this motion. I want to again say that we appreciate the work that ordinary Members have done in putting this motion together and we do look forward to working with them in the coming weeks so that we can collectively table an energy plan that has some real action and provides benefits to our residents who need to save money on their heating bills. We also want to work to instill a conservation ethic,

because we do have to do something to get a handle on our greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Before I call a vote on the motion, I will allow the mover of the motion to wrap up comments. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, this motion that has been brought forward in this House is the voice of the Northwest Territories. We have heard over and over throughout the Northwest Territories, north and south, in the most isolated communities, that this has been an issue in the past; the high cost of living and so forth. We have listened. We have brought the motion forward based on their needs. We must take it into consideration. This is not the voice of us sitting around the table here; it is those people, 43,000 people living in the North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. LAFFERTY: That's why we are here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we must take that into consideration and we must walk the talk. We do a lot of talking in this House. Now is the time to put our two cents into it and then move forward with it. We talk about waiting for federal funding, but we have our own responsibility as the Northwest Territories government. Let's do something. Let's do our own initiative and move forward with it.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we must think in the broader perspective. Mr. Braden touched on four-wheelers or skidoos in the communities, outboard motors and vehicles. Those will come into play as well down the road.

With respect to the motion, I again would like to reiterate that this is the voice of the North and we must act on it. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to recognize undoubtedly our most famous former NWT resident, Leslie Nielsen.

---Applause

All of us have seen many of his movies. He's produced over 75 that I can count and he told me last night a lot more than that. Mr. Nielsen spent a number of years as a young child in Tulita where his father was a member of the RCMP, and took the Tulita Unity Accord as an opportunity to go back and visit his home town. Mr. Nielsen, welcome to our Legislative Assembly.

With him are Judi MacDonald and Grafton Cole-MacDonald from Calgary who are accompanying Mr. Nielsen. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize one of the esteemed Members of our Legislature from the Sahtu -- we missed him today -- Mr. Yakeleya.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anything in the gallery today, welcome to the gallery. Welcome to the proceedings of the House. It's always nice to have an audience.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 18, Bill 19, Bill 21, Committee Report 5-15(5), Committee Report 7-15(5), Committee Report 8-15(5) and Committee Report 9-15(5), with Mr. Ramsay in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We have a number of items before us today. I will ask what is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Bill 21, Appropriation Act 2007-2008, specifically Education, Culture and Employment. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We will do that after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Good afternoon I will call the committee back to order here. Today we are going to be discussing Education, Culture and Employment. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible, Mr. Dent, for his opening comments.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our vision of northern people leading fulfilled lives and contributing to a strong and prosperous society is the driving force behind the direction we set for the department in its strategic plan, Building on Our Success, and in the 20907-08 Main Estimates we bring forward today.

The 2007-08 Main Estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment total over \$286 million. These estimates represent a 10 percent increase over last year's budget and include significant increases to fund early childhood development, inclusive schooling, school trades and physical activity, literacy, college and income security programs. They also include significant increases to pay for the higher cost of fuel, collective agreements and infrastructure.

I would like to highlight a few key activities of the department and how they will contribute to our vision for northern people.

Education And Culture

First, within the education and culture activity of the department, we propose to spend \$170.2 million in programs and services to residents of the NWT. Spending in this area includes money for early childhood development programs and schools, as well as language, cultural and heritage programs.

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood program activities complement the early learning provided at home and in our communities. They help to provide children with a healthy start in life and give them the learning tools they need to succeed in school and beyond. For 2007-08, we plan to spend \$5.7 million on early childhood development activities.

Mr. Chairman, the department is budgeting \$843,000 more for subsidizing the operation of childcare centres and family day homes in 2007-08.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

The increased budget will be used to fund program growth, a 30 percent increase in the rates used to calculate the contributions paid to operators, and a differential grid to supplement the subsidies provided to operators paying market rent for day care facilities.

The budget for community-based language nest projects is also being increased by \$201,000.

School System

During the next fiscal year, the department will budget close to \$150 million to support school programs. This includes funding for specific actions to improve results at all levels of the school system

To expand assistance to students who require support, inclusive schooling funding is being increase from 17 percent to 19 percent of the overall 2007-08 school year funding. This \$2.9 million initiative is part of a longer-term plan to increase this amount to 20 percent by 2008-09.

Specific student supports that will be expanded include program modification, counselling, behavioural intervention, specialized rehabilitation, teaching assistants and specialized equipment.

Physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact on learning. Young people who are physically active are better able to concentrate, have a more positive body image and greater self-esteem than less active students. Physical activity also lowers levels of anxiety and depression.

Beyond physical activity, we know that healthy students, who eat properly and make other healthy choices, are best prepared for the challenges of school.

To support increased physical activity in schools, the pupil/teacher ratio, or PTR, will be reduced by .5 in 2007-08 and .5 in 2008-09. The cost to reduce the PTR by .5 for physical activity is \$1.4 million for fiscal year 2007-08.

To support the expansion of trades programs in schools, the PTR will be reduced by .5 in 2007-08 and .5 in 2009-10. Operational funding for school programs will be increased by an average of \$60 per student, allowing for the high cost of materials required for teaching trades programs. The cost to reduce the PTR by .5 and increase operational funding is \$1.8 million for fiscal year 2007-08.

The third stream of Pathways programming through senior secondary school is under development. The emphasis is on courses that prepare students for the world of work, but also relate to other high school offerings that are more academically or trades focused. Pilots of the Pathways draft Grade 10 curricula in English and Experiential Science are taking place this school year.

The cost of an \$8.6 million infrastructure contribution to pay for the first year of the renovation of Ecole St. Joseph is also included in these main estimates.

The aboriginal languages and culture-based education directive promotes the integration of language and culture through K to 12 school programs as a basis for culturally appropriate learning and provides direction with respect to aboriginal language and culture programs. Our budget includes \$7.9 million to support aboriginal languages and culture-based education in NWT schools.

Official Languages

The department proposed to spend about \$2.2 million on official language activities in fiscal year 2007-08. Most of this funding will be used to support language communities in their efforts to implement their strategic plans.

As we are currently concluding our negotiations with the Government of Canada to renew the Cooperation Agreement on French and Aboriginal Languages, 2007-08 funding from that agreement is not included in these main estimates.

Culture And Heritage

In 2007-08, we plan to spend \$3.6 million on culture and heritage activities to support and enhance the arts, culture and heritage of the NWT, including the operation of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the NWT archives.

Later in this session, we will table a revised action plan in support of the arts in the NWT. This Arts Strategy Action Plan 2 is based on consultations with the arts community and on an internal review of progress. It will continue our commitment to supporting artists, arts organizations, art education and public access to the arts with a view to realizing social, culture, health and economic benefits for individuals and communities throughout the Northwest Territories.

Advanced Education And Careers

Within the advanced education and careers activity, the department proposes to spend \$43 million. Programs and services in this area provide northerners with access to the career development, skills training and post-secondary education needed to participate successfully in our expanding economy.

Adult Development, Employment And Labour

Low education levels continue to be a barrier to employment for many northerners. The NWT Literacy Strategy, which supports adult basic education in all communities and for all client groups, is being reviewed and will be updated in 2007-08. The department is budgeting an additional \$175,000 for literacy initiatives.

Mr. Chairman, completion of college, university or trades training equips residents to take advantage of economic opportunities. In 2007-08, an additional \$301,000 is budgeted to fund Aurora College to expand the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program. The new diploma program will be delivered on a full-time basis.

The 2007-08 fiscal year will be the third year that the department has been responsible for labour functions. Updating the Labour Standards Act and working with employers are two areas of activity that will contribute to a productive work environment.

Income Security Programs

Mr. Chairman, income security programs provide assistance to those who cannot meet their basic needs because they are pursuing education or training, seeking employment, or are otherwise temporarily or permanently unable to be financial self-reliant. The department proposes to spend \$66.1 million within the income security activity during fiscal year 2007-08.

We know we need to improve our income security system. Given limited resources and the requirement that those in the greatest need receive support, it is necessary that we carefully review and adjust our activities.

The consolidation of the income security and public housing rental subsidy programs in April 2006 was just the beginning of a multi-year process of income security reform. The department will continue the development of policy and operational structures based on the self-reliance framework adopted by this government. Together, these activities will fulfill the strategic plan objectives to create an income security system that is integrated, comprehensive and responsive.

A \$586,000 increase to the Home Heating Subsidy Program will ensure the budget incorporates cost increases. In this way, we can most effectively continue to assist seniors with the cost of heating their homes. A

\$141,000 increase to the senior citizen supplementary benefit budget is necessary to assist the growing number of seniors who receive this benefit.

The 2007-08 Public Housing Subsidy Program budget is being increased by \$922,000 to pay for increasing the wages of housing authority staff and higher fuel costs.

We are also proposing to add \$400,000 to the Childcare Subsidy Program budget to better meet the needs of post-secondary students.

Infrastructure - Capital Expenditures

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the departmental budget is supported with a request for continued investment in suitable education facilities over the plan period. With more than 65 educational facilities across the NWT, a number of which are nearing the end of their operational life, there is a need for continued investments in educational facilities. The higher estimates for capital projects reflect the rising cost of capital construction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my opening comments.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. At this time, I would like to call on Ms. Lee for her opening comments on behalf of the Social Programs committee.

Department Of Education, Culture And Employment

Introduction

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the committee met with the Minister and his officials on Monday, September 22, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Members considered the draft main estimates, including the changes to the budget of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment since the committee reviewed the business plan in September, on January 16, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$286.150 million in operations expense and \$40.445 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 budget-planning cycle.

Early Childhood Development (Day Care)

Since the review of the business plans in September, the department added \$1 million to the base for early childhood development. This new funding is being split between \$600,000 in funding for the start-up and operation of licensed childcare centres and family day homes, and \$400,000 to increase childcare user subsidies. This funding will be welcomed by licensed day care operators and should alleviate some of the immediate strains on the system.

However, there are still concerns in communities over the lack of suitable facilities to locate day care programs. Increasing funding for start-up costs may help a few communities reprofile existing facilities to house a day

care program, but will not help communities that have no suitable facilities in the public or private sectors.

The committee will be tracking this issue and offering comments in the transition document to the next Assembly.

Language And Cultural Instructor Program At Aurora College

During the review of the business plan, committee members expressed their concern that the Language and Cultural Instructor Program was not being delivered on a full-time basis at any of the Aurora College campuses or in any interested communities.

If schools are to be successful in delivering aboriginal language and cultural activities in the schools and out on the land, it is important that the people leading the classes have an understanding of classroom theory as well as being grounded in their traditional knowledge.

The committee is pleased that the department was able secure funding to run a two-year LCIP program beginning in the 2007-2008 Aurora College schedule.

Capital Projects Costing

Members remain concerned with the increases in costs for capital projects. It is clear that the only role for legislators is to approve the initial start to a project. The numbers and project scope that are approved at that time have no relation to the final actual costs or project. Two examples would include the Deh Cho Bridge, where bids came in nearly \$50 million more than expected, and the schools in Inuvik, which have seen their estimates increase nearly every year as the details were worked out.

It is understood that increases in the prices of building material and the shortage of skilled tradespeople make it difficult for the Department of Public Works and Services to provide solid financial numbers for large scale projects that may take up to six years to complete.

However, there are examples, like the Territorial Treatment Centre in Hay River, where, in the minds of committee members, proper planning was not undertaken in advance of the project getting into the capital plan.

In this example, Members had been asked to approve a renovation to an existing facility and were disturbed to see, some months later, a tender call for the demolition of the facility. Finally, a determination was made that it made economic sense to renovate. The committee believes that this is the type of work that should be completed prior to any project being included in the capital plan.

This is an issue that will be tracked and commented on by various Members during the review of the main estimates. It will also be mentioned as an issue for the 16th Assembly in the transition document.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Social Programs on the Department of ECE.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lee. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in any witnesses.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witnesses in, please? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me today the deputy minister for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dan Daniels; and, director of finance and administration, Mr. Paul Devitt.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A short general comment noting that the fiscal size of this department this year, this current year...

AN HON. MEMBER: Not physical, fiscal.

MR. BRADEN: Fiscal, the fiscal size of this department, this current year will overtake Health and Social Services, Mr. Chairman. I think the budgeted amount that we started with for this department was...Well, let's see. We started this year at \$259 million, we are going to be \$269 million for this department and budgeted to be \$286 million.

Mr. Chairman, largely speaking, this department's focus is on education and the enormously important but costly job that this is. It is also taking on more and more demand and responsibilities in the income support side which is also a sign of the way our society is growing. Unfortunately, in some areas, government is being called on to put more resources into its communities.

So, Mr. Chairman, it's a reflection that this is one of our prime growth areas here. It is a very necessary one and we are continuing to make sure we get value for our money in everything we do. So with that, I look forward to getting into the detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. General comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General comments. The first thing is with respect to something that this government has promised a lot, which is to guarantee jobs for some of the people who come out of Aurora College. I don't want to mention any other program other than the Nursing Program at this time, Mr. Chairman. This is an issue that came up with Health and Social Services and there have been lots of questions about that. I think there is room for this government to do a better job of working the transition between those grads that are trained in our facilities into their jobs.

Mr. Chairman, I do know that it is now possible for the government to follow up... I think this government has made a promise back in 2000 that under the Maximizing Northern Employment policy that as long as our residents go and get their secondary education at Aurora College, they will be guaranteed a job. I'm not sure if this government promised that, but that is the basic principle we work on. I understand if five, six, seven years down the road that the government... and I do understand that that concept applies to a job in the Territories, not at

Stanton Hospital; I understand that. But I'm not sure if we're doing enough planning to make sure that we make as many jobs as possible available. For example, at the Stanton Hospital, the last go-round, there were 14 grads coming out of there and there were not anywhere near enough jobs to offer those new grads. It could have been possible for these nurses to be trained at this facility because even if we wanted to be able to have these nurses be placed elsewhere in the smaller communities, I think all nurses coming out of school could benefit from working in a bigger hospital setting where they work with other doctors and nurses and other health care professionals so that they feel comfortable and feel like they're trained before they could move out to other regional centres.

I just have a note from someone, for example, where they were a slew of new hirings at the hospital just before these new grads were coming out. I have no idea what kind of coordination there is between the Health or whatever department, whatever the receiving department is, of the new grads coming out of the college. I do understand that we have such complex jurisdictions that, you know, the hospital is a separate jurisdiction, we have Department of Health, we have the Department of Education, and then we have the Yellowknife health board and we have Aurora College board. I mean there are lots of players that need to work together. I think when a government makes a promise like that, I think we have to follow up with an implementation plan that looks at the total picture and there's got to be somebody who could foresee the years down the road and do a plan that addresses the promise made. I think, in trying to address and listen to the nurses that come and talk to us, I don't think that's been done.

I do understand that there's been lots of changeover in the management of not only the senior management of the hospital over that five or six years, but there's been lots of players coming and going, and even just at the immediate supervisor level, like nurses in charge or management of nurse...I'm not pointing a finger at any one person, but I really believe that there has been lack of planning, lack of foresight, and lack of comprehensiveness on how we're going to best use the resources that we have coming out of the college. The government as a whole has invested a lot of money to get this Nursing Program done up here and I think that we have fallen short in terms of living up to that promise.

Another one that I just want to mention is, I went to a reception about three weeks ago, it was before session, where Aurora College was celebrating this new program that will be at the college that involves the simulator of underground mining. It's a very expensive program and it came about because there was a huge investment by all three diamond companies in equal amounts, as well as federal funding. It was a very good reception and it was a really good thing. The program is a software program, really neat, but very expensive, and we're going to have that program set up.

At that meeting, somebody mentioned to me that with the limited resources we have for education, and we do spend a lot of money on this department and it's just been pointed out today that the Department of ECE is, for the first time, moving ahead of Health and Social Services in its budget. I guess that's a good thing because we want to spend more money educating than...Anyway, I won't go there, but it's a huge department and yet somebody

mentioned that there is so much educating going on at different parts of government. We have Aurora College; we have education programs in MACA, in community government; we have education happening in human resources; we have...I understand why all this, and I don't know where else they're doing teaching but I think there's quite a few training pockets going on in the department. I think, ideally, what I would like to see, and what a lot of people would like to see, is all or most of post-secondary education being delivered out of Aurora College and allowing Aurora College to grow eventually into a university or university equivalent, or one that would do both. Because institutions like that have to grow and that could only happen...I mean, I think it's a good thing for it to grow. I certainly support that and that could only happen if...(inaudible)...for education and training happens in that institution and not have all the government resources spread out.

I don't know if this just happened by happenstance, different Ministers set up different programs because they got funding from somewhere, or it was a government initiative and these programs are allowed to grow, or it was just never really looked at to be in the same place. I don't know what it is. I agree with the principle of having separate campuses. Obviously we want to have a vibrant and healthy program going on in Inuvik and Yellowknife and Fort Smith, but I see a lot of training dollars going out of the government, as well. For some speciality expert ideas, I think it's a good thing to use private sector and some speciality services, but in the long run, if we look at how we have been spending our training money and education money that government is spending for the last 10 years, I think we've really dispersed it so thin that we have really hurt our chances of Aurora College even being stronger and having a lot more presence than it does now. I don't mean this in any negative way to Aurora College. They do a lot of good delivery of training, but I think there's a lot more that could be done, or would be able to do if the government...For one reason or another, I don't know if it's a result of a master plan or something, but I don't think we are maximizing that intensity that we could get from having most, if not all, training coming out of that college.

Those are my two comments and I would be interested in the Minister's feedback on that. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have heard that there are some issues around nurse placement. The government still maintains its position that qualified grads will be offered a job in the Northwest Territories. I know that the Minister and senior staff of the Department of Health and Social Services recently, actually just a couple of weeks ago, held a reception for all nursing students at which they answered questions and agreed to follow up on questions that were raised at the reception. The commitment is still there to offer employment to graduate nurses. Nurses will be asked to identify their top three priorities for the positions that they're interested in and they have been made aware that they won't necessarily be offered a position in their community of choice because we have to use positions across the Northwest Territories.

We're doing what we can. The college follows up with graduates by telephone survey to find out what they're

doing later on. I understand that in the 2005-06 class we've struggled a bit, though, because there are more than a dozen that we have not been able to track down because they moved on without giving us a forwarding address. While we try to follow up through the college to actually find out if there are issues, we haven't had a great success with that group.

I appreciate the Member's comments on the issue of using the college as the primary source of education in the Northwest Territories. I think, if Members have a look at the strategic plan of the college that was recently released, that you'll see that the college itself would like to be considered the primary delivery agent for post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories. I appreciate the Member's recommendations and we will see what we can do to work towards that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Minister and his staff for meeting with us today to go over the ECE's main estimates. Just a couple of points on his opening remarks. Again, I would just like to say that I'm glad to see that there's a lot of new money going into a lot of old issues with Education, Culture and Employment. It's good to see they're meeting these head on with a lot of new initiatives that they're coming out with. A lot of these old issues have been ongoing for some time and I'm sure a lot of students out there and families would be happy with these main estimates that have come out. It's good to see that there's more money in childcare all the way around and the childcare subsidies for students, which has always been a real barrier to a lot of education being thrown out the door, a lot of education dollars going to waste because students are just not completing courses or just can't cope with childcare costs and childcare in general in Fort Smith, or in Yellowknife or in Inuvik. Hopefully these subsidies will alleviate that for a lot of potential students out there.

Just to touch on one of the points that my friend Ms. Lee was talking about, the summer students issue, not just in relation to nurses but to summer students in general. I received a lot of letters, e-mails and phone calls from summer students who have been residents of the NWT all their lives and are in post-secondary education in the South, and a few of them have completed their post-secondary education and have sent out numerous applications to government agencies all over the place and have never received replies, or have never received any meaningful employment for the summer or just employment in general. I just wanted to make the Minister aware of that.

Great to see the Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program being a full-time course now. It's been a long debated issue whether it was viable or not and I'm glad that will help enhance and make the aboriginal languages in the NWT a little more exposed, I guess, for NWT residents and for people that want to pursue instructor certification on that level to teach their own language to their own people. I think that's a really good initiative and something that's way overdue and I just really have to commend the department for pushing forward on that one.

Just a point on the Aurora College in Fort Smith, Inuvik and Yellowknife, I just got some feedback from community

members and organizations on why we just don't use those facilities all year round to their maximum potential use. I know in the summer you wouldn't have to heat them at all, a lot of them. Very minimal amounts of power would be used during the summer months, which a lot of, I think, training programs and a lot of summer student courses probably could be carried out in these facilities. I've visited them in the summertime and they are huge facilities and there are one or two staff members there, but basically they're all empty for about two or three months of the year. I think that we should utilize these facilities to either provide NGOs with training facilities or provide community organizations with the authority to request a classroom for two or three months to hold workshops and whatnot, on a user-pay perhaps. I just think that they should be put to 100 percent use all year round.

Other than that, all the educational facilities across the NWT, the 65 that he did mention in his opening statement, I have to agree with the Minister that they are nearing the end of their operational life. There are a lot of them where, I think, we are putting more money into upgrades and minor renovations and I know that a lot of them are going to be up on the priority list of capital projects, many of which will probably be going into, I'm not sure if the Education capital projects are going to be going into the capital investment plans for communities, that they're going to be responsible for to some degree. Maybe the Minister could edify me on that.

Overall, I'm happy with education being a high priority of this government, given the highly technical and professional jobs that are here in the NWT now. Even though we do have to look back and re-instill the importance of trades in our economy and in our small communities, I think the ECE has definitely taken up that challenge by reinstating the trades access programs and the trades programs in high schools. I don't even know how they left the schools in the first place, but that's not to be argued because to get them back, I think it's great. That's just one class that was one of my favourite classes in high school, in junior high, so I really look forward to getting a lot of good Grade 12 students moving on to trades programs after this gets off the ground. I really have to, again, commend the department for taking on a lot of these long-outstanding issues of education and income support and everything like that. With that, I'll just complete my statement. If the Minister would like to respond, he can. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his comments. In terms of the question about the summer use of the college facilities, those facilities are available for rent by NGOs or other groups, so the facilities themselves are available. If there's a demand for courses, the college would be in a position, then, to offer those courses in the summer. It really does depend on whether or not there's a significant demand. Typically for the academic offerings of the college, though, the demand is highest in the fall session and the winter session, so that's when we usually see most of the course work offered.

In terms of the infrastructure that we have, we're not proposing that schools become part of the transfer under the New Deal to communities. This government will maintain the ownership of schools in the Northwest

Territories, so we will continue to advance the infrastructure through our capital plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Villeneuve, anything more? Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Next I have Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the Minister and his officials for appearing before us. There are a couple of general comments I'd like to make on his opening remarks. I'll save my questions or any feedback for when we get into detail. I do want to speak to the early childhood development and the Minister probably knows where I'm going with this already. I like the steps that you take and the money that you put in, but I still would like to see us go a step further and, as I've said before, incorporate early childhood learning centres into construction of new schools. I'm a big supporter of the trades and I think with all the activity that might be coming down here within the next few years, the more we can get our students into the skilled trades where they can take advantage of some of these opportunities I think is a big move. It's a proven fact that a lot of the kids up here that go to school, you get them into a sheltered environment or work in a trade or work with their hands and they seem to excel. They can be very good at that. We like working with our hands and I think that's a good move to start putting that back in the schools, because the students will benefit from it.

The inclusive schooling, increasing it from 17 to 19 percent I think is another good move. So I've noticed an increase in some of the funding that we're putting into some of the programs. So you are starting to listen and meet the needs of the people. The aboriginal language, I think it's a huge step. I'm hoping to see a day in this Assembly when all aboriginal Members can speak their aboriginal language. I think that day will come and will place a big importance on the language again. So I'm glad to see that.

The advanced education and careers, I've always believed that the Northwest Territories has some of the best post-secondary education, education and funding in the country. I've seen it firsthand. I would like to see when we get to the student financial assistance part, the money be tailored to where they're going to school. If a student is going to school in, say, Inuvik as opposed to getting the same money maybe going to school in Edmonton, I would like to see that changed to where they are going to school.

The income support programs, having had the opportunity the last couple of weeks to speak with the Minister and the department on a constituent and having them come through the way they did, I think spoke volumes as to one of the reasons I thought the Income Support Program was designed in the first place: to help people that are going through a difficult time and trying to get back on their feet where they won't have to be so dependent on the Income Support Program. I think that was a huge move on the part of the department to come through on that one and it was much appreciated. It does show them that they will be helped if they need it and if they get back on their own two feet and are able to pull their own weight and start contributing, then they will do that. I thought that was a huge move on the department's behalf and it's much appreciated.

Money going into the Home Heating Subsidy Program for seniors, I've had the opportunity in the past to access some of this money for some seniors back home and it's much appreciated because these are the people that have been around for a while and they didn't have the opportunities for the education and the training that's available today. So a lot of them are low income and do need subsidies once in a while. Most people want to be independent, but there's times when they need some help and it appears in the dealings I've had, the department has come through and helped these folks. That too, again, is much appreciated.

Nothing is perfect, but I see progress being made. The income security part, I have seen people trying to become a little more independent and I really encourage people to become independent and not be so dependent on all the income support programs that are out there. I think that's starting to happen.

So I see some good things happening with the department and there's a few things that need to be worked on, but for the most part I'm fairly pleased that \$286 million is going into the education budget and I think that's sending a good message out there that education is a priority and the people have to take advantage of it because with the development that may be coming down, they will need more skilled workers and I want to see our people being those skilled workers. I always tell kids that I have a chance to talk to, do you want to be the one doing the shovelling, or telling them where to shovel? I think by putting the emphasis on education, that puts the ball in their court and they will have to take advantage because the opportunities are there, there's funding there and I continue to say we have one of the better post-secondary education funding programs in the country. I've used it; I've gone to school with students from the South that couldn't believe the generosity of our government and the money that they paid us. They pay us to basically go to school. I think everyone out there should take advantage of it because it will pay off in the long run and I think the investment that the Department of Education is putting into the future of the Northwest Territories I think will pay off in the long run.

So, Mr. Chair, those are my general comments. I'm not expecting any feedback from the Minister. I will probably have questions as we get into detail and I'll save it until then. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I've got Mr. Lafferty next.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair...(English not provided).

Mr. Chair, I'd just like to highlight what I've said in my language, particularly on the Head Start Program that was initiated back 10 years. We just celebrated a 10-year anniversary just last week or so and we had successful graduates out of the program. They'll soon become teachers in the small communities. At the same time, Mr. Chair, there's uncertainty on federal funding. At the same time, this jurisdiction is in the Northwest Territories. You know, similar to what happened with literacy cuts we didn't expect that to come, but it came and we dealt with it through our government system. I think we seriously need to consider that as well on this Aboriginal Head Start Program that's in limbo right now. We, as a government, need to seriously look into that. Depending on the federal

funds we always stated, but we need to go beyond that, we need to commit ourselves as GNWT to say if there's no funding in place from the feds, these are our options. I, for one, would like to see those options.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to touch on the inclusive schooling, the 17 to 19 percent and also 20 percent in 2008-09. We have stressed this over and over with the Minister and with the department, with the colleagues around the table here and the Social Programs. This is key in the small communities, especially with the behaviour problems at a school, whether they need specialized equipment or a rehab team coming in and an increase of teacher assistants or special needs assistants to assist with those teachers.

At the same time, Mr. Chair, along the same line, pupil/teacher ratio has been reduced. It's great news for the teachers in the Northwest Territories. That gives focus to the teachers on those students that are in class. At times there are 35 to 40 students per one teacher. That's a big extreme, Mr. Chair. So I commend the department looking into that as well.

Mr. Chair, I'll certainly be highlighting the Aboriginal Language and Culture Based Education Program in detail. So I'll save my questions for that, but if I could continue with the 175 literacy initiatives. I've already touched on that, the cut from the federal government, but now we're committed. It's great news for the Northwest Territories, as well, again, for the smaller communities. We've stressed over and over and we've heard it at the community level that there's a real demand for these particular literacy initiative at the community level.

We, around the table, have stressed that Aboriginal Language Cultural Instructor Program be delivered on a full-time basis so they could qualify for the SFA Program, SFA qualification. Now the department has listened to us on part of Ms. Lee's statement as the chair of Social Programs, the need for a full-time program and it's here before us. Again, great news on the department for that initiative.

Just moving on to the Income Security Program, I'd like to thank the department for the proposed meeting on February 22nd to come to my community of Behchoko to explain in detail the income security and Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program that is available to the community and the communities-at-large. This, along with the partnership of NWT Housing Corporation, will certainly remedy some situations in the community and help clarify outstanding issues.

Mr. Chair, if I can finalize my statement on this \$586,000 increase to Home Heating Subsidy Program. There again, pre-budget consultation, we've heard over and over about the seniors' program, but this will certainly allow and assist seniors with the high cost of heating their own homes, which is great news for the seniors in the community. Also, the increase of \$922,000 for increase in wages for housing and fuel costs. Those are the good news that are coming out, but in detail, I will certainly seek more clarification and ask more detailed questions. I'll wait until then. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Next on the list I've got Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few general comments. I'd like to applaud the Department of ECE, I guess, for finally going above what Health and Social Services had before us. So I think education is very important amongst all our people in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to comment that it's good to see that under the Early Childhood Development Program that there's more money available coming out. I think it's a very important program, it's working very well. I know back in Tuktoyaktuk and also Ulukhaktok, I know that there are a lot of really good programs going there and I think we should continue to do that.

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to make a quick comment in regard to the school programs in the communities. I think that we all know that in the smaller communities outside the big communities here that a lot of the communities lack trades, pre-employment trade programs because it's one thing that Yellowknife is very lucky to have the kimberlite program there in place and all these other places, Inuvik in the high school they have the welding shop and everything, but again, I think I've stressed it before that the small communities just lack these type of opportunities. It's good to know that the department has a mobile unit that goes to the communities, but that only happens in the wintertime when the ice road is open and you'd be lucky if you could stay in Tuktoyaktuk for a week or so just to offer some kind of a program. So I think it's really important that the smaller communities have the same opportunities as the larger centres because they're the ones that will be somewhere down the road trying to fill these jobs if the pipeline goes through or this other kind of stuff. So I think it's important that the department look into that to make sure that if they can offer a welding program in Tuk, fine. Let them have that opportunity.

I think I'd like to spend a bit of time here with regard to the Income Security Program. We all know it's a program that's required in most small communities because of the lack of employment availability, but I think that the department should really look into, you know, they call it productive choices as a program if people can have access to this, but again, there's just so many things that a small community just can't do in terms of productive choices. The Minister at one time said watching your young kids at home is a part of the program, but again, in the end I don't think when you talk about productive choices you're talking about choices where the people that are on income support can actually go out physically and be able to be independent somewhere down the road and if you lack any courses in the small communities, you're really limited. So I, for one, would like to see people somewhere down the road get out of income support, but like I say the small communities really don't have the necessary workforces in place because you're lacking so many jobs in the small communities. So we have to find other ways that we can assist these people because, you know, I respect the department for making this available to people that require the assistance, but again, at the same time, Mr. Chair, I think it's important that we branch out and get some of these younger people to find employment and then rely on income support as required, that's fine.

There's one other thing I'd like to touch on, Mr. Chair, just briefly and as we go through the main estimates, I'll probably have questions later but there's one other final thing I'd like to comment on, Mr. Chair. Even though we have Aurora College, Arctic College, these facilities down

in Fort Smith, Inuvik, Yellowknife, I have spoken on this a number of times to the Members here. Why can't ECE consider that we have two big camps in Tuktoyaktuk that are really able to go...If we could use one of these camps, they can accommodate up to 200 people easily. They have classrooms in there. They have everything in there. If the department could consider using one of those camps as a training base for the Beaufort-Delta region, I think it will expand people having the opportunity for the trades that they need.

As I travelled to Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, although they don't mind going to Inuvik, they would rather go to a smaller community the size of Tuktoyaktuk for further training. That will take their minds off other things and they can concentrate on their schooling. The people in these small communities are looking for alternatives other than Inuvik. That's one consideration I think the department should consider. It's big enough to house our heavy equipment operators. At one time...(inaudible)...They offered a power engineering program. That was done in one year. We were able to get a power engineering ticket in one year, which was amazing in terms of the training involved.

You could offer welding. There is no shortage of alternatives that the department can look at. I think it's important, Mr. Chairman, that the smaller communities have to have this opportunity to be able to tie into training programs that the department should at least expand into.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I think it's important that consideration should be given to the small communities. It's good to see that the department will rely heavily on education. I think it's important, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Next on the list for general comments I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do realize that I will have an opportunity to ask more detailed questions under detail, but I just want to take one more opportunity to follow up on the questions I had with the Minister on grad placement. I just want to make it clear, for the record, that I am only asking questions on the nursing grad placement, because I do have a family member from Aurora College who graduated and I don't want there to be any perception of conflict. So I just want to put that on the record.

My questions are very specific to the Stanton Hospital and the nursing grads. The Minister mentioned earlier that the department does do follow-up to see what comes out of these nurse grads and how they are placed. I think that's really important. I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide us with information as to what the department's knowledge is in terms of how successful we are in placing our grads. Just to put context to that, I want to tell the Minister about two examples I know and there are a lot of other issues that I am dealing with and I am sure other Members are dealing with in terms of recruitment and retention of health care professionals, nurses in particular. It's wide ranging. I understand once they are employed as nurses, it becomes a human resource issue and a health and social services issue.

This afternoon, I just want to concentrate on nursing grads. One nursing grad I know of, I think she's always just wanted to be a psychiatric nurse. I don't want us to get mixed up with people who want to be placed in

Yellowknife rather than wanting to go to communities. I am talking about whether or not the hospital or ECE is working closely enough with the hospital as an employer to try to accommodate as much as possible our grads. This lady graduated from nursing and I think they get placed on an internship program before they finally get placed. So she was a student nurse. When she was there, there were about two or three vacancies for psychiatric nurses. I understand if there are no positions there, a new nurse can't be expected to push somebody aside and get a job there, but there were vacancies there. Right after she started working there, she learned that at least two out of those three positions were given to somebody from down south. So there is legitimate concern for her whether or not the government is serious about placing our grads into these places if the hospital cannot even work out the vacancies so they can maximize placement of our own grads.

It turned out that by the end of the year, there were 14 students in the program at that time but there were only vacancies for six positions at the hospital. All I am trying to say is if they would have worked out the numbers coming out of the grad program and the vacancies available, they could have done a lot better than what they have been able to do, which is to put people in places...either not be able to provide a position at the hospital or put them in places where they don't feel they are trained to do or it doesn't meet their interest and such. What's happening is a lot of our northern trained nurses are leaving.

I know a couple who are both nurses and we have lost them. At some point, we are investing millions of dollars for this Nursing Program. We cannot afford to train all these nurses and then send them down south. We just can't afford to do that. I understand there is freedom of mobility and people have rights to choose wherever they want to work, but surely there is a lot more we can do to accommodate them as much as possible, at least if it requires...I don't mean five-year planning; I mean like three months, six-month planning.

The other thing is I have been in contact with a number of student nurses who are really feeling like they are being discriminated against because they are from Aurora College. They continue to see new grads, new people just being hired from the South where they feel they can do the job. It's either they are ruled out because they don't have experience or they are not feeling supported in their mentorship program. I really feel ECE has a role to play in working with the GNWT as an employer or the hospital or any other places in the North to make sure that our grads are supported. For example, they are not placed where they want to be. They are placed where they don't feel that they could show their interest. Where they want to work on different shifts, they get told they have to work in one section over another without advance notice. When they call their mentors, I don't know if the mentors are under stress and they are not equipped to train the young nurses, I have no idea, but we definitely need to review this.

So I would like to ask the Minister if he could bring forward to us some kind of a review of the Nursing Grad Program for the last...I can't remember, Mr. Chairman, forgive me but I can't remember when this program started, but maybe for the last three graduating classes and see how many of them are in the North and what sort of programs

do we have for them. While we can't make them stay, we do create an environment where it's likely for them to stay.

The third thing is I would like to know if we ask any questions in advance before they get into the Nursing Program what their intentions are, not only to stay in the North. Do we ask a straightforward question? Are you willing to stay in the North for a number of years as a nurse? If you are not able to find a job in Yellowknife or if we are not able to give you a job in Yellowknife, are you willing to go to the communities? They should know upfront. If we are going end up having these nurses move away, maybe we are better off to spend that money in providing packages for our existing nurses. It does cost a lot of money to train these nurses. I think it is important for us to look at how we can enhance this program because it is the cornerstone of how we are going to deal with health care professional issues. It's been flagged as such from this government for a number of years now. I think it's time that we do evaluate this. I would like to ask the Minister if he is willing to look at that and bring it back to us.

He mentioned earlier that a lot of nurses are not able to be found. We can't even ask questions. So we can assume that they have moved away. They will be in a category as having moved away. I would like to know how many nurses have moved away in the North and for those that we can get hold of, I would like to know if we can find out the reasons why they moved. I would like to know if there is an exit interview or any kind of follow-up to see what their concerns are. Could the Minister provide me with that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. I will just mention to committee that we are still on general comments. Ms. Lee, your line of questioning is probably best reserved for page 8-27. There is nobody else on the list for general comments, so we will allow the question, but just to caution committee on that. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would agree with the Member that ECE has a role to play in ensuring that our educational programs are working as they should. I would be happy to discuss the situation with the Minister of Health and Social Services and talk about what we can do to ensure that people are aware that while the government has a policy of offering a job to all grads, they can't be guaranteed that they are going to get a position in the area that they are most interested in or in a location that they want to be in.

I think the Member makes a good point that we should make people know that going into the program and try to find a way to encourage people to look at other opportunities outside of Stanton. We know we have tremendous pressures in our small communities. That was one of the reasons we started this program, was to find northerners who would be comfortable in our smaller communities and want to move back to them.

So I would agree to follow up with the Minister of Health and Social Services and I would be happy to meet with the Standing Committee on Social Programs and review what our findings are. We should be able to give numbers on northern grads and how many are still in the North fairly easily. I know I saw that number tracked about a year ago and at that time, a majority were still working in the North. So I will see what we can do to update that

number and report that back to standing committee. I will leave it at that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on general comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Detail. Thank you, committee. We are on Education, Culture and Employment. We will defer the operations expenditure summary until the end and we will start the detail. On page 8-10, that is an information item, revenue summary. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Revenue summary, the department shows anticipated revenues this year of just under \$3.5 million. That's down considerably from \$7.8 million which is the revenue anticipated this year. Mr. Chairman, one of the detailed lines shows that, unlike the last two years, nothing is booked under the Canada/NWT Cooperation Agreement, previously \$3.5 million that flowed under that line. Could the department give an explanation, please, of what is the Canada-NWT Co-op Agreement and why is there nothing in that pot this year, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said in my opening comments, because we have not concluded the agreement with Canada, we can't include it in the main estimates. If you look at the 2006-2007 Main Estimates column, you will notice that last year the same thing happened and we had to bring in the amount of money that we do eventually sign off on with Canada as a supplementary. We are still in the process of negotiating that cooperation agreement. We believe that we will see the same amount of money this year or in subsequent years that we have this year. But until the deal is signed, we can't put it in the budget.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is that a multi-year agreement or is that something that is done on an annual basis, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a single year agreement. We've pushed the federal government a long time, many years, to try to turn it into a multi-year agreement and to really negotiate with us, but we don't seem to have much luck at pushing that. It's one where it almost gets to be the last day possible. They will finally sign off on a deal with us and we have to really go on trust that we are going to see the money, because we, the department, are advancing the money before we actually get it in through the revenue side. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Braden?

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Where in this agreement, then, do the people of the NWT see the

benefit or what is delivered to them through the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The cooperation agreement is around languages. So some of it is for aboriginal languages and some of it is for the French language services.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, if we don't get this money, we are still going to deliver these programs and find the money elsewhere? Is that basically how we proceed, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All of our negotiations to date led us to the understanding that the federal government is committed to renewing the agreement. We would like to see it like it was many years ago. It used to be a five-year agreement. We didn't have to negotiate it every year. We would like to be able to negotiate increases. We have instead been stuck with renewals that have happened just at the last minute and for exactly the same amount each year. So we are confident that we won't see any less than what we have seen in previous years, but our goal has been to push the federal government for multi-year agreements and increases.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not to engage in too much for a side debate here, but what is it then that has caused the federal government to pull back to such a short-term start-stop, start-stop process on this particular program? If it's been in place for that long and assuming we have a reasonably good track record of delivery, then I guess I am curious as to whether the Minister knows of any cause or reason that we have to go on such short-term approval for this program, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have much history with the current government, so I am not sure. It will take us a while to get to the point where I can say what their reasoning might be. The previous government had wanted to take a different approach with the funding for aboriginal languages. They said while they were embarking on a study of how the funding for aboriginal languages should be supported across Canada, they wanted short-term renewals. Then when the report came out on that, the report that came out recommended a totally different approach, one that we didn't agree with because it recommended funding through an agency rather than government-to-government funding. We are insisting on it being a government-to-government approach, because we think the other way would put the funding at risk or at more risk of not being renewed. We think we have a better chance of seeing the funding flow to us if we keep it government to government.

So at this point, we are still confident that all our negotiations are positive on us being able to renew at this amount, but we are still not seeing any indication that there is a willingness to move to a five-year term again with increasing amounts throughout the term of that agreement.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One more question. Counting on this agreement being negotiated and coming through, should we expect, then, that this year's allocation would be handled through a supplementary appropriation later on in the fiscal year, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It would be our hope that we will see this in Supp. No. 1 in the new year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee. We are on page 8-10, information item, revenue summary. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Questions? Thank you. Page 8-13, activity summary, directorate and administration, operations expenditure summary, \$6.826 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 8-17, activity summary, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$170.160 million. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: I am assuming this might be where the programs such as Aboriginal Head Start might come under. I may assume that some of that program might go directly to the programs themselves or through GNWT, but following up on what the Member for Monfwi said earlier and something that has been raised before, and that is the possibility of the Aboriginal Head Start Program being on the chopping block. I understand that the GNWT has had to step in to make up for some of the losses especially on literacy funding and MACA has put in some money for volunteers, but I think with the Aboriginal Head Start Program, it's a long-term program. It's been in existence for 10 years and it has shown positive results in our communities. There is a program in Yellowknife as well, I think in Ndilo, that has shown a lot of success. I am not hearing a lot of discussions nationally about how to save this program and I think it's not a straightforward process when you look at the federal budget. Sometimes these programs are housed in a bigger program with a bigger pot. I want to give the federal government the benefit of the doubt that they may not have the whole picture of what it means to cut some of these programs. I would like to know if the Minister is willing to do some...Where is it at the bigger table at the national level? Is there any attempt on the part of Education Ministers across the country or at the Premier level to see if we can save this program? It may be that because our jurisdiction has 50 percent of its population who are aboriginal and because it's making such a direct impact

and positive impact at our community level, it may not stand out in the whole national scheme of things. We should push ourselves as an example of how this program has really worked to set the foundation for our children before they get started. I would like to get started with the regular programming. I guess that's what I mean.

When we were in Fort Simpson last week for the NWT games, I had a chance to meet a teacher from Kakisa. She runs an eight student, one-room classroom in Kakisa with one student aid. Even though we are funding full-time kindergarten, she couldn't possibly have a full-time kindergarten because she would need to hire somebody to do that. So I think she will continue to have half-time kindergarten for one student who is in that eight-student program. I think that sort of situation happens in a lot of our communities and the Aboriginal Head Start Program is one that really augments our early childhood education. I think it's so important.

I don't know how much we can take over the responsibility that the federal government gives up on. At one point, we are not going to be able to do that. I would like to hear from the Minister what the national effort is and if there is anything we can do as Members to go with him, to protest, I don't know. I am not hearing anything nationally about saving the Aboriginal Head Start Program. It may be too late if we wait until it's cut. I don't think it's cut yet, but I think there's a worry that it might be on the chopping block. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with the Member that Aboriginal Head Start has proven to be extremely successful in the North. It's been a very good program and helps young children be better prepared for school, better prepared to learn. The one advantage we have in the North is that there has been an evaluation done of the program. That booklet that was released last week, and that we celebrated here in the Great Hall, I think will help us demonstrate to the federal government the reasons why they should continue on with the program. The situation right now is not one where the program has been threatened to be cut. The federal government has made no threat at all to do that, but the operators of the programs are wanting to get out ahead of the game and make sure they are not forgotten. They know the program was introduced with a sunset of 2008, or the funding through 2008-09. So next year's funding, as I understand it, is there through until 2008. So I think what they were doing last week was identifying their concern that they want to make sure that it isn't left until the last minute and they want support to make the federal government think about it sooner rather than later.

I think that's a good approach, because most of us around this table know that we started work on this budget last June. I have no doubt that the federal government follows a similar process, so now is the time to start to talk to the feds about getting something into that budget if it's not already there. I am committed to write to the federal Minister responsible to ask if they will commit to renewing the program. If we find out that they are not prepared to, then the Member makes a good suggestion and it's an item I would take up with my colleagues from the provinces and territories about Education Ministers being a lobby group that could ask the federal government to reconsider a position should it come to that.

I think right now with the tremendous success seen not only in the Northwest Territories but all across Canada with this program, I am confident that the federal government will see that it's a very worthwhile investment and want to continue with it.

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

MS. LEE: Well, I am going to go with the Minister's confidence and I would like to ask the Minister to still speak to his counterparts, because I think it's always better to work ahead before to eliminate any possibility of it being chopped rather than try to restore after it's been cut. So I would ask the Minister to have some deadline as to when he expects to hear from his federal counterpart and to initiate an action as soon as possible to make sure it stays there. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree; a proactive approach is better than a reactive approach. We will endeavour to follow through. I will give the federal government a reasonable amount of time to respond and then try to move things forward.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. Mr. Chair, I move to report progress. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. I will now rise and report progress. I would like to thank you, Minister Dent, Mr. Devitt and Mr. Daniels, for being with us this afternoon. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 18: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 21, Appropriation Act 2007-2008, and Committee Report 9-15(5) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 20: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 20, 2007, 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 9, Write-off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
 - Bill 22, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2006-2007
15. Second Reading of Bills
16. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act
 - Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008
 - Committee Report 10-15(5) - AOC Committee on the Report of the Review of the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
 - Committee Report 7-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 8-15(5), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 9-15(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 10-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
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 Tuesday, February 20, 2007, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 18:03.

