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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, August 16, 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. Miltenberger, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Yakeleya

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 Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 29-15(6): Richard Popko - Jim Bourque Award**

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to offer congratulations to a member of our public service, Mr. Richard Popko, who was recently honoured by the Fur Institute of Canada with the Jim Bourque Award in recognition of his support of the sustainable development of Canada's modern fur trade.

Richard is known for his commitment to the principles of sustainable use of wildlife. These principles include humane trapping practices and furthering indigenous peoples' cultures. He is a good example of the vital stewardship role that trappers play in the conservation of wildlife resources.

Born in the English city of Nottingham, Richard's family immigrated to southern Ontario when he was very young. As a boy, he spent his time hunting, trapping and fishing. His passion for outdoor life and learning about animals led him to enrol in the University of Guelph for a degree in biology.

He began his career with the Government of the Northwest Territories soon after his graduation and was first assigned to posts in the Eastern Arctic. It was here he met his wife, Napatchee. They now have two sons, David and Michael.

After working in the Eastern Arctic, Richard and his family moved to northern Ontario to live out his long-time dream. For five years, they lived on and maintained their own trapline. However, the lure of the North was too much for them and they returned north of 60 in the mid-1980s. They moved to Norman Wells, where Richard took on the position of conservation education and resource development officer. During this time he was heavily involved with local fur harvesters in trapping programs and workshops.

In 1995, Richard jumped at the opportunity to become the region's wildlife technician and get back into research, fieldwork and away from the office and a desk. He has become known for his contagious enthusiasm for the trapping industry and the natural beauty of the Sahtu. His enthusiasm and support is appreciated by his colleagues

in the GNWT, the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board and other government departments and agencies. He has worked on many field studies and scientific papers that contribute to our collective knowledge about wildlife resources.

We should all be proud to have a man of such integrity, dedication and ability in public service. His enthusiasm and passion for the conservation and sustainable use of our wildlife resources should be recognized by all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 30-15(6): Employee Consultation On Whistleblower Protection

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories, GNWT, strives to create a work environment that recognizes professionalism, leadership, integrity and respect for others. These shared values help public service employees adhere to high standards that maintain and foster public confidence in the government. To ensure continued public confidence in the territorial public service, the government is considering the feasibility of whistleblower protection for employees in the GNWT.

There are a number of different approaches to achieve the goal of whistleblower protection from stand-alone legislation to regulations under an existing act to government policy. It is important to consider which approach would be most practical for the GNWT.

At the appropriate time today, I will be tabling a consultation discussion paper: The Feasibility of Whistleblower Protection in the Government of the Northwest Territories. The paper is designed to encourage employee participation and discussion in the development of whistleblower protection for the territorial public service. The discussion paper is available on the Department of Human Resources website.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, a message was sent to all employees, along with information posters, inviting them to provide comments on the concept of whistleblower protection and what should be included by September 30, 2007. The unions representing GNWT public service employees have also been invited to comment.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 31-15(6): Hamlet Of Enterprise

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to announce that, after extensive consideration by the residents of Enterprise and their council, the Settlement of Enterprise will become a hamlet on October 29, 2007.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has been working with the Enterprise council and residents to explain the differences between a hamlet and a settlement and what the changed roles and responsibilities mean. There are many benefits to the community in becoming a hamlet, including the ability to pass legally enforceable bylaws, the authority to develop land management and development schemes, the ability to acquire and dispose of real property, and authority and control over capital programs and infrastructure.

The new hamlet will take over its jurisdiction within the same boundary currently enjoyed by the Settlement of Enterprise. The new hamlet will also become the owners of the municipal infrastructure currently owned by the GNWT in the community.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will continue to support the hamlet of Enterprise through increased financial support for operations and maintenance funding.

As well, for the first time, the community will receive funds allocated for capital through the capital funding formula and a funding allocation available through the Canada-NWT Gas Tax Agreement.

The community has selected October 1, 2007, for its election, at which time a new hamlet council will be elected. On this date, for the first time in Enterprise, the community will have the authority to elect a mayor separate from the rest of the council.

Community residents are looking forward to the increased authority, responsibility, local control and accountability that will come with this change. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is also looking forward to continuing to partner with the new hamlet council to build capacity as it addresses local issues and priorities.

I would like to congratulate the community of Enterprise for taking this very important step towards greater responsibility and autonomy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Core Housing Needs In The NWT**

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing in the NWT, in terms of availability, quality and affordability for renters and owners, continues to be a major barrier to personal, community and economic progress across the NWT. Here in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, the YWCA Transitional Housing Program and the Yellowknife Housing Authority continue to see demand for their

housing stock well beyond the supply. The housing authority has seen a waiting list of over 100 families in need over the past three years, with a significant number of those on the waiting list being seniors and persons with disabilities.

Affordability is an issue. Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation tells us a typical residence in Yellowknife will sell for close to \$300,000 this year. That's up 7 percent in each of the past two years. Vacancy rates for this year will be about 2.5 percent, tightening up from last year. The average two-bedroom apartment in Yellowknife rents for about \$70 more than it did in the past year.

At the territorial level, Mr. Speaker, we previously have seen in this House vigorous discussion on the merits of the ATCO Novel housing project. This is an innovative project, Mr. Speaker, that will have seen several hundred housing units converted from a construction camp to the pipeline project and the permanent housing in virtually every community in the NWT.

This would have been, I believe, a very viable part of our housing needs. Mr. Speaker, it seems that this is going to be something that's not going to be on our radar screen because of changes in the way the pipeline project is going to be constructed.

The NWT community housing needs survey in 2004, Mr. Speaker, showed that 2,260 households in the NWT are in core need. That means they need some kind of adjustment, change or replacement, or opportunity to move into something that is more appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, the Bureau of Statistics indicates that about 1,600 new homes will be needed to satisfy population growth and overcrowding between now and 2014. Mr. Speaker, I seek 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, colleagues, Mr. Speaker. The NWT continues to have a dramatic housing need. Of course, demonstrated by that information, it amplifies other social problems, but we face considerable constraints in solving this issue, Mr. Speaker. Developments, red hot economies all across western Canada, labour shortages increasing, materials supply costs have added pressures on how we are going to solve this problem.

So what I am looking for, Mr. Speaker, what we should all be looking for, are answers on how we are going to meet our housing needs, current and future. What are the options our government is going to be looking at to ensure affordable and adequate housing? I am going to have some questions for the Minister responsible later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement On Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's an old saying that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. But I think with this ECE housing transfer issue, they are trying to invent that to say if it ain't broke, let's break it.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, we brought motions forward recently, asking Housing to take the ability to do the assessments for the tenants back from ECE because, Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing for months now that this is just not working. I don't know what it's going to take for the department to realize it's not working, that they should transfer the money back to the Housing Corporation to look after the assessment themselves.

We have 30 to 40 forms that are behind people in an authority office looking to pay their rent, but they can't pay their rent because these assessment forms are not done. It seems to be that this is very low on the totem pole and the government tries to justify it by saying we need one-stop shopping. Well, one-stop shopping is fine, Mr. Speaker. It's fine down south when you have a two-hour drive between point A and point B, but in a lot of communities we don't have to worry about one-stop shopping. Who is this one-stop shopping supposed to be for? Is it for the benefit of the tenants or is it for the benefit of ECE or the Housing Corporation?

I still can't figure out why they took that responsibility away from the Housing Corporation. They were doing a good job. It was good for the tenants because they were assessed. They paid their rent when they had the money. Now the housing authorities are having problems getting clear audits because they can't collect rent for three months back because the assessments are not done. There's not much blame put on the regional level, Mr. Speaker, because a lot of problems we do have in the government start at the top. I mean there's 14 PYs assigned to this transfer of \$32 million. Where did they go? They didn't go to the regional level. I am sure they didn't go to the regional level because they seem to be swamped with all the work that they have.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to realize that they did make a mistake. Be big enough to admit it and correct it for the good of the tenants who don't have to be running all over the place. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support For Families Affected By Tragedy

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay honour to the people in Fort Good Hope in the Sahtu region. From time to time, with our people across the Northwest Territories, it's time to stop, put the issues aside and reflect inside our hearts. Today, the people of Fort Good Hope have organized themselves, with the support of many wonderful people in our region and across the Northwest Territories, to support families, children, grandparents and the people of

the Sahtu for the victims of the plane crash that happened there last year today.

Mr. Speaker, issues that are very important for the Northwest Territories such as my colleagues are speaking on and are talking about today, sometimes in our communities those issues are put aside and we look at the real human issues of how to support these young children who lost brothers, uncles, grandparents...One family in Fort Good Hope, young children, lost their mother and their father; the father to the plane crash and the mother to cancer. The parents are gone and these children are orphans. The system sometimes has to play a role to take care of them.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, we put aside these difficult issues that we face on a day-to-day basis. As MLAs, we are faced, numerous times throughout our terms, to deal with the real hard issues, the ones that really hit us in the heart and tests our spirit of compassion and for some thought to our children.

I want to thank the Department of Health and Social Services from last year for really supporting the family in Fort Good Hope. I can clearly remember a phone call from the mayor in Fort Smith offering me anything that his community can do to help these families in Fort Good Hope. There were numerous calls across the North, from Hay River to Kugluktuk and right down the valley to help these families.

Honouring them today is a real big thing, especially in Fort Good Hope. There are many good people. And this government too, this government went a long way to help the families. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people of Fort Good Hope, to the families and to the young kids who lost their friends, loved ones, brothers or sisters, parents, that we are with them in our prayers today and will continue to be from here on in. Mahsi cho.

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

Member's Statement On Highway No. 3 Maintenance Contact

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

Mr. Speaker, this is the third time I have raised the issue. There are two Department of Transportation crews that work on Highway No. 3. The Yellowknife crew is responsible for the section from Yellowknife to just before the Behchoko access road, the junction. The Edzo crew is responsible for the access road to Chan Lake towards Providence.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the current Minister of Transportation in February of this year if he would consider transferring the responsibility for maintaining a section of Highway No. 3 between Boundary Creek and Behchoko access from the Yellowknife crew to the Edzo crew. He replied that all maintenance crews that DOT does have are employed and live in Edzo at this point. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister was mistaken. I am referring to the Boundary Creek to Behchoko junction road maintenance. The Yellowknife crew currently have responsibility for this section of the road, and we want the

Edzo crew to take over the Yellowknife stretch to the Behchoko junction.

Mr. Speaker, it just makes sense that these jobs should be filled by Behchoko residents rather than have workers and equipment from Yellowknife travel as far as 100 kilometres to the access road and extra costs in time and fuel. It is more efficient to use the nearby Edzo crew. As I have said before, maintenance work on the highway is an important source of employment for the community of Behchoko. It should be a government priority to ensure that these jobs are filled by people from local communities whenever possible.

Mr. Speaker, this area is in the Monfwi jurisdiction. The Wekeezhii boundary, the Wekeezhii Land Water Board also is within the boundary that we signed between the GNWT, federal government and Tlicho Government. It is in a settlement area. Our people should have the responsibility for maintenance and the job that goes along with maintaining the stretch of Highway No. 3.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Department of Transportation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

Member's Statement On Northern Arts And Cultural Centre Core Funding

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the value of arts funding, particularly the importance of arts funding that benefits the communities. As a small jurisdiction, we can be proud that we have a professional performing arts centre in the NWT. This fully equipped live performance theatre is located in Yellowknife, but the mandate of the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre reaches to the NWT community. NACC is mandated to encourage the development of the performing arts from all cultural traditions in the entire Territories.

Mr. Speaker, NACC has existed more than 20 years. Its growth and development over that time was largely possible through volunteers and support from community groups and business sponsors. NACC's board of directors and administration have taken their territorial mandate very seriously. For example, during their 2006-07 season, community outreach workshops and performances were hosted in six communities outside of Yellowknife. Now, this is a great start given the limited resources the arts centre has, but we all know that there are 33 communities in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that community audiences and artists are exposed to a variety of cultural and artistic events. Young artists need to be encouraged to develop. Not all of our young people are involved in sports. We have to provide opportunities for performances and inspiration for actors, dancers and musicians. We must admire NACC for expanding their Community Outreach Program despite an unchanged GNWT core funding of \$30,000 a year since 1983. Over the past 24 years, no adjustments were made, not even to acknowledge the rising costs due to forced growth. NACC has submitted a detailed proposal to the Department of ECE asking for an increase of \$50,000. This funding is essential to sustain and expand NACC's territorial program. Unfortunately,

Mr. Speaker, ECE did not respond favourably. Supporting community outreach for performing arts is obviously not a priority of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I make a plea for the value of the arts funding. Allowing the requested increase would mean an annual core funding of \$80,000 for NACC, and this is still a very moderate amount of money for the value that we receive in return. The funding would allow the arts and culture to find expression in our communities and it would allow more communities to experience the importance of arts as audiences and performers. I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Adding funding to the long-established and well run Northern Arts and Cultural Centre would multiply its value because this minimal government spending would leverage many volunteer activities making these community events possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Marilyn Barnes, the Hay River member of the NACC board of directors, for drawing this situation to my attention and thank her for her tireless efforts in developing and supporting artistic and cultural events in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Access To Paulatuk Gravel Source

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During a visit in Paulatuk, I had an opportunity to meet casually with the mayor, council and residents of Paulatuk. An issue the mayor, council and public raised is the completion of a 35 kilometre plus access trail from Paulatuk to Rat Lake gravel source and the recent erosion problem that has occurred in Paulatuk. The erosion problem seems to be occurring all across the Beaufort because of climate change. I guess one can argue this fact.

Mr. Speaker, the previous MLA, the late Mr. Vincent Steen, was instrumental to work with the mayor and council of Paulatuk in accessing funds for the start of the access trail to Rat Lake. The hamlet, with the assistance of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, have worked together on this project for the past seven and a half years, which I understand was funded \$50,000 annually towards this project.

The hamlet informed me that they are now at a point where they cannot continue this project because they require assistance for further funds to construct a bridge so they can gain access to the Rat Lake gravel source.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to applaud and thank the Hamlet of Paulatuk and MACA in working together to try and reach a much needed gravel source for municipal requirements. At this point in time, I would be

disappointed if the Department of MACA and Transportation decided not to continue and fund and complete this project. Completion of the access road to the Rat Lake gravel source will address the long-term needs for the Hamlet of Paulatuk.

Mr. Speaker, the hamlet is requesting assistance from the Department of MACA and Transportation to complete the access road to Rat Lake. They are requesting that these two departments sit down with the council to discuss and design in which to complete this access road.

In closing, it is encouraging to see the Hamlet of Paulatuk and the government departments have such a close working relationship on this project. I would continue to encourage the government to continue working with the Hamlet to find funds to complete this access road. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Distribution Of CBC North Regional Personnel

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the CBC provides a vital link across the North, linking all of the communities, providing us a way to keep track of what is happening in this vast territory. We have 33 communities as well as Fort Chipewyan. Mr. Speaker, however, there is a significant problem, in my mind, on how resources are distributed across the North when it comes to CBC coverage. In Yellowknife, we look at the phone listings. There are 74 positions for CBC. In Inuvik, they do somewhat better. They have five to cover the North. The South Slave to cover all of the southern part of the territory including Fort Chip, there is one person. There is very little community reporting ability available. The person in the South Slave is a long-term employee, one of the best in the business. She just took on territorial duties so she has even less time to go to the communities than she had before. The paper media in the South Slave from Hay River and Fort Smith are commenting that they are the only ones covering events because the CBC is no longer present there. In Inuvik, they have the same struggles trying to cover all of the communities they have up there with the five people they have and the limited resources.

Mr. Speaker, I have raised this issue with CBC. As a northern communication arm, it is so important to us. They should be taking the steps to redistribute these resources a little more equitably. Ideally, it would be nice if they had more resources that they could actually put out to the field. When you look at the positions that are there, 74 in Yellowknife, five for the whole Inuvik region and one for the whole South Slave, clearly the balance is not right. They have a ton of bureaucratic reasons why it is so and how important it is to have all of these folks huddled here in the capital. They don't even have on-the-ground in-the-communities in-the-North community reporters like they used to have that they would call in with what is happening in their communities. So we have even less community input into this very important meeting that connects us all.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this is not a government issue, but this is a public forum. I know CBC is listening. CBC is important. They should be close to the people. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today about issues surrounding the operation of Stanton Territorial Hospital. During the summer months, the surgery ward has remained closed. It has been closed on and off for the last few years. The excuse, Mr. Speaker, is usually staffing. With the surgery ward closed, patients are being housed in pediatrics. For many obvious reasons, the reliance on pediatrics to house surgery patients seems to be an accident waiting to happen.

Post-operative patients should not be subjected to further possibility of infection nor should they be housed in close proximity to our sick children. Nurses on the ward are having to look after both the pediatric patients and the surgery patients. Mr. Speaker, for a hospital of this size and responsibility, it just doesn't seem appropriate that this practice is condoned.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a proposed plan to spend at least \$27 million at Stanton for the next few years to renovate the hospital. Mr. Speaker, a major incentive for the renovations is to have better space utilization. Mr. Speaker, this is a noble idea. However, what I truly believe Stanton needs to do is refocus its operation on solely providing the delivery of medical services to our residents, to have the hospital fully staffed and resourced. We have been struggling with staffing at this facility for the past 10 years. How many studies, reports, consultants and committees are we going to need to have staffing issues addressed at this hospital?

Recent decisions are being made that just make people wonder what exactly the hospital is there for. Mr. Speaker, this definitely impacts staff morale. Recently, the patient lounge on the surgery ward was turned into four offices to house staff from the medical centre. Certainly, space is at a premium; this is true. But are we looking at turning an entire ward into office space? When you visit hospitals in southern Canada, they seem to have office complexes and buildings near the hospital to house administrative staff. The time has come that the government needs to seriously examine the idea of building a dedicated medical administrative building near Stanton Hospital. If we can't get the capital dollars, let's let the private sector step up to the plate and get involved in building this much needed building.

Mr. Speaker, a hospital should be just that, a hospital providing the delivery of health services for our residents, not an office building. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resources Review

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following up on the Member's statement from the Member for Kam Lake, I just want to also speak a little bit about the issue surrounding Stanton Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I believe that, in this House, it is important that we get the job done based on what our constituents are telling us. Over the years, we have heard many questions and concerns about operations of the hospital, the morale, the deficit situation and such. I thought that, months ago, it would be a good idea for us to undertake a human resource review and get feedback from the staff there as to what the issues are and how we could address them. I supported this initiative because I really feel that it is much more important to be productive than to just be critical, although being critical can help too. Mr. Speaker, I do respect the work that the hospital people do. There are many people in my riding and right on my street who work at the hospital. I know there are lots of people who are happy working at the hospital without much issue, but there are many others. There are some real serious issues that have been brought to us that we owe them to look into.

Now, the human resource review that we have undertaken, we haven't got the results of that yet. We have a briefing scheduled, but I just want to put it on record that I feel like I am getting very conflicting information. On that, there is already a campaign or something going on that things are really not that bad. I just want to say that I am not interested in targeting anybody or anything. This is not a critical exercise. I still have a good will and good intention with the days remaining to do something productive and something good. I would like to call upon the Minister and the officials and everybody who is involved in this study to give us the goods, give us the information. Try not to make it anything other than what it is, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, if we don't know what it is, we can't fix it. We can't fix things unless we have all the facts. On Monday, when we are having a briefing, I will be expecting full information and a very good plan as to how we go about addressing issues that I am sure will come about, about how to improve the morale situation there or any issues that they may have and to make it easier for our human resources in the hospital. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On City Of Yellowknife Land Transfer Application

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT has an abundance of many things, one of which is land. What we don't have is an abundance of affordable lots to build houses on, Mr. Speaker. I would like to discuss an issue with regard to the City of Yellowknife's application for land and the process involved.

The City of Yellowknife applied for a transfer in February 2006, for six parcels of land, and all the land, with the exception of two properties, have been transferred. A year or more later, Mr. Speaker, in 2007, the city's land application was returned, with MACA saying that they do not agree with the scope of the request. Therefore, revise it and then maybe we will look at it again. Well, the city prefers not to revise their application and remove the parcels that MACA doesn't want to consider. The city would rather have this, Mr. Speaker. They want a fair, open process, something that is transparent where they can hear from any third party regarding their interest on this land that the city wishes to seek for disposition. So what land, we may ask? Well, Mr. Speaker, the areas of concern are Tin Can Hill, Yellowknife golf course, Grace Lake, northeast end of the city and even Pilot's Monument. MACA is saying they cannot circulate the city's application because they can't offer the land. That is, they are saying it is not theirs to sell. The city is of the opinion that the decision should be made after consultation. So, Mr. Speaker, where is the fair public process? Certainly it is not in this situation.

Secondly, in February 2007, the city expressed interest in reviewing options for purchasing the Con and Rycon trailer courts. In July of the same year, the city passed a motion to acquire the common areas of the trailer courts and recommended that MACA should offer fee-simple titles directly to the existing lease holders. Mr. Speaker, MACA responded that they would be required to consult again through the IMA on the disposition of lands to the residents and the city. So the city has requested they proceed so the title transfer can occur by early 2008. Mr. Speaker, this is twice that the IMA process is being invoked. It seems like an unfair hurdle that the city is being put through this process twice.

Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of AOC was to see the improvement of land transfer and to expedite the land transfer process. The Housing Corporation received more positions and so did MACA, but what are they doing? Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister later today. How do we get rid of the red tape and start transferring lots so we can build houses? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 6: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure I have some constituents in the gallery with us today. Mrs. Juanita Green and her son Nelson, who is checking out the skylights. Welcome. I also have a couple of special people up in the gallery, as well, today. My nephew Aaron Ramsay and his sister, Julianna Ramsay. Welcome. They are here to watch their big brother, Ryan Ramsay, who is a Page here in the Assembly with us this week.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a family friend, Mr. Wayne Sweeney, from Yellowknife, and visiting from Richmond, B.C., Alison Fraser. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 8: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

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

Mr. Speaker, as I highlighted in my Member's statement, the importance of having a maintenance contract on the Edzo crew from Boundary Creek to the Rae access road. Mr. Speaker, we need to respect the jurisdiction, the Monfwi Gogha De Niitlee traditional territory on which Highway No. 3 is situated and operated. My question is to the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation. What efforts have the Minister's department made to ensure it uses local workforce whenever possible? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The department, along with many other departments in our government, have been using and will continue to ask for local workforce in all its communities and regions that we represent. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that was just the beginning of my oral questions here. My next question, Mr. Speaker, is I asked the former Minister of the Department of Transportation to consider the pros and cons of transferring the responsibility for Highway No. 3 maintenance to Behchoko, taking into consideration the cost efficiency as well as the need to stimulate employment outside of the capital city. The Minister was to report back to this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm if this work has been done and, if so, what were the results? If not, why not? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No, I cannot confirm if that study has been completed, nor deny it. Thank you, honourable Members.

I have not requested the department to see if this work has been completed. It's only now been brought to my attention, but having our base at Behchoko right now is suitable for our current needs. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been over a year, almost two years now, since I last asked that question and the department was going to come out with a study and then come back to this Assembly, which they are currently still working on for almost two years now. I'm not sure how long it takes to supply that information. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek another question to the department and also to the Minister. So for the third time I will ask, Mr. Speaker, has the Minister considered the option of transferring the maintenance contract from Boundary Creek to Rae access road to be under the Edzo crew? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I actually heard a couple questions there and I'll follow up with the first one, which was the commitment to follow up on the study that's been previously committed. I can certainly do that. I'll check with the department and see where that assessment is at. As well, in answering the second part of his question is, I'll continue to do the same with the department and find out where the assessment and evaluation of extending the boundary from Behchoko to Boundary Creek. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the transferring of the contract; the sooner the better. So my next questions I guess would lead to that. Mr. Speaker, after all this time and out of courtesy to the Tlicho Government and the people of Behchoko, the Minister must make some effort to give this issue some consideration before the close of this 15th Assembly. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister agree to meet with the chief of Behchoko regarding the maintenance contract before the end of this Assembly and make a commitment to transfer the maintenance contract that is rightfully under Wekeezhii and Monfwi Gogha De Niitlee traditional area? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 129-15(6): Transfer Of Maintenance Contract For Highway No. 3

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be glad to sit down with the chief of Behchoko. I believe we're organizing a meeting with the Tlicho chiefs some time towards the end of this month and I'll be glad to sit down and discuss that item separately with them. Mahsi.

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

Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we look at neighbouring jurisdictions like the Yukon, for example, we always compare ourselves to them when it comes to things like tourism and the arts, and why is it with all the richness we have here in terms of culture and traditions in the Northwest Territories, do we not put more emphasis in this government on the arts? We're going backwards when it comes to the arts in the Northwest Territories. I remember when I came to Hay River 33 years ago, you could buy season's tickets for these different events that would take place, and they would come in, like musical ensembles and we even had the Canadian Brass come into Hay River and set up on a stage in the school and perform. Now we have nothing like that. We had a Hay River Drama Society that put on fabulous shows in Hay River. We don't have that anymore. Mr. Speaker, why would this government find it necessary to turn down an application from the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre for a \$50,000 expansion in their core funding that would have allowed them to enhance the performing arts and cultural activities in our communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make it perfectly clear that their application for increased funding has not been turned down. I think there's perhaps a lack of understanding here on the timing of how our budget process works. An application that was received by this government after the budget was passed this past spring would normally be put into the budget process for the next budget, for the next budget year, and decisions for that budget will be made, of course, by the next government because this government won't be in place to pass that budget. So the application is still in place; it would be considered.

I'd like to also make sure that Members are aware that over the past two years we have found extra money for the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre. We're aware of the deficit situation and I have advised them that we are looking for ways to help them resolve their current deficit, and their application, then, for an increase in the budget will be considered as part of the process for developing the next budget. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a very generous offer on the part of the Minister, that they will look for ways to help, but why hasn't the core funding to the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre, even in light of their community emphasis and their

Outreach Program, not been changed in 24 years? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue has always been one of finding adequate funds to be able to develop our programs. We're not in a situation where we have ever had excess funds that we could throw around. Over the course of this government, we have been trying to get, for instance, the pupil/teacher ratio back to where it was back in 1984. An important thing like education, this government has been struggling to be able to get back to the standards that we had 10, 15 years ago before we had substantial cuts in our funding by the federal government. So it's been a challenge for us to increase funding. However, over the past two years, the department has been able to find an extra \$30,000 a year to assist the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre over and above what their core funding has been. So we're aware of the issue and where we've been able to help out, we have moved to do that. We agree that it's time to move on increasing their core funding and it will be one of the priorities that is brought forward by the department for the new government to consider.

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

Supplementary To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the point that I make...and I'd like to thank the Minister for pointing out that I don't understand the budgeting process of this government, because I have only been here 12 years but I am sure I will get on to it next term. Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are just on an ad hoc basis looking for money here and there to give to this very important initiative, will the Minister just admit that arts and performing arts and cultural activities are just not a priority to this government? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I won't admit that. This government has invested considerable time and energy in developing an NWT Arts Strategy. After the first strategy was developed and tabled in this House, we also brought the people who helped develop it, along with others, back together to review the strategy and advise us on how to further develop it. Both ECE and ITI have, over the life of this government, increased funding into the arts; ECE specifically into the funding that goes to the NWT Arts Council. That has seen an increase during the life of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicates that this government doesn't have money to throw around and we don't have enough time here today for getting me started on that topic, where we actually throw money around. He brings up the teacher/pupil ratio, something dear to all of our hearts, but that's still no excuse for the limited and measly, meagerly support that's gone into support for arts and culture in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, as a former colleague of ours in this House, Mr. Picco, used to say, a strategy without any funding is just a slogan, and I don't want to hear lip service paid to this important initiative. I'd like to know where's the money? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 130-15(6): Arts And Culture Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, the department has consistently over the years found money to provide extra funding to organizations like NACC and we will continue to do that. I have no doubt that the new government will find the resources to increase the funding to the arts. Thank you.

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

Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for Mr. Handley as the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. As I referenced in my statement, this Assembly has been very busy with one of the potential outcomes of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and that being a chance to use the Novel housing approach which is a design put forward by ATCO to potentially convert some camp housing into permanent housing in the NWT.

AN HON. MEMBER: Bring back Novel.

MR. BRADEN: But we learned a little while ago that due to changes in the project that the Mackenzie Valley pipeline people might not or it's not likely they'll be using this particular idea and it takes off our list of options, Mr. Speaker, potentially several hundred housing units that we had thought could be put into place over the next few years. So my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is, does the Novel housing project remain a viable option for our housing situation in the foreseeable future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I haven't heard that Imperial and other proponents have dismissed the idea of using Novel housing. They've not told us that. They are reconsidering how they'll build the pipeline, where camps will be located and where they

won't. They may use less, but they have not said they will not. So that still remains a viable option. Mr. Speaker, the pipeline is scheduled to begin construction as early as 2010; no earlier, possibly later. We continue to work with ATCO on some technical issues. We still have not received a commitment from the federal government, so it has some challenges. But we're continuing to keep it very much as an option for housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Okay, Mr. Speaker. Thanks very much for the answer from the Minister. But my information, and I think it's been quite well noted in the media, is that the camp housing proposals that they were looking at for building the pipeline have changed from building I believe it was five major permanent or semi-permanent camps to ones that are far more mobile, smaller and less sophisticated. So that was the point of my question. Maybe we need to compare some notes on it. But regardless, we put a lot of our eggs in that Novel basket, potentially a lot of money had been talked about from this government, the federal government; some \$300 million at one point. What are we doing if this proposal is not going to be coming forward? What are we doing, Mr. Speaker, to replace this plan and continue on to look at the several hundred housing units that our people tell us we need?

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

Further Return To Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to assure Members that the Novel housing concept is very much on the books. We're working on it; we haven't dismissed it. It may be less houses than what was originally contemplated; I don't know for sure yet because I don't think Imperial have really made a final decision on how they're going to manage the construction of this, but we'll keep it there. In the meantime, the only other major initiative we have is the affordable housing initiative. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that out of the estimated 530 or so houses over the next couple of years that we would be building, we're now up to 336 houses that are either completed or in construction or were in design. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you for the update, Mr. Speaker, on the affordable housing project. One of the aspects of the Novel plan that had come under some discussion was that we would be, in effect, exporting a lot of jobs and a lot of value to factories in southern Canada that would be prefabbing this, and it caused some of us ask, well, why couldn't we create that kind of an industry here in the NWT for ourselves, knowing that housing is, of course, a perpetual need. So I'm wondering to what extent the Housing Corporation is looking at enabling the creation of a viable housing manufacturing facility here in the NWT that we know is going to be something that we will need

all the time every year and it looks like in an increasing way, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 131-15(6): Core Housing Needs Of The NWT

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, while the concept of a housing manufacturing plant has been debated and discussed for a long time, some community corporations have looked at it. Without a steady confirmed market, it's very difficult to set up such a factory. We have to look at the benefits of doing it that way and moving modular homes or houses that are pre-built into communities versus building in the communities and building up the capacity of the development corporations. Up to now, the Housing Corporation has received more pressure to work with communities to build up the corporations in each community so that they can build their own houses. So that's the direction we have been taking up to now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden. Thank you, Mr. Braden. Oral questions. Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke on the condition of Highway No. 8, also known as the "Dumpster Highway." I closed my statement by saying we deserve to drive on a nice highway. That was wrong, Mr. Speaker. We deserve a highway that's not dangerous. Some of the most beautiful country in the world you can't really look at it because you don't want to take your eyes off the road, otherwise you'll have a building named after you.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation has been on that highway. I'd like to know his honest assessment of Highway No. 8. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very happy to take the opportunity to go to Inuvik and to the northern reaches of our great territory and drive on the infrastructure that we do have over there. My opinion, it would be moot at this point but I can give the Member some facts, and the fact is that we have spent \$35 million on the Dempster Highway over the years, and the last two years, Mr. Speaker, we have spent \$5 million upgrading that piece of infrastructure and we've been very happy with the contractors that work there and work hard on our highways. We are working towards safe transportation infrastructure and that's important to our communities and the regions and our people, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you where that \$35 million is and the \$5 million they spent recently. It's in the ditch.

---Laughter

---Applause

Because they are not getting the work done properly and it's no fault to the contractor; they are given a contract to go by. So they go by that contract and I agree with the Minister, they do work hard, and that's not what I'm getting at. What I'm getting at is the money that is going into the Dempster Highway has to stay on the Dempster Highway and not go into the ditch, because that's the way it's happening and the highway is still dangerous. I'd like to ask the Minister if he's instructed his department to look at ways they can improve the highway and allocate more funds into it? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No, we are extremely happy to be using our resources and the money that we do have allocated to the Dempster Highway for culvert replacement, road widening, geometric improvements, improving the sight lines around the corners, and a lot of the money too has been expended on our passing zones by the application of calcium. So we are working hard to improve this piece of infrastructure. I have driven it, Mr. Speaker, and I can appreciate the frustration of the residents of Inuvik and of the Mackenzie Delta riding as well. There is a long piece of road that goes all the way to the Yukon and it's 670 kilometres long and I can appreciate the frustration of people driving for long hours on gravel road, but our section, Mr. Speaker, is 270 kilometres long and we're spending as much money as we can on that highway and upgrading and improving it and I did receive many, many positive comments during my tour. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

MR. MCLEOD: I think the positive comments on his tour were coming from the fellow Minister. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, with business plans coming up, if they can commit 125 kilometres from Inuvik to Tsiigehtchic. My colleagues were with me on that road; we're still wondering where the dust control is. It was dusty all the way. I'd like to ask the Minister if he could commit his department to doubling the amount of money they put on the Dempster and in particular fix the road between Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic, because it is a dangerous little stretch of road and it's not very wide, there are no sight lines. Would he commit to that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our priority right now is to do the 44 kilometres from the border towards Midway Lake and that's where we're expending our efforts. We've got regular O and M funding that does, as well, address some of the issues of that particular section the Member is talking about, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know it's difficult right now for the Minister to commit any extra funding to the Dempster Highway, but I would like to see him make a recommendation to the department to double the amount of money that they allocate to the Dempster Highway. Would he be able to do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 132-15(6): Condition Of Dempster Highway

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The challenges of my department and many other departments is how to best allocate the resources of the Government of the Northwest Territories. I can tell the Member that my personal experiences on the Dempster are leaning toward extra recommendation of funding for that portion. Mahsi cho.

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

Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services and it goes back to my Member's statement from earlier where I was making mention of the fact that the surgery ward at Stanton Territorial Hospital has been closed on and off now for the past three years. It recently closed again for the summer and, as well, recently the patient lounge in that surgery ward was turned into a four-person office room. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services if it's the intent of the department and the hospital to turn that ward into an office wing of that hospital? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know we've worked with Members of this Assembly around our territorial facility here in Yellowknife at Stanton Territorial Hospital. I must say that maybe sometimes I need to get the information the Member is

getting to help me do the job a little better. He seems to have a very good source.

Mr. Speaker, the area of the Stanton utilization is something we do when we work with all authorities in the area of master development plans and that is something that we will continue to do. In this situation, through the Stanton territorial facility, we've had an additional 11.5 physicians that will work throughout the territory in some of the rehabilitation areas. Because of our shortage of office space in a lot of our facilities, we've had to make some changes in there and those are just interim. We're hoping that we can go forward and put a submission into the workplace shortfall fund and look at making the necessary changes from that point on. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Minister that my source, as he says, is my constituents and my constituents advise me of things that are going on at that hospital. They're staff at that hospital and I take what they say quite seriously and that's why I'm here today voicing the concerns of my constituents, Mr. Speaker. So if the Minister is looking for a source, that's it.

I also wanted to ask the Minister if the surgery ward is shut down, when exactly will it be opening again? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the surgery ward, as the Member stated earlier, for a number of years now when they look at the utilization rates, the number of surgeries that were being done, the elective surgeries being done, there's a number of times throughout the year when the volumes drop. So looking at how we utilize our staff best and our facility, that's been decided quite some time ago, but we would, during a number of times throughout the year, close the surgery ward down to elective surgeries. Everybody remains on call if there is surgery required and that continues to happen. Recently, the past five weeks, the surgery ward has been consolidated with the paediatrics ward and what I'm told is the surgery ward is back to normal operation as of the 13th of this month. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the Minister's source is better than mine if the ward was reopened on the 13th. So I commend him on that.

---Laughter

I wanted to get back to a point that I raised in my Member's statement and that was the fact that from a staff perspective, if the department and the hospital are turning

patient lounges into offices and other patient rooms into offices in that hospital, it sends up alarm bells, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister if in fact the Department of Health and Social Services has taken a serious look at building a dedicated medical administration building at or near Stanton Territorial Hospital? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've already heard, the demand for more funding for a number of sources or activities in the Northwest Territories continues, whether its highways, arts funding or medical facilities or infrastructure or office space. What we've done is, again, looked at our utilization rate and right now at the Stanton facility there's approximately a 60 percent occupancy for in-patient wards. We're finding a heavy usage on the outpatient side of it and that's why a utilization report is being done to look at how we use our facilities best and a temporary move has been to locate some of our staff into some of those empty rooms until we can sort out how we're going to make room for the extra offices we need, whether it's in this facility or another facility. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if you're looking at relocating employees to a hospital, that to me is very, very expensive office space, absolutely. I think the department has to come up with a game plan to try to house their employees. That should be in a dedicated medical administration building. It shouldn't be in patient rooms at Stanton and they should look at amalgamating or bringing under, if the utilization of that building is 60 percent, they should look at bringing in some other services that are currently provided in other locations here in Yellowknife under one roof, not making that hospital into an office building, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, again, ask the Minister what the game plan is going forward. Are they going to take a look at building a dedicated medical administration building in Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 133-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the situation we find ourselves in, if we were to go after a dedicated facility as a Department of Health and Social Services, we'd have to work through our capital plan, get it established, get agreement that it was a priority that it would receive the funds. There is another route that we are working with and that is the workplace shortfall capital fund and we're putting a plan together to try to see if we can access that to help us in our office shortfall right now. From time to time, whether it's in this facility or other facilities throughout the territory, we've had people and staff in places where the space is tight, but that's the best

we can do in our existing climate and conditions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I was reading my Member's statement and I was starting to wonder, is the MACA department standing in the way of accessible lots and, therefore, affordable housing here in the city of Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, I have to try to figure out why the Minister of MACA has refused to allow the application to come forward by the City of Yellowknife to go to the public process, the interim measures agreement. So, Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister can help explain to this House and to the City of Yellowknife where the transparent process has gone and why he refused to allow it to go to a public hearing like every other piece of land should go through? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't understand why the Member would stand up and say that MACA is standing in the way of transferring land. I think historically this government has gone on record for transferring large parcels of land over the last while.

---Applause

This last land acquisition request that has come forward contains land that we don't have jurisdiction over and, therefore, can't disclose that. If we can't disclose of it, it doesn't make any sense to go to consultation, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the land request that came in a couple of years ago was cut in half by this department and once they came up with an agreement with the local folks, the aboriginal folks, they could have just, therefore, transferred the rest of it. But, no, they shelved it and sent it back and said apply some other day. Mr. Speaker, at the City of Yellowknife, the land cupboard is bare. They do not have lots available for affordable housing, Mr. Speaker. It is a very bare cupboard, but it's just not that long ago we gave MACA six more positions to deal with land transfers specifically. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like the MACA Minister to illustrate today to this House what these people are doing, because I'm kind of concerned because we do not have land being transferred over to the City of Yellowknife. Is he padding his department? You know, what are they doing over there? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the land request from the city, if the Member had checked, would indicate that there is privately held land in the acquisition request. I'll have to check to see if the Member's property is included in there.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, there's bodies of water that we don't have jurisdiction over. There's federal lands that we don't have jurisdiction over. We can't pretend that we're going to transfer these over; we can't take it to consultation. We have been talking to the city for I think around three months now to see if we can work our way around it. We'll either have to carve these properties out of there to take the rest to consultation or the city will have to change their request, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the Minister is getting his briefing notes, but I did check the land and, by the way, I got the information from your department. So you can make all the funny jokes you want; this is from your office. So, Mr. Speaker, in February 2007, the city expressed interest in reviewing options for purchasing the Con and the Rycon trailer courts. In July 2007, the city passed a motion to acquire the common areas of the trailer court and recommended MACA should offer fee-simple title to the existing leaseholders to them directly. So where is this process going forward, Mr. Speaker? What are we doing again? Stall, stall, stall while affordable housing solutions don't get done? Mr. Speaker, what is this Minister doing to solve this problem?

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

Further Return To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the Member would read his information more closely because, Mr. Speaker, we've indicated to the city if there is a real desire for us to transfer to the city, we can do it within four weeks or a month turnaround. If there's a desire for us to turn the land over to the leaseholders, that's going to be a new consultation process and that would probably not be finalized until December or January this coming winter, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think the Minister just accurately coined out the problem because the fact is, he's come up with a new process for land that's already been requested and already been approved because, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't that long ago that the City of Yellowknife applied for that area of land and it was okay because it went through the IMA, no

applications came in from a third party interest to stop it. So the fact is, it was already heading over to the side of the City of Yellowknife with no problem, but yet the MACA Minister slows it down. It's still going to the same people, Mr. Speaker. The MACA Minister could do this today; the MACA Minister could solve this problem today. Maybe if he'd look and talk to his colleague sitting right next to him, that's also the area of the city he represents. So maybe he would want to work together more closely in this Assembly to solve these problems. Will he do this today? He can do it today. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 134-15(6): Land Transfer Process

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we've been working close with everybody. My office has even kept the Member in the loop. We have indicated that we'll transfer the land to the city. We've done the consultation; we have all the necessary requirements for us to start that process today. If the transfer is going to be to anyone else other than the city, then that changes the land tenure and that would require us to go through another consultation process, Mr. Speaker. That is the process and I apologize to the Member if he misunderstood that, but the process is right now that we go to a new consultation process if there is anyone else in the city other than the city that applies for it. Thank you.

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

Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my questions today to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It's following up on the issues of space use of the hospital and other health care facilities in the city. Mr. Speaker, we know about the master plan of the Stanton Hospital that's been in the works for years but it hasn't really moved that far, but they're having other activities happening. There have been major renovations at the Frame Lake health care facility there, in Great Slave, and there's also a major initiative to consolidate Yellowknife clinics, but what is happening I think is that there has not been adequate consultation or at least the people are not aware of this facility and why what's going to happen to it and how it fits into the master plan or how it fits into the hospital. I've had health care professionals, as well as the users, asking or making suggestions about how to do this better. So I'd like to ask the Minister to give an update as to what the department has in the works in terms of consultation and public input process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct that there is work done on this and part of the problem is we've worked with a lot of organizations, the Yellowknife Health and Social Services

Authority, Stanton and other groups, but a lot of the work has been done quite some time ago. The idea of the consolidated clinics has been on the books for some time within the department looking how we can proceed with this and if there's an opportunity to move it forward. It goes back into an annual basis where when we do our budget planning, if we don't have a contract let on a facility, all of our projects go back into the mix and get re-evaluated. At this point, we're back into the business planning session and we have to make our arguments once again how to proceed and go on that basis. So right now there's more discussion on that, looking at what options there are and we've made some investment in the number of clinics trying to do some of that work up front, but there is much yet to be done and we're still a ways away from that as we continue to plan and proceed on that front. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Minister is aware of this, but the last information I received, probably early in the summer, was that Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board, which I believe is the driver of consolidating Yellowknife clinics, was going to set up a steering committee that would look at this consolidation of Yellowknife clinics. Part of their responsibility was to find a space whether to build a new space or to use existing space, but the important point I got out of that was that there was going to be a steering committee. I would like to ask the Minister if he would talk to them to make sure that that steering committee will include a meaningful consultation process from the users so that everybody could have a say on what is to happen to these consolidated clinics. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as stated earlier, we will work with the appropriate bodies in place to try and come up with a plan on how we can proceed with this project and how, in fact, we can do that. That is why the work is being done in the manner it is. We would consult with the appropriate groups to ensure that there is input gained as we go through this whole scenario. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not clear what the Minister means when he says "we," because I am assuming that is the Government of the Northwest Territories, but my understanding is that the driver of this project is really Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board. I believe there is a distinction. I am going to ask the specific question again to the Minister. Would the Minister commit to asking the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board to provide us with the information on what the terms of reference or the work

plan and consultation plan is with respect to this project as soon as possible? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I say "we," ultimately, working with the Health and Social Services authorities and when we talk about infrastructure dollars and how we proceed in the delivery of service in any community, the department gets involved in that process. Of course, different authorities take the lead on a number of initiatives. In this case, the Yellowknife Health and Social Services is the lead on this initiative, but, as a department, we are definitely plugged in on that and we will work with them. We will pass on the information. As we proceed, we would, being the department, make presentation to committees as we proceed down this path. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to be more specific, I believe that the government has already approved money for this, so this sort of plan should already be in place, really. Could I ask the Minister to get back to us as to exactly how the stakeholders such as doctors and other people who are going to be providing services and the users' specific information on how they are going to be consulted as to what is the best way to do this consolidated clinics in its relation to the hospital and other health care facilities that is going to be the key component of service delivery? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 135-15(6): Public Review And Consultation On Consolidated Health Clinics

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will get more detailed information so that I can provide it to the Member. As the Member stated, a lot of work has been done. This is not a new idea. Yes, as a department, we have allocated what we think would be the necessary amounts, but we haven't, as I stated earlier, as we go through business plans, unless we have a contract initiated and dollars approved by this Assembly, we have to go back into the whole plan and the mix and then justify our plan as we proceed forward. But I will get the latest information and provide that to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Justice. The question I have is in regards to the wilderness camp that he initiated through his department in terms of initiating a pilot project in the Sahtu region in the community of Fort Good Hope. That was the community that had this program. I wanted to ask the Minister of Justice in terms of his initial insight in terms of

an evaluation as to how this camp is doing in terms of what other camps may have been operating in the Northwest Territories. This is a very unique camp. I think the Minister of Justice needs to be commended on his initiative to pull this camp through and do something for the people in the North. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, let me thank the Member for his work in seeing this camp become a reality. In the 2006 winter season, the Member worked very hard with Charlie and Laura Tobac to encourage them to put forward an application to develop such a camp. In the 2006 season, we had a six-week program. In the 2007 winter season, we did the same. We are looking forward to similar programs as we go into this year into the winter program. We bought the equipment and we are lending that to the camp facility and then storing it in the off season. It is working very well. We are working with inmates. The inmates have reported that it has been very successful for them in helping them with some of their programming needs. So, by all accounts, this has been a success; a success that we hope that we can replicate in other regions of the territory. I know the next government is looking forward to working with other Members and committee to roll this out in other regions. I know we have plans currently underway in the Tlicho region. I thank the Member for his encouragement and want to acknowledge that much of his work was the impetus behind this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this initiative came from the elders in the Sahtu. They thought about it for a long time. I'm a voice for them in this Assembly here. Mr. Speaker, this initiative has also been voiced to people in the Tlicho, as Mr. Minister has indicated. The Member for the Beaufort-Mackenzie Delta in terms of Tl'oondih. I want to ask the Minister, Mr. Speaker, in this issue here, can this be replicated to young people that we have in the Northwest Territories and the Sahtu region where a lot of issues are being dealt with now by the young people through the youth of their use of alcohol and drugs? It has been an issue that has been on our people's minds. Can we take something like this and gear it towards the young people now? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the things that I think will make this ultimately much more successful in the way we approached wilderness camps in the past. We are not looking to set up permanent facilities out on the land. We are not expecting an operator to come with a huge amount of infrastructure. We are supplying equipment which we store. We can set this up

for men, women or youth. It is all about the programming and finding elders who are willing to do this. The department will work very closely with those people to make sure that we make this a success. So, yes, I think this can be replicated in other regions. As the Member has pointed out, the Member from Tlicho has already been working with his community services agency to see it rolled out this winter. I am sure it will be successful in that region. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories should be very proud in terms of leading the rest of Canada in terms of this type of operation that we are dealing with the Department of Justice. Now, can the Minister commit to me and to the House that he can look at laying out some options in terms of how we take the type of camp that is in Fort Good Hope and replicate it to a youth justice program so that youth now can take advantage of this in the coming years in terms of the camps that we have talked about? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, as we go into the business planning process, as the next government sits down to talk about priorities, they will see, from the work that we have done, the reviews that we have in from both the operator and from inmates. By all accounts, this type of program has been a success. There are many other opportunities and avenues that this can take. I expect that we will be able to sit down with committee and talk about where they would like this programming to go. This, in fact, was a pilot in the Sahtu region. We did this pilot with the hopes that it would be successful and that we could broaden and expand the program. That is exactly what we are going to be able to do. It is simply a matter of the next government sitting down in this Assembly, deciding it is a priority that they want to fund. I fully expect that they will do that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will this Minister in this government make it a priority of the Department of Justice to move it out of the pilot project concept into a firm program that could be used in our region, expand it to other areas, involve other departments in terms of having this camp be as successful and be a leading solution to all other programs in Canada? Could I have the Minister commit to me in the House here to move this forward into a high level of priorities within his department? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 136-15(6): Sahtu Wilderness Camp For Youth

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I suspect the Member at times often knows the answer to the question that he is asking. There is work underway between social envelope departments currently -- I am sure he was not tipped at all, Mr. Speaker -- to look at how we can work interdepartmentally, Health, Education, Justice, all working collaboratively to talk about wilderness camps and to talk about standards, criteria and programming. I expect that this will take a much larger focus and have a higher profile in future governments as it should. We have far too many people in institutions. We need to get some of these people out on the land to do some healing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the issues I was advocating many years ago was about the disabled barrier for disabled housing unit, and Minister Krutko, at the time when he was Housing Minister, initiated the project and just recently, in the spring, the new Minister of Housing, Minister Handley, had helped cut the ribbon in this facility. But, Mr. Speaker, the spring is long since past. We are bulldozing almost into the fall here and winter will be long gone. When will this facility be open? My direct question to the Minister of Housing is, when will this brand new barrier-free apartment building be open, Mr. Speaker? We cut the ceremony ribbon four or five months ago. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Housing, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there have been some delays since the ribbon cutting. Some inspections had to be completed. The units had to be furnished. That is pretty much behind us now. Applications have been taken. I understand those applications are currently being reviewed and there should be a decision on who gets to move into that unit very quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I haven't asked him this week, but it was just over a week ago they still didn't even have the building in their possession to be screening applications. So is the Minister really sure that the building is in their possession so they can be screening applications in order to allow people to move into this barrier-free building that was designed for seniors and people with disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can't say that I am really sure, really.

---Laughter

But my information is that they are reviewing the applications now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, this would be a great project to tuck under the belt of this Premier walking out the door and saying we accomplished some good stuff in the term of this Assembly. So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier say today he will make sure this building is in the hands of the Yellowknife Housing Authority by the end of next week so we can get people into that building like we told them we would six months ago when we cut the ribbon in early March or in that period? Will he commit to doing that to make sure we start having people move into adequate housing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, there are only so many good things I can tuck under my belt.

---Laughter

I will certainly endeavour to make this one of them. The original schedule was to have people move into this unit in October of this year. We are working towards that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would say we are ahead of schedule on this one, so I am quite proud of it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to bother with the last question, but because of the Minister's fine answer about we are ahead of schedule, well, maybe the Minister should revisit his briefing notes on this because it was supposed to open a year ago because it was planned to open and finish in October of last year. So maybe instead of his notes saying 2007, it actually says 2006. So the fact is the building is almost a year late from when it was originally supposed to open. People who are in this need said, well, it's okay; we can wait. Well, March rolled around four or five months later and now four or five months later it is almost September. So when will this building open, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 137-15(6): Status Of Barrier-Free Housing Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the building will open as soon as the applications are reviewed and selections are made of who will go into that unit. I expect that to happen very quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is for Mr. Menicoche, the Minister for Transportation. It regards a notification that went out about two weeks ago now, a fairly major restriction on the Kakisa River Bridge near the junction of Highways No. 1 and No. 3. Mr. Speaker, we voted just over \$9 million over last year and this year to replace the bridge, but the department advised on August 3rd that a considerable restriction was being put on traffic. Truck traffic was being forced down to a five kilometre single-lane use of that bridge. According to a press release issued that day, this was to minimize vibrations that are a principal cause of stress-related impacts to the bridge. Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly severe restriction on traffic flow. Just what kind of damage was discovered that caused the department to impose this fairly major restriction on traffic on the Kakisa River Bridge?

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

Return To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety concerns around the Kakisa Bridge have been on the books for our department for some time. In fact, we are up to looking at replacing the bridge. We have been monitoring the bridge for the last year. Some of the international driving courses is the bridge collapse in Mississippi as well as the incident in Quebec last year that really heightened our Bridge Inspection Program, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are concentrating on. With that collapse in Mississippi, it made us take a second look at the Kakisa Bridge, because it is our oldest bridge, Mr. Speaker. It is 50 years old. We have had some concerns over the steel and concrete structures. So we are having a good look at them. We are just asking the travelling public's patience as we continue to monitor and assess the bridge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

MR. BRADEN: Okay. I guess I am just trying to understand just what is the specific nature of the damage that was discovered. Are we just reacting to things that have gone wrong in other places? I appreciate that we want to take a surplus of caution, but just what is the exact nature of the problem? Just what is it, then, that we should be really concerned for a danger to the travelling public or complete failure or closure of the bridge? I think

the public deserves to know just what is going on there, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the issues that we are having with the Kakisa Bridge right now is that it is a 50-year-old bridge. It is steel and concrete that was used on that bridge. It is exactly at that same age. We are having some stress and some fatigue issues with the steel and we are looking at it. The engineers are assessing it to see what kind of mitigation we can deal with the bridge and make it safer for our travelling public. Once again, as repairs are ongoing, we have asked that the road restriction be five kilometres an hour through the work zone. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the advisory that the department put out said that these measures will be in effect until the new bridge is in place. Now, I am anticipating that this is going to be some time potentially through the winter traffic months. I don't need to remind the Minister that there is, for a very short period of time, an incredibly high volume of traffic that needs to use that bridge. Having to slow traffic to a crawl is not only an inconvenience, but I think that the degree of hazard grows in the winter months. Could the Minister advise, then, just when are we going to anticipate that either these restrictions can be lifted or the new bridge will be in place, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, we are continuing our assessment on the Kakisa Bridge. Restrictions will be in place until an engineering assessment says anything different. For now, Mr. Speaker, the bridge is old. We do have serious concerns over the stress and fatigue that is with the steel there and the restriction may even be in place up until next year when we start constructing a new bridge on the Kakisa River. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, is the replacement project on time and on budget? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 138-15(6): Restrictions On Kakisa River Bridge

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is anticipated that the bridge will be constructed and in place for next fall. Thank you.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Yeah.

AN HON MEMBER: Heads up.

---Applause

Question 139-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue with some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services getting back to the closure and I guess now the reopening of the surgery ward at Stanton. If the ward did in fact reopen on the 13th, I'd like to know what patients and families visiting patients on the surgery ward, now that the patient lounge has been converted into office space, where do patients and families go to get out of their rooms and to get some relaxation on that ward? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 139-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll have to get that information. I was made aware that the surgery ward was back open. I'm not sure what they've done to deal with the space situation, as the Member raised earlier the fact that we've taken some of that and turned it into office space. I'll have to get back to the Member with that information. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 139-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister also said earlier that the office space and the turning of the patient lounge into office space on the surgery ward was in fact temporary, as he had mentioned, and I'd like to get the Minister's definition of temporary and how long that patient lounge area is going to be used or utilized as office space. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 139-15(6): Operational Issues At Stanton Territorial Hospital

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once we looked at putting a proposal forward into the workspace fund that we'd be able to try to get something on that, I don't have a timeline at this point. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Time for question period has expired. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 14: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 36-15(6): Eighteenth Annual Report Of The Victims Assistance Committee Of The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Eighteenth Annual Report of the Victims' Assistance Committee of the Northwest Territories, April 1st, 2006 to March 31st, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Tabled Document 37-15(6): The Feasibility Of Whistleblower Protection In The Government Of The Northwest Territories

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled The Feasibility of Whistleblower Protection in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member from Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Tabled Document 38-15(6): Professionals' Statement Calling For An End To Water Fluoridation

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a document. The document is a petition called the Fluoride Action Network. It was released on August 9th, 2007, and it's a signed petition by over 600 professionals with their concern regarding the use of fluoridation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member from Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabled Document 39-15(6): Letters From Residents Of Gameti

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have 37 letters signed by students and parents from the community of Gameti on the Gameti school addition concerns. Mahsi.

Tabled Document 40-15(6): Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Fund Financial Statements For The Year Ended March 31, 2007

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 21 of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act, I wish to table Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Fund Financial Statements for the Year Ended March 31st, 2007.

Tabled Document 41-15(6): Pension Administration Report - Retiring Allowances Act And Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, As At March 31, 2007

In accordance with section 21(1) of the Retiring Allowances Act and section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, I hereby table the Pension Administration Report, Retiring Allowances Act and Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, as at March 31st, 2007.

Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 13, 14 and 19. By the authority given me as Speaker by Motion 9-15(6), I hereby resolve the House into Committee of the Whole to sit beyond the hour of adjournment until such time as the committee is ready to report progress, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Good afternoon, Members. I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee this afternoon? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Bill 13, Change of Name Act; Bill 14, Employment Standards Act; and Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We'll do that after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. I would like to call committee of the Whole to order. The first order of business is dealing with Bill 13, Change of Name Act. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland, to please introduce the bill.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Bill 13, Change of Name Act. This bill replaces the current Change of Name Act.

The bill transfers administrative responsibility for change of name from the court to the registrar general of vital statistics, Department of Health and Social Services. This change will give NWT residents the ability to request a legal change of name through an administrative process that is easy to understand and follow, similar to that in other Canadian jurisdictions.

In keeping with the Human Rights Act of the Northwest Territories, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, provisions in the bill give equal rights to both married and common-law spouses to assume their spouse's name without application under the act. These provisions are important to avoid discrimination against those in common-law relationships, including spouses in same-sex unions.

Applications involving children will be more efficient and economical. An applicant can jointly request that the names of minor children also be changed rather than having to submit separate applications for each child. Any application to change the name of a minor child will require the consent of the other parents, and an application to the Supreme Court will be necessary to dispense with this consent if doing so would be in the best interest of the child.

The bill also provides for two levels of appeal if an applicant or any person wishes to object or appeal a decision made by the registrar general, including an opportunity to appeal to the court if necessary.

This bill includes stricter measures to address identity theft and other security concerns to bring the act in line with current and emerging practices in other jurisdictions. For example, name changes will be published in the Northwest Territories Gazette, and notification of name changes will be given to authorities such as the RCMP. The bill defines acceptable identification for determining the identity of an applicant, and applicants will be required to surrender certain identification with their application to reduce the changes of individuals having primary identification in more than one name. There are also provisions that will allow confidential name changes to protect the safety of certain applicants.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will now ask Ms. Lee, chairperson for the Social Programs committee, the committee that reviewed the bill, to provide committee's comments on the bill. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Social Programs conducted hearings on Bill 13, Change of Name Act, between June 6 and June 15, 2007. Combined with the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight members, the committee split into northern and southern groups seeking input from as many communities as possible within this time frame. Meetings took place in Fort Smith, Hay River, Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson, Yellowknife, Behchoko, Gameti, Tulita, Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik. The clause-by-clause review with the Minister took place on August 13, 2007. The committee would like to thank all participants for their contributions during these meetings, and the Minister of Health and Social Services and his staff for providing this bill.

Bill 13 will replace the existing Change of Name Act. Similar to other Canadian jurisdictions, legal name changes will be possible through an administrative process rather than a court process. People will be able to change their name by applying to the registrar general of vital statistics of the Department of Health and Social Services. The bill includes provisions for which documents are admissible for the determination of the identity of an applicant. Certain identification documents have to be surrendered with an application to reduce the chances of an individual having primary identification in more than one name. Once approved by the registrar, the name will be entered in the change of name register. Notices will be published and certain authorities like the RCMP, the courts and the maintenance enforcement office will be notified. These measures address identity theft and other security concerns.

The bill also gives equal rights to both married and common-law spouses, as defined in section 1 of the Family Law Act, to assume their spouse's name without application under the act. The committee understands that applications involving young children will become more efficient.

During the community hearings, committee heard from more than one person who experienced problems when trying to revert back to their original name after government had caused a name change in the past. For example, John Itsi, a Tsiigehtchic resident, expressed his frustration with the process. "Since I was a child, I have had my name changed four times by the government. Every time I try to get them to change it, different bureaucrats go and check that person and go and check that other person and you get fed up talking with different people. You are phoning all the time and you have to pay to phone. They write you letters and ask for your original birth certificate, which you can't find and they want \$250 to change my name. They are the ones who changed my name. They should give me back my original name for nothing."

Section 20 of the proposed bill gives the registrar the discretionary power to waive fees and the committee encourages the government to make it a practice to do so if the government caused the original name change.

Mr. Chair, this concluded the committee's opening comments on Bill 13. Individual members may have questions and comments as we proceed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Ms. Lee. Now I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in witnesses.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does the committee agree that we bring in witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bring in some witnesses.

Thank you. Minister Roland, please introduce the witnesses you have with you today.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, to my right is the deputy minister of the Department of Health and Social Services, Mr. Chuck Parker; and, to my left, Mr. Mark Aitken, director of legislation, Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Welcome to Mr. Parker and Mr. Aitken to our proceedings this afternoon. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 13. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question of the transfer, I am in full support of it. I am asking in terms of the support the registrar general in vital statistics will have on the amount of work that possibly could be forthcoming with regard to this legislation. Do we have the support now in the existing system with the existing issues we deal with today? Do we have the support for this change in vital statistics in terms of this new legislation being discussed? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in reviewing this file and the bill, the department feels the department can deal with an additional workload with the support staff that's in place. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department may feel they can deal with the existing workloads and future workloads of this here; however, I heard some concerns in my region that sometimes these issues take six months to a year to get the information to the people because of the limited resources in the office of vital stats; a simple request for a birth certificate or issues of certificates of marriage and so on. So I am very concerned. I just wanted to make sure again that they know what they are walking into.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the office, indeed in the past, has had some problems dealing with the workload issues within that office. We have paid some attention recently to how that office has been functioning and we've been informed now that they are up to par on all their files and we will continue to monitor the situation. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister has indicated, they will continue monitoring the situation and the people in my region will continue monitoring this also and duly report back as we see fit. However, Mr. Chair, I want to say one thing. I do support this legislation. I am looking at the types of issues that will be forthcoming in the next couple of months around issues on the residential school issues and them working with the federal government on a different avenue and situations where some of the students that were in residential school who do not have this type of information. As Ms. Lee alluded to regarding John Itsi in Tsiigehtchic and how he explained this situation to us, I look forward on how to deal with issues like that at a community level. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have, in fact, in cases already in that area, been involved in helping individuals prove their name and identification along those lines, so we will continue to work along those lines.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya? No? Next on the list for general comments I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to also add my support for the lines of comments that the Member for Sahtu has already mentioned and to put on record to make sure adequate resources and preparations

are put in place in the Inuvik office to carry out the provisions of this legislation.

This is important legislation. While it may not be as sexy as other things like...I don't know. I guess there is lots of sexy legislation. This is sort of the nuts and bolts the government is responsible for and if not done properly, it could cause a lot of headache and hardship for our residents. Interestingly enough, this is an issue that has come to my desk a number of times and I am sure to others. There are many of us who have been born with a name and never have to change it for the rest of their lives, but there are many others who have to change their name. In the process, governments do make mistakes or there might be aboriginal people who have had to change their names or Anglicize their names, in some cases. There are immigrants who have come into the country and sometimes are forced to, or choose to, change their names to more friendly English names from their original names. Our opening statement only spoke about changes in marital status and such, but there are lots of other cases where something that seems to be a simple and straightforward name isn't that simple a process.

Until this legislation came about, people had to go through the court process. I do understand that the impetus came from the court side too because administratively, they would rather that they didn't have to be responsible for this responsibility and it's better we are putting it into another wing of a government office. But for the users of the name change, it was a rather intimidating process to have to file a court application to have their name changed and it's quite costly, cumbersome and intimidating.

So in that aspect, I think it's good for both parties that we are enacting legislation that would do away with that process. I just want to ask the Minister once again to make sure that resources are placed properly to get this done.

I think the legislation sets out step by step, in detail, what has to take place to have the change affected. In order for that to go smoothly, the staff responsible will have to be given proper resources and training to make that happen. Having said that though, I would like to ask the Minister to do what he can to see that this legislation comes into force as soon as possible. So I would like to ask the Minister as to when we should expect to see legislation in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member brings up a number of good issues that we feel this bill will address: simplifying the process, making it easier for individuals to change their name. As well, one of the factors within this bill will be the consideration when we look in the area of fees, there would be allowances that we could deal with a nil or nominal fee when it comes to names that have been changed where the government had made that change or forced an individual to change their name. So that could be taken into consideration, as well. We are anticipating the bill will come into force April 1, 2008.

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

Mr. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one quick question with regard to the Minister's opening remarks regarding authorities; for example, the RCMP. Is there any authority you are looking at that can be included? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are other areas as well that we would be looking at and one of the other areas would be the maintenance enforcement office would be another area we would notify would be other individuals who are faced with that, would do that as well. Once this is done and the name is changed, it would be published in the Northwest Territories Gazette.

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

MR. POKIAK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Just to follow up, will it be a really quick process if a request is given to the department for disclosing information? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we proceed with this and go to implementation, one of the things we will be working on is a transition plan looking at certain areas such as timing and how things will flow. That's one of the things we will take into consideration. Of course, there would be some cases because we will have to work with individuals and do the notification; there may be some time lag as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Next on the list for general comments I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. Just for clarification, I wasn't on this committee that went to public hearings or considered this Change of Name Act. It says Bill 13 will replace the existing Change of Name Act similar to other Canadian jurisdictions. Legal name changes will be possible through an administrative process rather than a court process. There's a highly publicized case in the media just in the last couple of weeks about a couple who were living in Quebec. I think the bride was from Ontario and, in fact, in Quebec, she could not change her name to her spouse's name in Quebec. There was only two criteria that would allow you to change your name to your spouse's name and one was if your name would lead to ridicule of some kind and the other was something else like that. So when you say similar to other jurisdictions, I just want to clarify here, then, when it says the bill gives equal rights to married and common-law spouses, as defined in section 1 of the Family Law Act, to assume their spouse's name without application under the act. So, in fact, not only do you not have to go to court to change your name, as they do in Quebec, to your spouse's name, but you don't even have to make an application under the act. It's just automatically approved and you can take on the name of your spouse. Can the Minister just clarify that for me?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there will be a couple of routes that will be determined as an application is made or as the process is established what we are going to. Not wanting to confuse the issue, I will have Mr. Parker give some detail on that and how it works.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Parker.

MR. PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just quickly outline the process. A common-law spouse will sign a statutory declaration when assuming their spouse's surname. In the case of spouses, they use a marriage certificate when assuming their spouse's surname. So that's the process that would be used for those two categories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Parker. Anything further, Mrs. Groenewegen?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: So they would still have to make an application under this act to change their name to their spouse's name. They would still have to make an application under this act. It says they are allowed to assume their spouse's name without application under the act. It says that in Ms. Lee's comments. So they would still have to make an application. Am I correct? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will have Mr. Aitken provide some technical detail on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Aitken.

MR. AITKEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the answer to Mrs. Groenewegen's question is found in section 4(3) which deals with applications. As the Member pointed out, a name change would be made upon marriage without making a change of name application under the act. So it can be automatic if the person chooses that result. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Aitken. Is there anything further, Mrs. Groenewegen?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: So just to clarify then, in fact, Mr. Chair, this is unique legislation in the fact that this does not coincide with other Canadian jurisdictions; for example, Quebec. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it does not coincide with Quebec, but it does coincide with other jurisdictions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. I am going to let Mrs. Groenewegen assume the chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): General comments. I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to pick up on an issue that Mr. Yakeleya was talking about earlier and that was the change of name. When we were

on the road with legislation earlier this year, we were in Tsiigehtchic and we met up with a gentleman who had told us his name had been changed no less than four times during his life. He was originally from Old Crow in the Yukon. His family had moved east and settled in Tsiigehtchic. He has had an interesting time in trying to understand who is responsible for getting him and his family their name back. Is it the federal government? Is it the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs? Is it our government? Who can this individual talk to to get his name back for himself and for his family? I think that is an identity we all have. We are born into this world as our name. It is very important that he gets his name back, Madam Chair. So I would like to know that.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, unfortunately, this is more common than a lot of people realize. In the North, many years ago, the federal government actually went around and assigned people new names because they could not write or pronounce the aboriginal names of people in the Territories. At least, that is what has been said. I have had that told to me as well. In the Mackenzie Delta, there was a commission that went around and gave individuals English names. That can be very difficult now to try to go back to some of those. But the process we will have established once this comes into force, it will clarify how that can be done in changing back to the person's name, the birth name they were given. Their aboriginal name as well would be looked at. As for the actual process of what support could be in place, we would have to work that out in the transition plan of what is available. If it goes back to what we can do with the federal government or whose responsibility it is, well, obviously, with the federal government setting that up and going around and having people's names changed, it was very difficult. I think, in the existing system, with the old act in place and having to go to court, it is very difficult when you are from a small community, isolated, trying to get all of the pieces lined up so you can provide the documentation and go before the court, pay the fees and follow through in that process. It makes it quite difficult. This process would make it a bit easier. There still needs to be some documentation, but it would make it a bit easier and the process simpler to go back to that person's original name. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad to hear the Minister say that it is an important matter. I just want to understand a little bit better. I believe the committee is asking the government to make it a practice to waive the \$250 fee for individuals who have had their name changed by no fault of their own, by the government or by whoever showed up in the community years ago and said your name is going to change from this to that. It is not their fault. I don't think they should, under any circumstance, have to pay \$250 to have their name changed back to what it originally was. In fact, given specifically this gentleman, his heartfelt explanation of what happened to him, I would encourage the government to set up at least a contact person. When you are an individual person in a community like Tsiigehtchic, it is very hard to get the documents, to talk to somebody, to understand the system, to find out what is going on, and how to make things right and get your name changed. I

think if we had a single point of contact for individuals who are in the same situation as Mr. Itsi is in Tsiigehtchic, that would make things a lot easier for residents in our communities who have had this practice done to them in the past and can get their original name back. I would like to ask the Minister, is the department going to take a look at setting up a single point of contact for individuals who want to get their name back? Can we do that? Can we assign that task to a person in the Inuvik office, South Slave office, a person in the North Slave office, so that individuals in the small communities know who to talk to? Because right now, they get the run around. They talk to six different people and get six different answers on who is responsible. Let's try to fix this, Madam Chair.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in fact, with this bill going ahead and dealing with it through the health services administration office up in Inuvik, it is one office. The workload is broken up between individuals in that office for different areas. So this would fall into that pattern and would make it much simpler as we proceed forward.

Yes, as I stated earlier, on the issue of when names were changed by no fault of their own or an action by the government through regulations, we would look at establishing a process where, if it is by no fault of their own, we could put a nominal fee in or no fee at all. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is fine and good, but who can an individual call today, a gentleman in Tsiigehtchic, who can they call specifically today to address the issue of their name being changed no less than four times and wanting it changed back to their original name? Who in the bureaucracy can they call today so that they can have one point of contact and they can get the issue dealt with? Is there anybody they can talk to to get that rectified? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the process as of today is under the old act and the courts would be the place or the avenue that would proceed. As of April 1, 2008, it will be through the Department of Health and Social Services vital statistics area, the health services administration. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I should rephrase my question a little bit differently. Under the new legislation, is there going to be a single point of contact for individuals who have had their name changed so that they can phone somebody? There should be somebody in each and every region in the Northwest Territories so that there is that one point of contact so that a file can be developed and their name could be changed back to what it originally was.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we have only one office that deals with these functions. It is the health services administration office up in Inuvik. As it is stated, during the process of establishing this and coming into force, we will have a transition plan put in place. As I am aware of today, the way the office works, different files are given to different individuals in that office. Once that is done, we can clearly make that available to all people in the Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I heard a commitment from the Minister to have a single point of contact. If it is in Inuvik, it is in Inuvik. If we can't have one in each region, it is okay if there is a phone number. For an individual to phone when it goes back 50 or 60 years when their name was changed, I think it is very important that they have some peace of mind that somebody somewhere is going to care and somebody somewhere is actually going to do something about it and get their name changed back to what it originally was. I am glad to hear the Minister say that. By the looks of things, under the new legislation, that will happen through the transition. I am very happy to hear that, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, as we go through a transition plan and implementation in putting this act into force, we will, as the office has already shown a number of files they have dedicated to different individuals in that office and will be working with them as we go through implementation in having this act come into force. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments. Detail. There are 26 clauses in this bill. I will ask Members if they will turn in their binders to Bill 17, Change of Name Act. Sorry, I have no glasses on. Bill 13, Change of Name Act. Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 12.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): If I can ask Members, when we are calling out the clauses, does it help to read out the subtitles or the area that clauses are related to? Okay. Clause 13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 14.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 15.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 16.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 18.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 20.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 21.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 22.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 23.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 24.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 25.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Clause 26.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Does the committee agree that Bill 13 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Bill 13 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Minister Roland, Mr. Aiken, Mr. Parker, for your help today. Thank you.

Okay, Members, if you can turn to Bill 14, Employment Standards Act. I would ask Minister Charles Dent if he would please provide his opening remarks on this bill. Minister Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to introduce Bill 14, Employment Standards Act. The purpose of this legislation is to modernize the statutory framework for employment standards in the Northwest Territories. To that end, this bill proposes to replace the Labour Standards Act, the Employment Agencies Act and the Wages Recovery Act with comprehensive legislation for employment standards.

This bill is based primarily on consultation that was conducted with the public in late 2004 by the Department of Justice. The department received feedback from different stakeholders, including GNWT departments, employers and employer organizations, labour organizations and individual stakeholders. The general consensus of stakeholders was that the regulatory framework for employment standards in the Northwest Territories was in need of change.

The proposed bill is substantively similar to existing legislation with regard to the regulation of employment standards and employment agencies. In addition, the bill:

- exempts certain employers and employees, or classes of employers and employees, from the general provisions of the act, by regulation;
- incorporates provisions respecting the employment of young persons;
- establishes new days of rest requirements;
- allows employees to receive lieu time with pay instead of overtime where the employer agrees;
- provides for the establishment of a minimum wage, by regulation;
- requires that employees be granted an annual vacation with vacation pay within six months after the first year of employment;

- establishes the right of employees to unpaid compassionate leave, bereavement leave, sick leave and court leave;
- requires that employers give advance notice of termination to affected employees and their trade union where large numbers of employees are to be terminated at one time;
- establishes a new complaints process and provides for the resolution of complaints by an employment standards officer;
- establishes a new appeal process by which individual adjudicators hear appeals of decisions made by the employment standards officer;
- establishes the priority of employee wages over other claims against an employer to a maximum amount of \$7,500 per employee; and
- restricts access to information provided under the act that could identify the parties to a complaint or appeal.

Madam Chair, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs for their assistance and constructive suggestions to improve the bill. I trust that the members of the committee will agree that a new Employment Standards Act is necessary to provide a modern, clear and coherent regulatory framework for employment standards in the Northwest Territories.

I will be pleased to answer any questions the members of this committee may have.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Dent. At this time, I will ask the member of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Mr. Yakeleya, if he would please provide the committee's comments on this legislation. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs, in association with the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, conducted public hearings on Bill 14, Employment Standards Act, in Yellowknife on June 6th and 7th as well as on August 13, 2007, and in Behchoko at the union meeting on June 6, 2007. The committee then split into two committees to conduct public hearings in Fort Smith and Inuvik on June 11, 2007; Hay River and Tsiigehtchic on June 12, 2007; and Jean Marie and Tulita on June 13, 2007; and in Fort Simpson and Gameti on June 14, 2007. A clause-by-clause review with the Minister took place on August 13, 2007.

The committee would like to thank everyone who took the time to make presentations and make their views on this important legislation known to the committee. We would also like to thank the Minister and the staff of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment as well as staff of the legislation division of the Department of Justice for their collaborative efforts in addressing some of the problems with the legislation that were identified while the committee had possession of the bill.

This concludes the comments of the Standing Committee on Social Programs. Individual members may have comments as we proceed. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. At this time, I would ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Minister Dent.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms, please, if he would escort the witnesses to the witness table.

Minister Dent, for the record, could you please introduce your witnesses?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my left I have Janis Cooper, legislative counsel for the Department of Justice; and on my right, Blair Barbour, who is legislative policy advisor, policy and planning, Education, Culture and Employment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Dent. General comments. General comments on the Employment Standards Act. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just wondering if the Minister could provide us with a definition of construction. If you look at plumbers, for example, some work in construction sites and then there are some who do service work. They are both plumbers but only one works in construction. I am just wondering if the Minister could provide us with a definition of construction.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The intention is to make that sort of definition in the regulations. That will happen after consultation after the act is passed and before it is brought into force.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just wondering if the Minister could just provide who he is going to be consulting with when he talks about consultation.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. There will have to be a broad consultative process before the act is brought into force. It will include the trade organizations, employers' organizations, and there will be an opportunity for the public to comment as well.

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

MR. RAMSAY: I have just one further question, Madam Chair. In the definitions, there is a definition of work of construction but not specifically of construction. I am just wondering why you wouldn't have a definition for construction in the legislation itself.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Perhaps, Madam Chair, I could have Mr. Barbour answer that question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Barbour.

MR. BARBOUR: Thank you. What we are planning on doing is defining construction in a context of the notice of termination exemptions. Currently, we define the notice of termination exemption requirements in the regulations and the idea would be to define it just with respect to the issue of the requirement to provide notice of termination. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This legislation is quite substantive and it's packaged nice and neat now, but it went through lots of discussions and reviews and amendments in the public process and the committee process. As the Minister mentioned in his statement, I think it was a very good productive working process. I just want to ask a question following up on the questions from the Member from Kam Lake. I'm glad he raised that here, because it's something that he raised I believe during the committee process as well. We have received communications from the Construction Association on that. I believe we had a presentation from an individual who is associated with the Construction Association, as well, about the definition of construction. So just to put it on record, could I ask the Minister or his officials whether or not, in his opinion, that the changes that they're making with respect to the definition of construction, whether it's worker construction or construction or however they're doing it, that that will address, then, some of the concerns that they had. I think that the Minister is aware of the fact that we have had recent examples of where an employer of a plumber who went to work at a construction site got caught up in that cross-jurisdiction situation. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm advised that the department was aware of the original submission put in by the Construction Association. The intention is to make sure that the definitions are clarified and not substantively changed over what is currently understood by the definitions.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask the Minister or his officials whether there has been any consultation with the Construction Association to make sure that this approach is acceptable to them?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the reasons that it's being left to regulations is that it

allows that consultation to take place, but the Construction Association will be involved in the consultative process, yes.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That has been my understanding. So could I ask the Minister just to get some information on when that consultation on the regulatory wording and the meaning of that will take place? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. After the bill is passed, the intention is to bring it into force as quickly as possible. So the consultation is planned for this fall.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a couple of provisions here that I wanted to see a bit more information on this otherwise very progressive bill. Mr. Chairman, the bill brings in a couple of areas that provides for more clarification. This is specifically in the areas of compassionate and bereavement leave. The question that I wanted to pose regarded the definition of family, as these two provisions would allow and there is contained in the act a definition of it and I understand also that this is consistent with federal labour legislation. Of course, it's spouses and children of employees and other persons. There was a member of a class of persons described by federal enactment, etcetera, but provision (e) in the definition says any other person who is a member of a class of persons described by regulation. Regulations, Mr. Chairman, as we know, tend to be written after an act is passed or a bill is passed by this Assembly. So I was wondering if the Minister is contemplating that there will be additional definitions of family allowed in this area in terms of bereavement and compassionate leave. I know that this has some special application here in the North, Mr. Chairman, where our definition or our consideration of family has different cultural circumstances attached to it. So how does the Minister propose to be handling a definition of family as regards to the regulations, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason this has been written this way is to recognize that the definition of family may be different in the North than what you might find elsewhere and while the family has been defined under compassionate leave pretty much along the way that it is now recognized by the federal government, that's been done just to ensure that where employment insurance would kick in, it's a consistent definition here for us; but under bereavement leave, the expectation is that we will have a definition that is much broader, recognizing the northern reality or a broader understanding of what makes up a family and ensuring the people are a broader range of family members then able to take bereavement leave that might be the case for compassionate leave.

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

MR. BRADEN: The department engaged in quite a considerable consultation process already leading up to this bill and from everything I saw, it was a pretty good process, Mr. Chairman. Will there be further consultation or attempts to see what the general public thinks should be brought in for defining family for this bereavement leave aspect? Is there going to be another round of discussions, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the expectation was that there would be some public discussion about that issue. One manner might be, for instance, to take a stab at a draft of what the regulation might look like and then go out and ask people have we got it right. That process is not dissimilar from what was undertaken in the first place and I think worked fairly well to stimulate discussion.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask in another area a little bit about the minimum wage provisions. This bill proposes that minimum wage from now on could be set by the Minister in regulation, which is a change. It takes it out of the legislative realm. On occasion, legislatures do go in and amend minimum wage to accommodate for things like the activity or lack of it in the economy or rates of inflation. It's not done very often. I think I remember in the last eight years, I don't know that it's come up more than once in my term here, but I wanted to, and I have no objection to it becoming more or less than an administrative change rather than a political one, but I wanted to ask what kind of indicators or triggers or thresholds the department would use in deciding when it was time to go in and change the minimum wage? What would be the indicators that would bring this about in this closed process, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just on one of the points that Mr. Braden was making, or just to provide some clarification perhaps, Nunavut is the only other jurisdiction in Canada that still uses legislation to set minimum wage. So in this change we are expecting that we are making it easier for the government to make smaller changes more regularly, which we think is a more appropriate way in which to handle this. I would expect that the government would annually take a look at what has been happening across the board with wages and embark on a process of consulting with chambers of commerce and trade unions about potentially changing the minimum wage.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Finally, in the area of the appeals process under this bill, we are proposing a fairly substantive change there and that is going from a panel to a sole adjudicator model. I wanted to ask the Minister of our ability or intention to ask those

people who are currently serving on the appeals panel to gauge their interest in taking on the job as a sole adjudicator and, more specifically, Mr. Chairman, what kinds of training and expertise we would be offering or expecting these people to have before taking them on as sole adjudicators. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The existing members of the Labour Standards Board will be considered adjudicators by the terms of this bill. So their appointments continue automatically as sole adjudicators. We are hoping that they are prepared to continue to act as adjudicators so that we can take advantage of the experience and knowledge that they have already gained on the job. The expectation will be that there will be regular training sessions for adjudicators, offering them a chance to come together so they get to know each other and meet face to face at least annually for training sessions and that would facilitate not only the training that they would be expected to get, but for them to get to know each other so that they are comfortable in cases where they may want to seek another opinion of an adjudicator; they're comfortable phoning or meeting with another adjudicator to discuss the case. I mean there's no reason that that couldn't happen, should an adjudicator wish to seek counsel from somebody else who is also an adjudicator in our system. So we expect that through collegial contact, through training, that we will ensure that people still have the ability to work together, if necessary, in order to get the job done better.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden, thank you. General comments. Does committee agree to go into detail? Clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can committee turn to page 11, please? Bill 14. Okay. Committed, clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 11, Bill 14, Employment Standards Act, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 26.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 8.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 27.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 9.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 28.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 10.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 29.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 11.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 30.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 12.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 31.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 13.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 32.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 14.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 33.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 15.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 34.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 16.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 35.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 17.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 36.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 18.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 37.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 19.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 38.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 20.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 39.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 21.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 40.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 22.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 41.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 23.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 42.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 24.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 43.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 25.	SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 44.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 45.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 46.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 47.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 48.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 49.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 50.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 51.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 52.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 53.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 54.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 55.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 56.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 57.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 58.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 59.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 60.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 61.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 62.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 63.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 64.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 65.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 66.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 67.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 68.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 69.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 70.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 71.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 72.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 73.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 74.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 75.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 76.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 77.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 78.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 79.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 80.
SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.
CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 81.

- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Excuse me, clause 81.1.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 82.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 83.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 84.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 85.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 86.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 87.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 88.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 89.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 90.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 91.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 92.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 93.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 94.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 94.1.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 95.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 96.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 97.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 98.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 99.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 100.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 101.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 102.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 103.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 104.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 105.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 106.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 107.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 108.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 110. Oh, I'm sorry. Clause 109.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 110.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 111.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 112.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 113.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Clause 114.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.
- CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** The bill as a whole.
- SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree that Bill 14 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 14 is now ready for third reading. At this time, I'd like to thank the Minister and his staff. Would the Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the witnesses out. Thank you.

Thank you. We are now going into Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible, Mr. Dent, if he has any opening remarks. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. The purpose of this legislation is to increase the aggregate amount that a student is eligible to borrow under the Student Financial Assistance program.

The current aggregate amount that a student is eligible to borrow under the Student Financial Assistance Act is \$47,000. The amendment proposes to increase this amount to \$60,000. This change will allow the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to increase benefit levels under the SFA program by raising the monthly repayable loan limit from \$1,100 to \$1,400. This will mean that students in a typical eight-month program will see benefit levels increase from \$8,800 to \$11,200 per academic year.

We trust that the members of the committee will agree that this amendment is appropriate and will benefit northern students.

Mr. Chairman, I will be pleased to answer any questions the members of the committee may have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. As Bill 19 was referred to Committee of the Whole directly after second reading, there are no committee comments on the bill. Mr. Dent, would you like to bring in witnesses?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Would the Sergeant-at-Arms please bring in the witnesses. Thank you.

Thank you. Mr. Dent. At this time, can you please introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left, I have Ms. Melody McLeod, director of income security, Education, Culture and Employment; on my right is Mr. Ian Rennie, legislative counsel, Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. At this time, is there any general comments? Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome the Minister and his staff to the proceedings this afternoon. Welcome. I am very glad to see that the department has gone forward with this initiative on increasing the limit from \$47,000 to \$60,000. I just wanted to mention to the Minister that I think this is a step in the right direction, but perhaps what we should be looking at is setting up a separate fund for post-graduate studies

specifically for law school, med school and other post-graduate initiatives so that residents here...The cost is continuing to increase. Tuition fees across the country are going up, especially for post-graduate studies. I think it's important that the ministry of Education, Culture and Employment have an eye to the future and try to ensure that if our students want to go to med school, they want to go to law school, they want to take post-graduate studies, there is a program there. I believe the government should be funding students, if they are going to come back here, similar to the exercise that we have in place now, the remission program. It should be available for post-graduate studies, too. I think we should be funding anybody who wants to go to school and wants to come back to the Northwest Territories to work. I think a program like that for post-graduate studies would be much welcomed. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department needs to, on a regular basis, ensure that our program is in line with getting a graduate or post-graduate degree. So I think it is imperative that this sort of change take place on a regular basis. I expect that it would probably be a good idea to take a look, as we just did with the Employment Standards Act, making it possible for the government to make this change in regulation rather than come back to the House and do it in legislation.

It wasn't something we had time to do in the life of this government, but it is something that should be considered for future governments. Our program currently does fund post-graduate studies. Somebody who has gone to school in the Northwest Territories is entitled to 12 semesters of study. That means that you are covered with the remission program all the way up to the first six full years of study. Then subsequent to that, there are loan programs available. The expectation is that somebody taking one of those programs for lawyers or for doctors, they are going to have earning potential to be able to pay back at the higher levels. We've made it relatively easy to get their first six years of study.

I take the Member's point. All of our programs need to be looked at on a regular basis to ensure that we are achieving the goal of ensuring that northerners have good access to programs and are encouraged to come back.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to thank the Minister and, again, thanks for the increase. I think there is a lot of students out there in the Northwest Territories who will welcome the new ceiling. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. At this time, I would like to recognize Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister indicated earlier, this did not go through a public hearing process because all the Members, not only the Social Programs committee, but AOC, all 11 Members on this side of the floor felt this had to be done and it had to be done quickly. I know there is at least one constituent of mine who is sitting there waiting to see if this is going to go through. But I know there are lots of other students who would benefit from having more room to borrow. So I

just want to thank the Minister and the government for moving quickly on this and the Members for supporting it. I also want to state that having been a student myself, the SFA program in the North compares better than anything else in the country and it was back then when I was going to school and I believe it continues to be. I think we should celebrate what's good. I think we have to do our best to make sure it stays that way.

I also want to support what the Member from Kam Lake stated. The Minister has already agreed that this needs to constantly be reviewed so we can do the best we can to encourage and make it easier for our people to go and get the education that they would like that would be not only good for them but good for the economy we have here and address some of the shortages in the labour situation we have here. I just wanted to add my support for that.

I would just like to ask a question of clarification here. We aren't talking about grants. Some people are eligible for grants if they meet the criteria, but this is to increase the maximum limits of the repayable loan. We have what's called remissible loans where those who qualify could ask for remission when they come back. Is this loan a remissible loan for those who qualify or is that something separate?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The remissible loan program is something separate from the repayable loan program.

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

MS. LEE: So this is an amount of money that is available for someone to tap into after they have exhausted if they are eligible for grants and remissible loans. This is on top of the money already available?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's correct. It's not necessarily something that follows on after a student has used up all of their 12 semesters if they qualify for 12 semesters of remissible funding. There are many students who access needs assessed funding. This funding is all needs assessed. You have to apply for the money and demonstrate a need for it, but that can be available to you beginning in the first semester if you have a need for the extra funding. So this money is over and above the basic grant and the remissible loans, yes.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. To clarify further on that, it's possible for someone who went to school for their entire grade school, 1 to 12, and they get their grant and remissible loan to do a university degree and then they decide they want to do further graduate studies or professional degrees, they can start tapping into this money up to \$47,000?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, this money could be available for use after a student has gone through the first 12 or eight or whatever semesters they qualify for. But as I said, it could also be available to

students who may be single parents that may have higher costs. So it's available right off the bat, if necessary, to those who have needs.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. Can I just get information on what the criteria requirements are? It's needs-based, but is it only on income and the need for money? Say if someone, what Mr. Ramsay was talking about, was going to law school, I know when I went to law school in '94, when I started, my tuition fee was like \$1500, which probably nobody could believe now. When I was finishing three years later, it was \$5,000. The last I heard it was about \$12,000 a year to go to school. Could somebody borrow the entire \$12,000 to pay for that even if they couldn't prove that they were really, really poor but having that \$12,000 would help them with their loan? Do you know what I mean? Not really, really poor, but all students are poor because when you go to school you can't have much income. I guess what I am saying is the situation is so different for every student depending on what program they are taking, whether they have children or not. Some people have no children but they have had some money saved and they may have money in the bank, but their need for money is a lot higher because of the fact that they are going into a program that is costing more money than other programs, for example. So can you just apply to the SFA program and say I would really like to tap into the \$60,000 to pay for the three years of my tuition at law school, med school, engineering school or any school you want to go to, even if you have some money and you have it stored away in your bank account?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I say, it's an application-based fund. So a student can fill out an application form and from that application form, it will be determined if they qualify for some of this repayable loan funding. The sort of factors that come into play are children and childcare costs, the cost of a program that is being taken and the Member talked about whether there is any money in the bank. There is an assumption with the SFA program that you will earn some money during the summer break. So that sort of expectation is factored into the calculations. It is a formula that is determined by the responses on the application form and that sets out how much money is available then to people from this fund.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: One question, Mr. Chairman. The bill is a good bill. I do support it. I don't think they call them starving students for nothing, Mr. Chair. This is good news and I applaud the Minister for listening to the people and doing some good work here.

We increased the loans for these students to pursue an education to look for a career they can work on and at the same time, they have to repay these loans. Are we doing well in that area? If we increase the loans, are we going to do a good job in terms of collecting these loans or are we going to be in a position where these loans are being looked at by the students in terms of repaying them? Are we going to starve them to get the money back? I guess it's more of a question I have for my people in the Sahtu.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do fairly well on collecting on debts. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment doesn't directly follow up with people who are having trouble making their payments. We hand them over to FMBS and that's the collection agency within government. So I can't speak to how well they resolve that. Judging from what we see in the write-off of debts bills, I don't think we are doing too badly, given the amount of money we are lending to students. We are always going to wind up with people who run into economic trouble and because of that, we are going to have some debts that go bad. But in general, this has proven to be a very worthwhile investment in northerners and in getting northerners educated. So we think it's a worthwhile investment.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the Minister talks about it being a good investment, I wouldn't argue that in any way. Has the department done any investment on their own to find out how long we keep some of these people that we provide student loans to? The reason I ask that is because I think it's fabulous to work at bringing everyone's education up and that works for society as a whole. I am just curious; once somebody takes out a student loan, they get their schooling paid for and they come back and get their years remitted, if it's three or four years, do they say see you later? Do we ever follow up about what type of investment or as they say, ROI, in industry? What type of longevity do we get out of students who we continue to offer one of the best student loan programs in the country if not the best?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The best indicator we have on immediate returns is the number of students who are achieving remissions on their loans and that is almost all of them. So we know that most students come back in the first instance to qualify for remission and do stay in the Territories through the remission of their loans.

We do also an occasional survey to try to follow up with people who have received funding to attend post-secondary institutions. While I don't have those numbers with me, we have tabled in the past the post-secondary indicator book and that is available on our website, which does provide follow-up information. So we do regular surveys of students to see how many are still in the North.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't say that as a criticism of the program. I would just like to see us get a return on the program. If we are going to educate northerners, I certainly would like to see them...We are investing in folks to come back and we are investing in the right people. I know the last couple of years I have had people ask about programs when they go into their masters, and the Minister provided them with good information and opportunities to go forward and families were very grateful. So when you see an increase in the

program, that is going to be an extremely good positive spin-off. I would just like to see that we continue the momentum and synergy so the North as a whole sees a benefit. Do people in general, once their loan is remitted, do they leave or are they staying? It's my experience that when you educate someone up here, whether they are born here or have been educated here, they seem to have a strong tendency coming back home and raising families. No real question, Mr. Chairman, just an observation. All the kids, young students, young and old who have taken advantage of this program, I am just curious on where they have ended up in the sense of that.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased to see this initiative coming forward and to give it my support. As a matter of fact, I may be in a position in the next little while to experience its benefits. I am very happy to see that when we do this, it's something that works for a lot of people. I think this is one of the, unfortunately, little known secrets and advantages of living in the Northwest Territories and raising a family. Whenever I get the chance, I promote this as an enormous benefit that we have that makes us almost unique in Canada. So it is one worth defending, promoting and enhancing whenever we get the chance to and I am happy to see it.

Today I have just one question. It applies to the coming into force of this. Will this be something that students enrolling in the coming school year be able to take advantage of or is this going to be dependent on the next budget cycle, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, we've been quietly letting people know that the expectation of this will be in place this year and once the bill is passed, we'll make sure it is well publicized amongst students so there is that awareness. There were some students who were running up against that \$47,000 limit and we have been letting them know it was in the works and it will be in effect this year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next on the list is Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank committee's indulgence here. I am not on the Social Programs committee and I don't get to talk about SFA too often, so I will take my opportunity now. I know the government is on its last legs. There are a couple of weeks left. I just want to get some ideas out there. While we are talking about SFA and ideas, one of the problems that we've seen over and over again is the improvement in retention of health care professionals, especially in the small communities and trying to get nurses in the small communities, trying to get teachers in the small communities. One of the ideas that merits some consideration by the department is taking a look at bringing people in here and paying off their student loans while they are here. It would be a heck of a lot cheaper to do that than to fly nurses in from Honduras or Newfoundland, all these locum nurses. You know what? When we get some of these nurses and teachers on the ground in the Northwest Territories, some of them might

actually want to stay here and make their home here. They are young people; they will raise their families here. So I think that's something that merits some consideration by the department. You can include the Department of Health in that if you are going to examine how that would work. I think it would be much more cost-effective to take a look at paying off...Like I said, tuition fees are going up. Kids are coming out of university now with \$45,000 or \$50,000 in debt with Canada student loans or provincial student loans, in some cases. If the government of the Northwest Territories said why don't you come work for us and we will pay off your student loan while you are here, give us five years or six years, it would be much more cost-effective, I think, and merit some consideration. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first item that the Member was talking about in terms of attracting people to smaller communities, we already provide remission at a higher rate to nurses who have gone through the program here and are willing to work in our small communities. So we recognize the student financial assistance and remission rates can play a role in recruitment and have taken that to heart and are doing that.

In terms of Education, Culture and Employment remitting loans to a different government, that would be outside of our mandate. But I take the Member's point that it may be something that the government should consider in terms of a recruitment, so I would be happy to have the Minister of Human Resources talk to the Minister of Health and Social Services to see whether or not they would be prepared to consider such an approach.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Clause by clause.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. No further general comments. We'll be going clause by clause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree that Bill 19 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 19 is now ready for third reading. At this time, I would like to thank the Minister and his staff and request the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses out. Thank you.

At this time, what is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): There is a motion on the floor. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I shall rise to report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Pokiak?

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 13, Change of Name Act; Bill 14, Employment Standards Act; and Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, and would like to report Bills 13, 14 and 19 are ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee. 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. Third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 22: THIRD READING OF BILLS.

Bill 11: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oooh!

HON. BRENDAN BELL: ...that Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 11 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Bill 12: Public Health Act

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Bill 12, Public Health Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 12 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Accountability and Oversight committee at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. Orders of the day for Friday, August 17, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 6, Workers' Compensation Act
 - Bill 7, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act
 - Bill 9, Write-off of Debts Act, 2007-2008
 - Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2007-2008
 - Bill 15, Liquor Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 13, Change of Name Act
- Bill 14, Employment Standards Act
- Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, August 17, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 17:31 p.m.

