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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 16, 2009****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:35 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister, the lead Minister on Strategic Initiative committee.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 18-16(3):
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today as the lead Minister for the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee to provide an update on the activities related to the Board Reform Initiative.

We need to take a moment to take stock of the whole board reform idea and where it has come from. It is important to remember that the question of how the GNWT approaches boards and agencies has been discussed by the Legislative Assembly for more than a decade. This is not an idea that has just occurred during this Assembly. During the 15th Assembly, Members were involved in an extensive boards and agency review that considered many of the same issues on the table for discussion now. With our renewed focus on effective and efficient government in the 16th Assembly, the time is right to move forward with changes. We can take steps now that will allow us to offer improved services to our residents and help us resolve some long outstanding issues.

Board reform is not about suggesting that the boards aren't working hard to deliver programs and services. However, it is about recognizing that a large part of the client base for each of these boards is the same people and that the issues in one area cross over into another. It is also about ensuring that what funding we do have is spent as much as possible on direct delivery of programs.

The Northwest Territories is relatively small in terms of its population. At the moment, there are more than 70 different education, health and housing boards at the local and regional level. Each of these boards has a dedicated group of individuals who represent community or regional interests, an administration, and programs that it delivers. This wasn't necessarily a situation the government set out to create. The current structure emerged over many years as individual boards were created, sometimes in response to specific circumstances or needs. While some boards may function well individually, they were not necessarily designed to function as a system. We need to ask ourselves if this is the approach we need now, or if we want to have a system specifically designed to deliver integrated, comprehensive services to our people.

Mr. Speaker, when we got together at the start of the 16th Legislative Assembly a key message from Members was that we needed to get on with board reform. Work had been done in the past on various elements of the system and the call was for us to act. In trying to determine the most appropriate approach, there were three factors that drove our thinking.

First was that regional input into service delivery mattered and should be preserved. We have a long history of having local input into program delivery. While some might prefer to see all services delivered at a territorial level, we believe that regional priority setting is an important feature of our approach to boards that must be retained during this reform.

The second element was that a case management approach was needed. Our services should focus on our clients and their needs, which is aided by removing barriers to people working together and integrating service delivery wherever possible. Board reform is not about fixing particular problems with education boards or health boards, but it is about finding better ways to serve the needs of our residents. This is not to suggest that many of our regional staff aren't already trying to find ways to work together, but often these efforts are done in spite of, rather than because of, the organizational structures we have in place.

The third element of our thinking was related to the management and administrative duplication that occurs when 70 boards are involved in governance for health, social services, education and housing programs. While board reform isn't about saving money, it only makes sense that we don't need separate administrative structures for every single business line when these resources could more effectively be directed at front-line delivery in services our residents need.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard concerns from Members, stakeholders and the public about the amount of information the government has provided on the Board Reform Initiative. I understand that people are concerned about what this initiative might mean for them and are anxious to hear some details. We intend to provide those details as work on this initiative progresses. Board reform is a significant undertaking and we did not want to finalize our plans behind closed doors without input from the people it will affect. Our strategy was to get some initial ideas and concepts on the table for discussion, rather than to try to work out all the details before letting the public know what was going on.

In late January, we released a document that provided a description of the general approach to the proposed regional services boards. This document was not intended to answer every question or provide specific implementation plans, but rather to support continued discussion on elements of the proposed approach. We have been consulting with boards and staff on this general approach and also want to hear from the public and other stakeholders. We have posted the consultation package already distributed to boards on the Department of Executive website. The package includes an overview of the issues we are looking at as we develop our plans, and asks specific questions about elements in our approach. I encourage anybody with an interest in board reform to download and read the package and give us their thoughts on the issues we have brought forward at this time.

To those who are merely standing to say "no" to a change to how boards operate in the NWT, we would ask that you give some thought to the goal we are trying to achieve. We want to provide better and more effective services for our residents. We encourage you to come to the table not with a no, but with a list of what is most important to you and your ideas about opportunities to work better together within communities and regions.

Board reform is a work in progress. The issues are complex and it will take time to develop our plans and implement any changes. We have stated in the past that this may end up taking on different forms in different regions. There may also be a

different time frame for implementation in different regions and it is possible that a phased approach will be most effective.

Much has been made of the milestone set for this coming April. Let us be clear that this is only one such point on a much longer path. In April, the first round of consultations on our general approach will be done and we will have completed some of the more detailed costing associated with board reform. We will then be in a position to work with Regular Members and make decisions on how we want to proceed with this initiative. No one has suggested that regional services boards would be established this April or that all final decisions will be made.

Mr. Speaker, I want to state for the record that boards are an important and vital part of how the GNWT manages and delivers services to the people of the Northwest Territories. Boards are a critical link between the government and the people we serve. We depend on the boards to ensure that services are meeting community and regional needs and we do not see that role changing. Boards do good work and this initiative is not because we think they don't. But where we are doing a good job now, we believe we can do an even better job in the future.

I encourage all Members to continue to engage in a dialogue on the best path forward. There are some that may prefer that we do nothing. I believe that if we are true to our goals and priorities for the 16th Legislative Assembly we will all work together to make the changes needed. Thank you.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 19-16(3):
AURORA COLLEGE WEEK/LIFELONG
LEARNING

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating Aurora College Week. Our northern college provides many opportunities for NWT adults to develop new skills and engage in lifelong learning.

Twenty or thirty years ago, people could graduate from high school, take a few years of training and be set for life. Those days, Mr. Speaker, are gone.

Technology is always changing, knowledge is expanding and skill demands are continually evolving. What was considered an adequate level of skill 10 years ago might not be adequate today. Ten years from now, we expect that NWT adults will need additional skills to those required today.

In the 21st century, adults from all walks of life must be lifelong learners to keep up with the pace of change. Lifelong learning happens in the classroom, the workplace, the community and at home. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment encourages NWT residents of all ages to keep learning and developing new skills. The global and national economic recession is a concern for all of us. Every night on the news there are stories of Canadians losing their jobs and falling on hard times. However, even in this economic recession, some employers are having a hard time recruiting employees with the skills needed to do specific jobs. The jobs that are the most resilient to economic ups and downs are high-skill and knowledge-intensive jobs. One of the best things Northerners can do to protect themselves from economic hardship is to continuously upgrade their skills.

Aurora College offers a wide variety of programs, ranging from academic upgrading to degree programs. Aurora College also offers many evening continuing education courses, so NWT residents can upgrade their skills without taking time off work.

I encourage NWT adults to explore the many opportunities Aurora College provides for them. I encourage all NWT residents to become lifelong learners. During Aurora College Week and every week, learning is for life.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 20-16(3):
HERITAGE WEEK EVENTS

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, by tradition, the third week in February is celebrated across Canada as Heritage Week. This year in the Northwest Territories, many organizations are celebrating the importance of heritage.

I would like to highlight some of the Heritage Week events that will be taking place in the Northwest Territories this week.

On February 16 and 17, several organizations are promoting heritage and culture-based education resources at the NWT Teachers Conference in Yellowknife. Representatives from the NWT Heritage Fairs Society are giving out pieces of a "heritage" cake February 16 to mark the significance of National Heritage Day.

The Norman Wells Historical Centre has organized a storytelling event today aimed at local family participation. Long-term resident Ed Hodgson is sharing some of his favourite stories of life on the land. The Historical Centre continues to feature many exhibits of history, art and cultural heritage of the Sahtu region. For example, moosehide craftwork by Sahtu Dene artisan Myrtle Harrison is on exhibit along with artifacts and natural history

specimens that portray the beauty of the land and tell the story of the CANOL Trail, exploration and aviation history of the region.

The City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee kicked off its celebration of Heritage Week yesterday with an afternoon of storytelling and a heritage art show at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. They also announced the winners of the 2008 Heritage Award to the Mildred Hall School heritage mappers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite Members to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to view the various new displays and exhibitions including Pihuaqtiuyugit – We are the Long Distance Walkers. The exhibit features traditional place names near Ulukhaktok and the literacy skills used by Kangiryuarmiut to travel from ancient routes from the sea ice inland to caribou calving grounds.

Awareness, appreciation and promotion of our northern heritage is important because it helps strengthen our cultural identity as individuals, families and communities.

I would like to recognize the efforts of all cultural and heritage organizations and individuals across the NWT who work to promote, preserve and revitalize our unique northern heritage throughout the year. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMMITMENT TO SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about diamonds and our local cut and polish industry. I spoke numerous times about the Government of the Northwest Territories' inability or lack of desire to pursue new directions and a commitment to the secondary diamond industry here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, Laurelton diamond factory closed its doors and with it 40 jobs were eliminated. I have constituents with young families who worked at Laurelton who have come to me and said could this have been avoided? Where was the Government of the Northwest Territories when it came to protecting the jobs at Laurelton and the cut and polish industry? Mr. Speaker, an industry that we have worked so hard to establish is being left to die on its own and my belief is that it's not too late. The Government of the Northwest Territories must

look at ways to be flexible and accommodating during these rough economic times. We need to sit down with the existing cut and polish factories and find some creative ways to keep their doors open and retain the 65 jobs that remain in these factories. What good is a new diamond policy going to be if we don't have any factories left?

The Arslanian and polar bear factories are shut down all of this week and already five employees have been laid off. The factories are closed so that management can come up with a plan as to how to survive in this worldwide recession and their plan may be to close the factories for good. This would be an outright shame.

I believe the Government of the Northwest Territories should be trying to sort out some interim rules or policy to allow the remaining factories to function. According to industry experts, the turnaround in the diamond industry will not happen until the last quarter of 2010. The next two years will be extremely difficult for existing cut and polish factories. We need to ensure that we do everything in our power to help these factories and the cut and polish industry survive until the market turns around.

Do we not care about the remaining 65 jobs and families involved? Can't we show this industry and the diamond world that we actually care about the cut and polish industry here in the Northwest Territories?

I will have questions for the Minister of ITI at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT LIARD BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring will soon arrive in Fort Liard. Spring, as Liard residents know, brings the bison into their town. Some communities in the Northwest Territories may have dogs roaming around in town. Other communities may have unsupervised youth or children looking for trouble. In Fort Liard there are bison. They can ruin the trees, dig up gardens, damage properties, and are a significant hazard to the residents.

The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources committed to the development of a Bison Management Plan. A draft Bison Management Strategy is now out for public comment; a plan that suggests that it will take another two years to prepare a plan specifically for the Nahanni herd. The unwelcome visitors in Fort Liard belong to the Nahanni herd.

The Bison Management Strategy also states that ENR will immediately increase its efforts to keep bison out of the communities, including the increasing availability of public education materials.

Last spring the Minister advised me that the department was considering increasing the quota for the community from one to six animals and was working with the Department of Transportation on fencing options, including testing electrified fencing.

I recognize the Minister is getting started on the task. I suggest to the Minister that, to the best of my knowledge, new public education materials are not going to keep the bison out of Fort Liard. Nahendeh residents continue to expect more substantial action from the Minister to help us with this serious problem.

I'll be asking the Minister questions during question period.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SALVATION ARMY

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about the Salvation Army and highlight the wide range of services it offers to the people of the Northwest Territories.

As Members of this House and the general public are aware, there are serious issues of homelessness and substance abuse in the North. Since 1981 the Salvation Army has been one group of many who attempt to address these issues in our community. They provide a noon hour soup line and an evening supper at the entrance of their shelter. Free bread is distributed during office hours. The emergency shelter provides a secure sleeping place for people who would otherwise be left in hazardous situations. Activities and an evening snack are available to clients who are sober or who are involved in transitional programs.

As we know, people will not change their lifestyles until they make personal decisions to do so. Fortunately, when someone decides to make a positive change, the Salvation Army is prepared to help. Case workers support clients with withdrawal management services followed by Life Recovery and Making Productive Choices programs that deal with life skills, emotional stability, and relapse prevention. Staff and volunteers also provide assistance with resume writing, as well as with job and apartment searches. They help address education and literacy needs. The Salvation Army also offers budget counselling, emergency clothing

vouchers to be redeemed at their Thrift Store, and family housing assistance.

The Salvation Army staff are extremely busy. Volunteer opportunities are available in many areas. Members of the public make donations to the food bank or participate in Christmas Food Hamper and Adopt-a-Family programs, and all is coordinated through the Salvation Army.

Services are not exclusively for the homeless. They are available for any community members who are at serious risk. They do, however, offer some programs targeted at specific groups. For instance, accommodation and life recovery programs are available for men only. With the opening of the Bailey House, the Salvation Army hopes to better support men in transitional circumstances.

If we ignore the issues of addictions and homelessness, more people will be victimized on the streets and we will experience more poverty and crime in the North. The Salvation Army reaches out to the individuals, addressing a great need in our community.

I would like to recognize and applaud all of the staff and the volunteers of the Salvation Army and thank them for their dedication to the Northwest Territories. Let's remember their contributions and pledge our continued support.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH CENTRE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the need to develop and expand our research capacity and knowledge on northern climate change. The Northwest Territories is on the front lines of climate change and if Northerners are to successfully adapt to these changes, we need to understand it and how to apply this knowledge to our everyday lives.

The Yukon government has taken a proactive approach to better understanding these changes and impacts. It was recently announced that it will fund the Yukon Research of Excellence. The mandate of the research centre is to develop, coordinate, and support leading edge research on climate change adaptation for the Yukon. It is also supporting the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre, which will focus on the development of viable business opportunities related to cold climate technologies.

I believe we need to make similar investments in this type of research and take a proactive approach

to climate change adaptations and innovative technologies in the NWT. It will help us better understand what changes are occurring as a result of climate change. What can be done to adapt to these changes and potentially develop made-in-the-North, made-in-the-NWT solutions?

We have a number of organizations that are committed to climate change work in the NWT. They include the Arctic Energy Alliance, Ecology North, and the Aurora Research Institute. An investment in these types of research moves us closer to our goals of a greener, more sufficient Territory.

The old saying used to be that climate change was on our doorstep. I'm going to say that story is no longer. Climate change is like an unwanted visitor who is on my couch and not going away.

I would have to say the world is hungry for this type of urgent information. I encourage the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources to reach out to the federal government and our many partners to help create and establish a centre of excellence here in the Northwest Territories, a climate change research centre. This is an institute that could be good for all.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FEDERAL SUBSIDIES FOR MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice announced recently that the government would be committing an undisclosed amount of money to subsidize Imperial Oil and its partners for costs associated with the Mackenzie Gas Project. Given that the environmental and national review process is not completed yet, this is a serious breach of the government's responsibility to the people and an insult to many of those who participated in the review.

Rather unbelievably, our own Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment said that he was very pleased with the announcement. By backing the project financially, the federal government has not just gone against their word, they have severely undermined their ability to make fair and objective decisions about the MGP.

Despite the review process not being complete, the government has clearly made its decision. Minister Prentice speaks of the project as a done deal, ensuring that once the review process has been completed the project would proceed quickly.

We know something about conflict of interest, and in my mind the federal government's decision is unequivocally a clear breach of ethics on conflict of interest. It's bad enough that the feds are undermining the voice of our people by essentially bypassing the review process, but to have our Cabinet publicly support such a move is outrageous.

Esso is one of the richest companies on earth, regularly announcing unbelievable levels of profit while crying for subsidies. Whose side are we on, the people's or the multi-national oil companies? It's a question worth asking, Mr. Speaker, because as it stands, the pipeline is going to benefit the oil companies far more than it will benefit Northerners. At the very least, where is our use of this project to leverage devolution so we can actually ensure meaningful benefits? Where is this government's demand that this gas be directed to replacing dirty fuel or the transparent process to ensure our public that this will occur? Where is the demand that this gas not be used to fuel an industry that is currently threatening our water quality for the length of the Mackenzie River?

At a time when our economy is in serious trouble, thousands of Canadians are losing jobs and our environment is threatened as never before. Our federal government is handing out money behind closed doors and ignoring due process. How about diversifying our economy and creating jobs in alternative energies and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and our escalating vulnerability to climate change?

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. Here, Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories, we are completely unprepared tax wise or regulatory wise to ensure maximum benefits within a narrow window of authority we do have. Trying to do the same old things the same old way does not serve our people and sometimes it is downright shameful. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
AKAITCHO BUSINESS CORPORATION
AWARD RECIPIENTS

MS. BISARO: Today I want to highlight the Akaitcho Business Development Corporation and their 2008 award winners. The Akaitcho Business Development Corporation works to advance economic development in Ndilo, Dettah and

Yellowknife through assistance to small businesses. Last year the corporation assisted over 56 businesses with loans, loan guarantees and business advice and that resulted in the creation of more than 75 full-time jobs.

In December of 2008 the Akaitcho BDC held their annual general meeting and awards luncheon and five Yellowknife area businesses received awards in recognition of their success. They were the Bella Dance Academy, business of the year. Ms. Lina Ball is the owner of the academy and received the Excellence of the Year award previously. S.L. Painting, Youth Business of the Year. Mr. Sebastien Lévesque began his business in 2007 to fill an expanding need in the Yellowknife market. Didehcho Gas and Diesel Services, Aboriginal Business of the Year. This business is owned by Grant Blondin and has become well known for quality repairs and services on machines run by gas and diesel. YK Glass Recyclers, Environmental Business of the Year. Matthew Grogono started recycling glass in 1994 and converted YK Glass Recyclers to a co-op in 1997. Sam's Monkey Tree and Diamante Restaurant, Excellence of the Year award. Harvey Bourgeois and Steve Dinham credit the success of their business to concentration on service and the quality of the food.

Mr. Speaker, the success of these businesses is impressive. Owning and operating a small business is a daunting and all-consuming task. Most new businesses struggle and some of them do not survive. I would like to congratulate all of the award winners and make special mention of the following 13 businesses who have each achieved the five year mark in the life of their business and that is a very significant mark. They are: DJ's Towing, Donald Clark; Euphonia Hair Spa, Samantha Kidston; Birchwood Gallery, Tony Watier; Behind the Scenes, Pat Thagard; Certified Refrigeration and Burner Services, Ellison Watkins; Aurora Telecom Services Ltd., Mark Rocher; Millenium Technology Solutions, Norm Fillion; McKay Electric, John McKay; J&A Fire Protection, Jim and Angie Mernickle; Yellowknife Funeral Services, Bill Skentos.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, for allowing me to finish this great list. JMS Services, Dave Hysert; DW Maintenance, Darrell Peddle; Quarter Pound Fries, Dave Lantz.

I think everybody has had some of those great fries. They each deserve our congratulations and best wishes for another successful five years in their business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF METIS LEADER LOUIS RIEL

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, being the former vice-president of the Northwest Territories Metis Association is an honour by way of wearing my Metis sash today in recognition of the father of the Metis revolution, Louis Riel.

This day in 1885 Louis Riel was hung for the Red River Rebellion. He was a leader and a man with foresight in regards to the battle of First Nation and Metis rights in western Canada. Louis started the First Nation rights as we know them today. The battle for settling treaties has crossed western Canada, the settling of land claims and the battle for constitutional protection and recognition for First Nations and Metis people in Canada.

Looking back 124 years, aboriginal people have come a long way. The challenges and the recognition of their rights in Canada are still a struggle today. It is still with us today with the leaders of today and the aboriginal people that basically strive for those rights can look back in regards to 124 years and realize that Louis Riel was a hero. His struggle and this battle for recognition of indigenous people's rights in Canada wasn't lost for all. He is a leader that has taken the sacrifice for what we have today as native people in Canada. The Metis people in Canada should celebrate that 124 years ago the struggle began with the death of Louis Riel. Native people, Metis rights, constitutional protection is something that is a result of the protection of section 35 of our Constitution, which means something to First Nations people. But yet today, people still do not recognize aboriginal land claims, aboriginal treaties and aboriginal rights when it comes to health care, education, dental care. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the struggle goes on.

Again, with that, I would like to say, mahsi, Louis. Thank you for the struggle. Without you, we wouldn't be here where we are today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SUPPORTS FOR
POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, today I listened to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment talk about the lifelong learning specifically in the Aurora College initiative that is happening down the

Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to congratulate the people who are making a difference in the small communities and large centres in terms of entering into college or university or learning the new technology of the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, my concern with the smaller communities is that a tracking of our education system. Mr. Speaker, we have lots of young people who are graduating from school who are finishing Grade 12 but have a very difficult time entering into college or university because sometimes they have to do a couple of years of upgrading to prove their standards to enter into a qualified program at either a college or university. Sometimes the support isn't there and so these students are left out in the cold, so to speak.

As a case in point, I have several constituents in the Sahtu that have finished Grade 12. We celebrated and graduated them, and yet when they try to enter into a college program of their choice, or university, they are told that they have to upgrade their skills in order to enter into that college. That is where I feel that the education system is somewhat needing to be improved with our students here.

I want to look at these gaps here in terms of where this department is focusing their energy to help these young students to get into colleges and to support them through the college system, even though it means that we have to look at different areas where we can support them through a preparation for college or a university either here in the Northwest Territories or somewhere in universities. Sometimes we seem to not have enough resources to support them. I would want to question the Minister later on in the House in terms of what ways we can look at supporting these young students into colleges or universities and not let them fall between the cracks in terms of the education system. I will be asking questions to the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, even after hearing Minister Miltenberger's Minister's statement today on the Board Reform Initiative -- I've been around here a long time -- I still am at a loss to understand what the government is trying to get at by taking such a wholesale and wide-sweeping approach to board reform.

Why can't we take some small steps? Why can't we look at the Health and Social Services department,

for example, and look at the governance structures that fall within that department and think of ways of creating efficiencies? Health is a good one because it is fairly integrated across the Territory. Mr. Speaker, to take all the education councils and local authorities; to take all of those local housing boards that get elected every year and mostly just volunteer to do their work; to take all of those...Let's see, what am I missing here? Education, housing, health and social services...Like I said, health and social services is a different creature unto itself. Mr. Speaker, this is not a game we're playing here. This isn't some one person, you know, sitting up in some control tower trying to figure out how to move governance around on the map. These are people's lives we're talking about. This isn't a game of I'm the king of the castle and this is how it's going to be. I get the impression that this is some kind of a play on some kind of an organizational chart.

I still cannot hear coming through in the communication what the real reason is for the push behind this. Of course, we all want efficiencies. Of course, we want to make sure we have maximum resources at the front-line to deliver programs and services to our people. But how can we show such disrespect for the people at the community and regional levels that are bringing their good thought and their good expertise and experience to serve on these boards? How can we disrespect it? I would dare say that many of them have more knowledge and experience and more dedication -- because many of them do it on a voluntary basis -- than what we see sitting around this table here. Yet we think we're in a position to dictate top-down to these people and criticize what they are doing by taking this absolutely sweeping approach to changing the way we do government.

There are so many other important things we should be focusing on right now and this is a misplacement of our energy and our resources. After hearing the Minister's statement today, I would like to ask him to cease and desist. Let's get on with the important stuff. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the chief from Inuvik, Mr. Herbert Blake. Welcome to the House, Herb.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 120-16(3): CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH CENTRE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in my Member's statement I talked about the importance of creating a climate change research institute here in the Northwest Territories. My question to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources is would he reach out to his federal counterparts to see if they would be interested in establishing a research centre of excellence here in the Northwest Territories to do climate change study? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue the Member has raised today is one that we intend to follow up on. As pointed out here, there have been quite a number of concerns around climate change in the Northwest Territories. I know Minister Miltenberger is looking at our existing facilities to try and work with those in the field to see what we can do to improve in that area. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, would the Premier be willing to put this on the next type of discussions they have with the Prime Minister and potentially the Environment Minister at the earliest opportunity that we can have on this subject? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, we're going to have to come up with our own approach here. I know Minister Miltenberger has been doing some work in there and I'll have to get back to him to find out what work has been done, what connection has been made with other jurisdictions, and follow up from there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 121-16(3): COMMITMENT TO SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. It gets back to my Member's statement where I was talking about the secondary diamond industry here in the Northwest Territories and the fact that the Laurelton plant recently closed down, with 40 jobs being lost. I have constituents who have come to me and said, well, what is the Government of the Northwest Territories doing to protect jobs in this secondary industry. That's the first question I've got for the Minister. What is the

Government of the Northwest Territories doing to protect jobs in the secondary diamond industry?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear that the Member agrees that we should be protecting secondary diamond polishing jobs in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: I didn't hear anything specific there. I'd like to ask the Minister -- and it hasn't come through our committee, the EDI committee. I'd like to ask the Minister if he'd be willing to take his departmental officials and if I could offer up my services to help facilitate any of those types of meetings with the secondary diamond industry, the cut and polish factories that are in existence. I think we need to sit down with them and find a way that we can keep their doors open and protect the 65 or so jobs that are out there. Will the Minister commit to meeting with the existing factories? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have briefed standing committee. We have offered, and the committee has agreed, to work together as we review a diamond policy. I know that the situation is getting very serious with regard to diamonds. Certainly, we'd be willing to meet with the diamond polishers and manufacturers here in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, the fact is, what good is a diamond policy if we don't have any factories left? I think time is of the essence here. I'd like to ask the Minister if the government had sat down with Laurelton prior to them shutting their doors. Because my fear is in the next couple of weeks there's a real fear that Arslanian and the polar bear factory will indeed shut down as well. Time is of the essence. Can the Minister agree today to sit down as soon as possible with those factories, the ones that are remaining, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We're quite prepared to do that. Arslanian and ACW are restructuring and have been restructuring for some time, but we're quite prepared to sit down and meet with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, in trying to keep the factories open, would the government entertain some type of interim measure on these policies which would allow the factories to remain open? I want to get a better understanding that the government will be flexible in these discussions. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are prepared to be flexible and work with the committee to see how we can protect these very important jobs. We've looked at a number of approaches and some of them haven't worked; loan guarantees haven't worked and we've also looked at other ways to help the diamond manufacturers. We're quite prepared to work with the committee to see if we can find ways to protect these jobs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 122-16(3):
ASSISTANCE TO NEW
SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also addressed to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I spoke in my statement about small businesses and the importance of small business in our community. I mentioned that businesses have difficulties, small business especially, when they are new and growing. I want to ask the Minister how our government provides assistance to new, fledgling businesses in our communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have quite a number of programs and resources to help people get established in business. We have economic development officers that are available and can work with interested people. We have funding programs. We have grants and contribution programs to help people get established to develop business plans. We also have a wide variety of loan programs, either through Community Futures or through BDIC, through our partners such as Aboriginal Business Canada, and so on. We have a number of resources that are dedicated to this.

MS. BISARO: Thank you to the Minister for that answer. I appreciate that there are programs out there. But it's been said many times lately, and it's not going to get any better, our current economy is weighing hard on NWT businesses. I'd like to know from the Minister what our government is doing now. What concrete actions are being taken, apart from the programs that are available, and what we are doing in addition to those to assist NWT small business owners in their struggle to stay afloat?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I guess the primary actions that we've taken is to work with the federal government to develop programs that have been announced and extended in the last budget. We are also seeing our loan rates being reduced through

the BDIC. They have been reduced to the Bank of Canada prime rate plus 2 percent. So the rates right now are 3 percent, 4 percent, and 5 percent to the different categories of loans. That's the lowest they've been in a long time. Certainly we are working with BDIC and we'll be meeting with the Ministerial Advisory Committee in a couple weeks to see more input on what kinds of things this government could be doing to assist small business.

MS. BISARO: I appreciate the answer. I guess I would like to know from the Minister...What he's suggested are all good things and I'm glad to hear that there is something that is happening, but I guess an owner or operator of a small business is going to be struggling and is going to need assistance not now, but right now. What is being provided to individuals as operators, as owners of business, not necessarily financially, but that can assist them in their day-to-day operation as they try to manage their business? More management assistance than financial.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We do have a number of programs, through our business programs we can work with individual businesses so that they can apply for funding to allow them to restructure or re-profile their business, perhaps even go as far as refinancing their operations in this difficult period.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. I guess I would like to ask the Minister, relative to all these programs and all these things which he says are out there and are available, it's well known that our small communities have businesses that suffer more so than in the larger communities. What specific programs are available to small community business owners?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are looking at trying to do something more definitive with small business owners and after I've had input from the board of the BDIC and my meeting with the Ministerial Advisory Panel, I'll be looking to meet with the Minister of Finance and see if we can do something more definitive for the small business owners in the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 123-16(3):
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll ask my questions to the Premier. They are on

board reform. It seems like the initiatives that this government has undertaken during the life of the 16th Assembly have not gone very far. You would think that by now the leadership in our government here, the Cabinet, would start to get a picture here; they would start to get a message. At the very outset we demoralized our public service by coming out with a half-hatched plan on reductions. Next we took aim at our seniors, which didn't go very far and as long as sentiments on this side of the House stay the way they are, we won't be going anywhere with that either. Now we're going to take all those good and contributing people in the Northwest Territories who serve on school boards, who serve on housing boards, who serve on health boards. We're going to take aim at them and we're going to tell them that we know better and we're going to form super boards. If you listen to Mr. Miltenberger's comments in the media, oh, in his Ministerial statement today he talks about consultations, but in his media interviews going back a few months he said there were 70 boards and now there will be seven. I don't consider that a very consultative approach.

I would like to ask the Premier or whoever wants to answer the question now I guess, who does support board reform? Why is the government pushing on down this road when we have so many other pressing issues that we could be turning our time and energy to? Who does support board reform?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of board reform is one that has been identified now for a couple of Assemblies as an area that needs to be dealt with. It's probably the single most significant piece of restructuring of government program delivery that will be before an Assembly now or into the 17th Assembly. There are efficiencies to be gained as we move into increasingly tight fiscal realities as well. We're going to be having to look at every way possible to be as efficient as possible. We think we can improve the system, even from the policy and legislative point of view. We recognize there are a lot of questions about the 70 to seven, but we've also indicated April is a milestone date for this Assembly to have a review of all the work that's been done and map out next steps.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Just because we looked at it in the 15th Assembly doesn't mean we need to carry on with it in the 16th Assembly. Times have changed. There are some very unusual realities out there right now for our people and for our economy. Just to say, well, we're going to do it because we said we were going to do it and we're going to

press on no matter what, come hell or high water, doesn't sound like very good reasons. As for the efficiencies, let me get to my question. As for the efficiencies this is going to create, why can't those efficiencies be created with the governance structures that we have now, within the departments that we have now? Why can't those efficiencies be looked at within the context of what we have right now for governance?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We've been working with the system that we have now since 1967. We have identified in this House numerous times, for example, issues about board structures in health, deficits, problems to get decisions made, communities not being able to get responded to. We've had many, many discussions about rental arrears, LHOs struggling to deliver the program areas, concerns at different times about deficits in education or some other problems related to graduation rates, quality of education in small communities. I suggest that we've been doing this for 40-some years. It's probably time to look at this. Seventy boards have evolved with no real clear plan and we want to take a look at how to rationalize that and is there a way forward. We believe there is.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I hardly think that we can blame all the health authorities or boards for any deficits that have occurred. To suggest that taking the local input and involvement out of these key areas that the Minister is talking about is somehow going to be better, is he suggesting that we know better than those people in the front lines, in the communities, in the regions? Does this government know better? How is that going to change?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The regional structure exists in every region. Every region has at least one regional board. We're talking about expanded scope and mandate for a regional structure that has been there for many, many years and the creation of a community service agency kind of model at the community level to make sure that there's input on case management and program issues at the community level. What we are proposing is, we believe, a way to enhance the ability for regions and communities to be able to have a say. For example, there is no regional board right now for housing in any region. That board and that particular service would then, for the first time, come under a regional structure. So there is opportunity there, but come April we'll have the discussion about steps going forward.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear from almost every Member of this Legislature that local housing authorities have been doing a

very good job. What went wrong is when this government stepped in and took away certain things and tried to move things over to ECE, again doing their master plan which usually ends up just messing things up worse than they are.

I would like to ask the Minister what he believes is wrong with the idea of trying to create efficiencies by perhaps reinforcing the mandate of some of these boards by doing small changes. Why does it have to be the wholesale change to these super amalgamated boards?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As I indicated in my comments, we are moving forward to April. We recognize that a phased-in approach, there are going to be different configurations in different regions given the unique complexities that most regions have that make them separate. There is a two-track process between here and Yellowknife. I mean, here and the North Slave and the rest of the North given some of the complexities in Yellowknife. We fully recognize that while we have come forward with 70 to seven as we have the discussion in April about how do we move forward on board reform that we're going to be looking at options other than that one.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 124-16(3):

FORT LIARD BISON MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources questions regarding my Member's statement in which I raised the Bison Management Strategy and the concern of the residents of Fort Liard. As a result of the Member's statement, he had committed to a public meeting in Fort Liard. I would like to know how soon that will be conducted.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll commit to having it, with the Member's concurrence, within the next two weeks.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'd like to thank the Minister for that. I'd like to ask his staff to ensure that it's well advertised.

Another question is, has the department worked with Department of Transportation on the options of fencing at the airport?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There has been some work done, I understand, on electrified

fencing that had some problems with it. So it hasn't been brought forward as a solution at this point.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Another solution was to increase the quota for hunts of bison. Has the Minister taken any steps in that regard?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The intent was to look at moving from the one tag that is currently there up to six. Consultation is now being undertaken with the community about that suggestion and how the tags would be allocated.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Has the Minister's department been working on the new public education materials and will that be ready for the public meeting as well?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We'll make sure the staff go to the meeting as fully prepared as possible with all the information that is available in addition to the draft strategy and an open mind, and sit down with the community to talk about this particular issue that I know has been a matter for this Member for some time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 125-16(3):
GWICH'IN CONTRACTING MEMORANDUM
OF UNDERSTANDING

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of ITI. The Gwich'in signed a land claim agreement in 1992. In that agreement there are several elements regarding the economic measures chapter, protected areas chapter, establishment of the Gwich'in Territorial Park just outside of Inuvik. There's a lot of protection agreements that we've put in place that were supposed to establish a park management plan regarding how that park was going to be managed with respect to the Gwich'in Territorial Park. There was establishment of a park committee to oversee the implementation of the park and ongoing economic social programs that could be run to enhance the Gwich'in's involvement in managing that park.

Today there is still, regardless of the park plan in place, contracts being let publicly without consulting the Gwich'in regarding those economic opportunities. I would like to ask the Minister of ITI how seriously this government takes the Gwich'in Territorial Park and the park management agreement that was signed between the

Government of the Northwest Territories and the Gwich'in Tribal Council to implement that park.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories takes any agreement it enters into very seriously and certainly if we have entered into an agreement with regard to parks, we would honour it.

MR. KRUTKO: Just on that, why is the Government of the Northwest Territories allowing public tenders for work in the Gwich'in Territorial Park?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The Government of the Northwest Territories has a memorandum of understanding with the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the purpose of the MOU is to give first opportunity to the Gwich'in Tribal Council for any contracts that the government plans to enter into, whether as a sole-sourced or negotiated contract basis. My expectation, if we went to a tendered contract, would have been that we couldn't reach agreement on price and it became cost prohibitive, so we had no choice but to go to tender. Without knowing the specifics it would be difficult for me to conclude that.

MR. KRUTKO: The whole reason that we established a park management plan for the Gwich'in Territorial Park in Inuvik was for the plan to clearly spell out how it's going to be implemented, what economic opportunities would flow to the Gwich'in, and through the park committee they oversee the operation and expenditure of that park. Yet this government, with regard to ITI, has totally neglected its obligations under the park management plan for the Gwich'in Territorial Park. There were not supposed to be public tenders on this park. It was supposed to flow through the park management committee for this park. So why have you not used the park management committee in implementing the Gwich'in Territorial Park with respect to that agreement?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I realize there are a number of parks in the Beaufort and Gwich'in areas. Perhaps the Member could be more specific as to which park he's referring to.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's only one Gwich'in Territorial Park in the Inuvik region. It is just outside of Inuvik. It is a large area around Campbell Lake designed as a territorial park under the Gwich'in Land Claim. Because the park

was established under the land claim and our protected areas agreement it has special significance. I'd like to ask the Minister why the contracts and tenders of this government have not been allowed to go through the land claim agreements under the establishment of that park under the land claim agreement.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: If we had entered into a management plan -- and we have entered into a management plan -- I expect that it would have laid out the conditions under which we would go out to tender and I will endeavour to find out what those conditions were and advise the Member accordingly.

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

QUESTION 126-16(3):
SUPPORTS FOR
POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about the high school students and the career path they want to take. There seems to be some missing gaps in the education system. I want to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if his department has been looking at this issue in terms of some of the missing gaps, in terms of tracking students who have graduated from our small communities, in terms of trying to enter into a post-secondary institution and failing to meet certain requirements such that they need to receive more education curriculum to get into those schools. Has this department been tracking students, specifically in the Sahtu, who would like to get into colleges or universities and fail to meet certain requirements?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly addressing the community graduation is high on our radar within our department. We are proud to say there has been some real success to date with aboriginal students in the aboriginal communities. I'll just give you an example. From 2003 to today there has been an increase in aboriginal graduates from 119 to 206. That's a huge increase. Also, by small communities from 53 to 100 within a five-year period. We identify those as key successes. We do continue with some challenges, as the Member has alluded to. We continue to work with the regional groups and the superintendents and the DEAs and DEC's to identify those gaps.

MR. YAKELEYA: The issue I would like to again ask the Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment about is with regard to the huge increase of graduates in smaller communities, especially with the aboriginal students. Is the Minister dedicating some of the personnel within the region to work with the education board to track students who fall between the cracks with respect to trying to get into a post-secondary institution? I understand there are some students falling in the cracks and not being supported by this government with respect to getting into a recognized institution to begin their career path.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly we do support all students who apply through our education system. At the same time, stressing that we are working with the leadership in the regions and communities, the DEAs and DEC's, and the parents on the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative. That's a new initiative that we're working with. We have dedicated staff working in the regions. Specific to the Sahtu region we have resource staff that are working with our department on identifying the root causes of these challenges and trying to figure out solutions to that. Not only that, we just launched an NWT Literacy Strategy 2008-2018 that will clearly highlight those areas that need support improvement.

MR. YAKELEYA: Can the Minister inform this House that he will be or is going to work with the federal government, the other governments in the Northwest Territories and this government to look at how successfully we can track the students that finish grade 12, are able to get into a post-secondary institution or college, if that person is not able to get into college or university, and if there are support mechanisms in the small communities to allow him or her to get to a place where she or he is able to enter into a program? In the Sahtu alone with high school diplomas or more there's 52 percent of young students who receive high school diplomas. In Yellowknife it's 82 percent. In Hay River, Fort Smith, and Inuvik it's 72 percent. There are gaps that really need to be closed. I'm asking the Minister if he will consider working with other governments to see that these young students do have a chance at college or university courses.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly the work is underway to find those gaps between non-aboriginal and aboriginal students, the success to date and some struggling and the challenges that we're faced with. Certainly we'll continue to work with various organizations, government, universities, and colleges. Not only that, the learning starts at home as well. Taking early childhood into consideration, the schooling, the students choosing the career path with the support of their parents, their guidance and the teacher's. We need to work within our system, as well, and identify a certain path that students want to go on. Certainly we will continue to work with the federal

government. We're meeting next week on aboriginal education specifically, so I will be addressing those issues as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At one time I went to visit the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Behchoko. I understand they, along with the other governments who are involved, had one person dedicated to helping students in colleges and universities. I understand this program is very successful. I understand also that there is the possibility this Minister will sit down with the federal government to have a dedicated person in these small schools to track the students and support them through the system so they can get into college or university.

Will the Minister look very strongly and seriously at working with the aboriginal governments, the federal government, and his department to all who say they want to put a dedicated person in these small schools to help Grade 12 students move on to college or university if they choose? Will the Minister be able to do that?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly we do have a dedicated departmental staff working with the region. Out of the discussion we'll be having on the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative there will certainly be a discussion on a moving-forward basis. If the group and committee have identified that a dedicated resource person is needed within the communities, then that will be up for discussion as well on a moving-forward basis. I'm looking forward to the update on the strategy and I will be informing the standing committee on the progress to date.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 127-16(3):
COMMITMENT TO
SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleague here in the House, I'd like to ask the Minister of ITI some questions regarding the GNWT's support of the secondary diamond industry. Earlier he gave a commitment to the House that he would meet with them, but as this Minister seems to be well aware with full understanding that this diamond cutting industry is day by day, does the Minister of ITI have an action plan that includes financial resources to help support the secondary diamond industry? If he does, could he give this House some details on what that actually means?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues with the secondary diamond industry have just come up recently and, as the Member knows, we have committed to working with the standing committees in developing any solutions.

MR. HAWKINS: "Any" is a big word, so I wouldn't mind the Minister of ITI narrowing it down here, not just for my benefit but for the official record. Does any solution mean financial support in this particular case?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We do have a diamond policy which outlines how we would promote and develop secondary manufacturing. As I responded earlier, we've also looked at providing loan guarantees and other means of support, which has not met with favour. If the Member has any other suggestions I'd be pleased to undertake them. But we will be working with the committee to find a solution that will help save jobs.

MR. HAWKINS: I understand that we have a policy to help promote the secondary diamond industry, but one of the problems is outside of the reach of the normal hand of the Minister, which is the fact that if people aren't buying diamonds it puts our cutting industry completely at risk. Mr. Speaker, I don't have to lecture the Minister that Quebec supports industry. They will help move an industry to their area by helping them with establishment costs as well as labour costs. Mr. Speaker, the market out there wants Canadian diamonds. What is the Minister doing to make sure they buy northern diamonds? Mr. Speaker, is this government completely committed to the secondary diamond industry here in the North and are they willing to go to the wall for them? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are committed to working to help maintain and conserve the secondary diamond industry, but they will have to be on our terms. We are not going to cut our policies without making sure that the North continues to receive benefits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, the fear is that the diamond cutting industry we have here is really operating day by day. I appreciate the motherhood statements from the Minister but I want to hear that the Minister is going to be aggressive on this file to make sure we don't lose it because, I have to be honest, once they pack up, they could go anywhere in the world to cut

northern diamonds. They will be seen as northern diamonds. They won't really care. What is the Minister going to do to be aggressive on this file to make sure it doesn't slip through our fingers and it is lost forever? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I have already indicated we are prepared to meet with the diamond manufacturers. We are reviewing our diamond policy. We are quite prepared to put forward a proposed solution to the standing committee to see if we can move quickly on this. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 128-16(3):
MOOSE MEAT CONTAMINANTS ADVISORY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I want to question the Minister of ENR with regard to several news reports with regard to the moose in the southern Deh Cho which was reported in the Deh Cho Drum and the radio this morning. The concern was that they were reporting some pollutants in the moose. I just wanted to get some clarification on that. It is raising some concern with some Nahendeh residents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a concern raised by the naturally occurring levels of cadmium that are in the moose, specifically the moose that dwell and inhabit the mountains. The recommendations are to limit the amount of times that you eat kidneys and liver from moose. Regular moose meat is not a concern. The absorption rate is 5 percent compared to if you smoke. You absorb about 50 percent of the cadmium in cigarettes which is many times more toxic but, in this case, these are naturally occurring. Cadmium tends to concentrate up the food chain. It has been identified through testing that has been going on through the National Contaminants Program that this is a sufficient concern that has been in the advisory put out.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I guess the real concern is the fear that these reports are generating,, so people want to know, like the Minister said, about the safe levels and most particularly, for me, how long has this study been going on, Mr. Speaker? How long has the department known about this? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, what is recommended is one serving of valley moose kidney every two months and one serving of valley moose liver per week, one serving of mountain moose liver every three months. It is

recommended that no kidneys from these animals be consumed due to a significantly higher cadmium level. It has been a number of years now that they have worked with the National Contaminants Program getting help from hunters and outfitters to bring back samples of the animals that could be tested. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I guess the concern, too, is that the news reports talked about rising levels of these toxins. Mr. Minister is saying they are naturally occurring. Is there a way to assure the public that the increase in these cadmium levels is a natural occurring product as he is stating and his department is stating? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, there are no other sources of cadmium other than what is found naturally in the rocks, plants and water and it concentrates up the food chain. The National Northern Contaminants Program has been at work for about 15 years. They are looking mainly at barren land caribou and recently have started looking at the moose as well. The issue, I would assume, has always been there. It is just now that they are doing the testing on moose in addition to the caribou. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Just in order to get ahead of the fear and the panic that constituents have, is there a strategy in place or will the Minister look at a public awareness campaign, get a hold of the band offices, the leadership and the community to advise them just what he is telling me here today, that it is manageable? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, ENR will be working with the local health officials in the communities to make sure the chief medical health officer is issued the warning. We will make sure that we work with them to allay people's fears that this is naturally occurring and can be easily handled if they follow the guidelines put forward by the chief medical health officer. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 129-16(3):
PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, in regards to the Deh Cho Bridge and the \$165 million hired P3 that we are looking at, it is something that I supported. I think it is a way this government can put infrastructure in place and look at the possibility of unique ways of financing it. I think it is important

that we expand that program to include other regions. I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation how open is this government to realistically look at other areas for similar projects, looking at similar proposals and seeing if people in the private sector who can also deliver bridges at a cheaper price and see what the government can do it for. How open is the Minister to looking at those types of proposals in light of the Deh Cho Bridge project going forward?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the P3 projects and the approach of using a partnership to deal with our larger infrastructure is something we certainly looked at as something that could work with the Deh Cho Bridge project. It is also in the area the federal government looked at in terms of supporting with P3 dollars. We expect those to move forward. We are still waiting for them to set up their management board. Given all of their ingredients that are required to make the P3 work, we would still be very much interested to see what projects are out there, how it can be financed. It would have to be demonstrated, of course, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I was quite shocked and surprised to realize there were four reports that this government had in the House in regards to the proposed Peel River Bridge which was proposed when the Dempster Highway was being built back in 1968 and concluded in 1972. At the time that they built the bridge, it was prescribed back then, which was \$6 million. Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear from the department that their estimates were \$70 million. I was floored when I heard that so I looked a little further into it the possibility of at a cheaper price. I would like to ask the Minister, is he open to looking at a proposal that can come forward at a cheaper price than \$70 million? I think, realistically, it can be done for \$40 million.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have looked at other proposals that were unsolicited that have come forward to our departments from various organizations and companies. The fact that we have information dating back to the early '60s and '70s is certainly something we have in our archives. We have it for most of the major river crossings. It is some of the work that was done and we inherited it from the federal government. So, of course, we would be very much interested to see a proposal from any organization or company for us to review. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, in regards to the proposal or there is also a letter that came forward from committee supporting looking at the possibility

of a Peel River Bridge, something that I think is doable. We do have a ferry operation there. At some point, you are going to have to replace that. I think, also looking at the concern from the people in my riding is the amount of gravel that is put in that river every year to the tune of some 14,000 cubic metres every year that goes into that river which has been happening for 30 years. That is a lot of gravel that is being put into that river. I think it has a major affect on the habitat in regards to fish and also downstream by way of sandbars. Realizing that there is that potential there, would the Minister seriously sit down with the Gwich'in leadership and myself and also take into consideration the possibility of looking at a P3 project for the Peel River Bridge?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to review a proposal from whoever the Member is referring to. I have an interest on the Peel River crossing. Of course, the proposal will have to make sense. We'd also have to see how it could be accommodated in the capital budget that we have, depending on what the proposal indicates. Debt wall would have to be taken into consideration. We would certainly have to see what kind of federal support would be out there to move forward on a project of this nature. There are many factors that we have to look at. I would certainly be willing to accommodate a proposal if that is the interest of the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the economic times we are in today, I think it is probably a perfect opportunity to realizing the price of steel is down, the price of commodities is down and also the price of borrowing is down. This might be a good opportunity to seriously look at that. Again, I would like to ask the Minister, in light of the Deh Cho Bridge project, which basically is a \$165 million bridge -- which basically seems like it managed to get through pretty smoothly -- to seriously consider the possibility of a \$40 million bridge for the Peel River. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I have said it before. We would be pleased to take a look at it. Of course affordability, but the concept and how it is presented to us in the form of a proposal would be of interest. The price tag, the bottom line, our estimates as the Member has indicated, the project is around \$70 million. If somebody has a better price, we would be very interested to see why and how. We would be willing to accept something that comes forward to review. There still needs to be a lot of work if we are going to make it a project. We would have to find the resources. We would have to see what the federal government would be able to contribute. There are big things we would have to

look at. We would be pleased to take it for consideration. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 130-16(3):
COMMITMENT TO
SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. RAMSAY: I have a few more questions for the Minister of ITI and talking earlier, I know Mr. Hawkins was talking about this as well as the government's commitment to diamonds and the cut and polish industry and the industry as a whole in the Northwest Territories. A question I would have for the Minister and for the government is, has the government given any consideration whatsoever to buying up an allotment of diamonds from the producers here in the Northwest Territories and stockpiling those until the market turns around, Mr. Speaker? Has the government given any consideration to that? Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have looked at a number of possibilities. The main question is, would it seem to be a good investment for this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be a great investment. I think the markets are going to turn around. If the producers aren't able to move their 10 percent allotment to local cut and polish plants, I think it would be a prudent investment by the Government of the Northwest Territories to put these aside. Because everybody knows, when you have access to rough, people will come. We talked about a diamond bourse or exchange here in the Northwest Territories. What better way to establish that than to have a supply of rough diamonds available. Again, I would like to ask the Minister if the government would seriously consider buying these rough diamonds and setting them aside so that we can establish a diamond bourse, an exchange here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Certainly we are quite prepared to look at this and bring it forward, put it in front of the standing committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, late last year I had some questions for the Minister in regard to the review that was being done on the establishment of a diamond bourse here in Canada. I know the Government of the Northwest Territories has

contributed \$20,000 towards that review. I have yet to see the actual review. I would like to ask the Minister where that review is at and what direct influence or input the Government of the Northwest Territories has had on the review. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: First of all, I would have to find out if there are any diamond companies who are interested in selling their diamonds to us. We would also look at different ways of how we could make that happen. With regards to diamond bourse, we participated in a study that was commissioned by the Government of Ontario. The Government of Ontario has approached us to participate in the secondary second phase of it. We have contributed \$20,000 to do so. We will be continuing to participate in that review of establishing a diamond bourse somewhere in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister know when this review is going to be concluded and when we might be able to look at it? Again, what impact or influence did the Government of the Northwest Territories have on that review? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The paperwork was being done up just recently. I expect the second phase will be starting up shortly. As I have always indicated, the fact that the majority of diamonds in Canada are produced in the Northwest Territories should have an impact on any decisions on where the bourse would be located. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 131-16(3):
FUNDING SOURCES FOR
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation in light of his exchange between me and also the Member for Mackenzie Delta in terms of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Is the Minister looking at any areas where he could put into the budget of Transportation where there would be dollars identified for the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had a discussion last week during question period about some of the different ways

we would try to get the federal government to engage in looking at the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a project. In the meantime, we have been working with the federal government to identify different areas that we can improve.

By the end of the life of this government, we should have 39 bridges built in the whole Mackenzie Valley area. We also have been doing a lot of work on various grade improvements. There has been significant investment over the last number of years in this area. It is still an area that we intend to continue to invest in and work towards extending the life of the winter road and improving that piece of infrastructure. We will continue to invest in that area. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has stated that there is certain infrastructure in place to improve the winter road, to improve our highway system up in the Mackenzie Valley here. I would ask the Minister if he is considering putting some dedicated funds...I will wait for the answer in terms of putting dedicated funds...I will wait for the answer in terms of putting dedicated funds in the budget that says to construct the Mackenzie Valley Highway from Wrigley to Inuvik.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, no, I can't commit that we're going to build a Mackenzie Valley Highway with the amount of money we have in our budget. We'd need the federal government to engage to support a project of that size. It's close to \$2 billion. We'd probably also need to look at the O and M of a piece of infrastructure that large. We certainly don't have it within our resources.

What we can do, and what I can commit to doing, is continue to improve those sections of roads in the area and look at extending the life of the winter roads and improve the stream crossings. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are two different estimate numbers out there. I understand that the territorial government is estimating at \$700 million. There's a company out there, MAC group, Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation, whose estimate is \$1.8 billion. In between, there's got to be a number. I know that this government doesn't have this kind of money to build a highway. I'm asking if the Minister would look into his budget and commit so many dollars that it would say the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I think we all know and recognize and understand clearly that the federal government has a major, major role in terms of this construction, but also they're taking millions and millions of dollars out of the Northwest Territories. I'm just looking for some creativity, some solutions, some ways that we can get people the hope that we can be a master of our own course in the Northwest

Territories. Can the Minister start identifying in a budget line item money towards the Mackenzie Valley Highway?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, there are probably a number of dollar figures floating out there that people have put together in terms of trying to estimate the cost of this piece of road. The \$700 million estimate, I think, has come during the days of the 12th Assembly and it's quite old and aged. There are other estimates out there.

We, as a government, as a department, have undertaken to do a couple of things to improve the business case. We're doing economic analysis of that piece of infrastructure. We're also doing more baseline studies to give us a better idea of certain pricing. We're also doing a scope of the whole project. There are areas that we have included in our budget.

As for doing a complete analysis of the whole road, I think we'd have to see if there was more of an interest from the federal government before we decided that we need to do more work and provide more investment. The resources we have at hand are already strained, so we'd have to see something that was fairly positive before we would undertake such a huge task. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I take it that in terms of waiting for the federal government to have a favourable response in terms of our business case, as the Minister said, in terms of building the Mackenzie Valley Highway we're sort of waiting to see what the federal government is saying, which they aren't saying anything. I guess I'm asking the Minister in terms of going to the federal government specifically to Minister Strahl with the other aboriginal groups, people of the Northwest Territories, to say that we have an interest, there are other ways that we want to construct the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I'm very happy to hear that they are doing other work. I'd like to see in the budget a budget line item that says the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, environmental baseline, regulatory issues. I know the Minister is going to have some thought to this, but I'd like to see it somewhere where it shows that we see this as a priority and the federal government starts to see this as a priority.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I didn't hear a question here. It's not time for Members' statements; it's time for questions. Thank you, Members. The time for question period has expired. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge one of my most important constituents in the riding of Yellowknife Centre, my oldest son, McKinley Hawkins. He's here with me today at work because the schools have PD days. So he's helping me out at the office here until Wednesday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome everybody in the gallery today. We hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the opening address. Item 11, replies to the budget address, day seven of seven. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Replies to the Budget Address

MR. KRUTKO'S REPLY

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, we have some 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. As we all know, we're going through a recession and yet, Mr. Speaker, there are still high pockets of unemployment in a lot of our smaller communities in the Northwest Territories. The recession will hit them harder than most of the larger centres who have other economies to depend on, whether it's oil and gas, minerals, government, industry, or manufacturing. Mr. Speaker, we must find a way to stimulate all our communities in the Northwest Territories with the budget that's before us to find ways that we can get the dollars into the communities and have projects that basically can move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, was a full supporter of the community capacity funding which rolled out in the previous government in regard to some \$30 million that went into communities all across the Northwest Territories which was on a base-plus formula which was fair, equitable and that communities really saw that they can do something with that infrastructure funding. Mr. Speaker, I think we have to roll out a similar initiative in regard to either the \$50 million for funding by way of housing or looking at some way we can use the Building Canada Fund for those types of special projects. I think it won't be fair if you look at application-based programs and

expect all 33 communities to have the capacity to bring forward an application and expend these dollars over two years. Realistically, I don't know how you're going to do it. It is going to be challenging just to expend the capital dollars we have in this government where year after year our capital carry-overs continue to grow with last year's carry-over exceeding \$200 million, not counting the new capital infrastructure funding we have before us.

As a government we have to be realistic and find unique ways of spending these dollars and also, more importantly, stimulating our economy, putting people to work, being able to bring in revenues by way of payroll taxes, personal income tax, corporate taxes and property taxes to ensure the revenues of this government are stabilized. Without that, we as government will be no worse off than we were in the 13th Assembly when we had to cut some \$130 million. Realistically, that can happen again today.

Mr. Speaker, one of the big challenges we face in our communities is just dealing with the day-to-day issues on capacity through programs and services. Mr. Speaker, the challenges we face are a lack of dental care, a lack of doctor care, in some cases, a lack of nursing care and, more importantly, mental health and addiction services. Yet, Mr. Speaker, this government was in the process of cutting those dollars for mental health positions. Now we find that because of pressure from Members on this side they are now going to be reinstated. I say whoop-dee-do.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, there are strings attached. Sorry, we can give you the money, give you the person, and give you the position. But unless that person's got a master's degree in psychology, that person ain't going into your community. The same thing applies to other professions that are required in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we have to take down some of these stovepipes to realize that small communities have unique challenges, as we see in policing in regard to the community I represent, Tsiigehtchic, where again I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for taking down those stovepipes and find a unique way to provide police services. That means putting an extra police officer in Fort McPherson and designating him to serve the community of Tsiigehtchic; I'd say have at 'er.

Mr. Speaker, we as government have to work closer with our First Nations partners. I talk about the aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories and especially those ones with land claim agreements which this government signed on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government on behalf of

Canada. Mr. Speaker, it's sad to see in this day and age that this government is competing directly against those land claim organizations that have invested their own dollars in regard to business ventures that they have taken a risk. Regardless, if it's real estate in regard to the office complex for Inuvik, our large \$100 million capital project in the Gwich'in settlement region where now all they got was six loads of gravel...Shame, shame, shame.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister, in regard to Public Works, tabled a document in regard to giving a list of all the subcontractors which included some Gwich'in subcontractors, but yet today nothing is being done. To top it off, Mr. Speaker, when this government uses public funds to run directly counter to an aboriginal investment by lending dollars that they borrowed in regard to \$10 million and then use public funds to the tune of \$34 million, totally putting that business opportunity out of reach, in which a company again has no way of being able to compete against government funds in that sector. Again, Mr. Speaker, there was no, I repeat, no market disruption strategy or plan imposed on that lending of \$34 million, which is a no-no in the Government of the Northwest Territorial Financial Administration Act. Again, Mr. Speaker, we are stepping out of bounds by way of taking these actions knowing that they would directly affect the economy of the Northwest Territories, especially for aboriginal investment in the Northwest Territories economy.

Mr. Speaker, what are we saying to the aboriginal investment dollars that are spent in the Northwest Territories? Should they maybe consider taking those dollars and investing in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton or, for all we know, Toronto? Toronto is a good place to spend money; everybody's looking for money these days in regard to the Toronto Stock Exchange, in regard to venture capital. They can do that. I do not think it's fair for this government to be competing directly against aboriginal development corporations in light of the economy that we're in and putting them out of business for the sake of making a small 10 percent investment. Oh, I forgot to say there's also an administration fee that hasn't been added to this.

Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal communities I represent are tired of lip service in regard to how government is going to improve programs and services in our communities. The doctors' visits are becoming shorter; you get to see him once a month. Nowadays you're lucky to get in to see him twice a month if not every three months. Dental care, well, you might see him twice a year. In regard to mental health positions for communities, in a community I represent, Fort McPherson with 850 people, they get to see a mental health person once a month. How do you expect people to deal with their mental health issues by someone driving into the

community for a couple of hours, drive back to Inuvik once a month, and say you're providing a service to that community?

Mr. Speaker, this government has to wake up to the reality that communities don't expect anything less than those large communities in the Northwest Territories. Sometimes you might have forgotten what it was like to have one school in regard to a teacher in one community or what it was like to have a nursing station with one nurse running the whole community when you have dementia centres, walk-in clinics, doctors' visits, major hospitals in Inuvik and Yellowknife. Yet, Mr. Speaker, people are struggling in our communities to get the basic services.

I got a call the other day from an elder in my community. She told me, David, bring something up for me. I said what. This person has to go to Edmonton for cancer treatment. If this person leaves McPherson at eight o'clock in the morning, she has to drive to Inuvik and catch the flight at 1:30. You get to Edmonton at almost six o'clock, and if the plane is late, you don't even...If you don't have any money or you don't have any dollars to go to the cafe in the Inuvik Airport or at the airport here in Yellowknife, you don't eat, you don't drink anything until you actually get to where you're going. There were some cases where people were stuck at the airport in Inuvik for almost eight hours and finally realized the flight was cancelled. These things have to be thought about by people in regard to how they deal with the whole issue around medical travel. How do we take care of the patient once they leave home, once they get to the hospital in regard to Edmonton or Larga Home? Again, those little things that we may take for granted, an elderly person who is dealing with cancer, for them it's a big thing. It's not bad enough that they have to deal with stress alone during their travel, leaving home, loved ones, but worrying about how their trip is going to be and how are they going to get there.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we have to sometimes take off our blinders, take a step back and realize the unique challenges that we face in different communities; you have to treat them differently. We, as government, have to realize that all policies, procedures and legislation we put in place do not fit all. We have to allow for a system that takes into account that you have to allow for differences and unique situations so that maybe you can change the policies to allow small communities to have people who may not have a psychology degree in regard to a mental health position, but someone there that people can talk to in regard to emotional stress, regardless if it's residential school problems that occurred over the years or just dealing with suicide and death in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, these people are in our communities already. These people have taken training on the Hay River Reserve. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the sad part about it is our own people who took this training aren't good enough for this government to have them hired in regard to those positions in our communities, regardless if it's mental health or addictions. Mr. Speaker, it tells me that either whoever is writing these policies is too high up on the scale of knowing what the North is all about or somebody just fell out of university and comes forward from the sunny South, Toronto or Vancouver, and comes to the Northwest Territories and drafts our policies and says, well, this is how we do it in the South so maybe that's how we should do it in the North. I think sometimes that's exactly what we're putting forward by way of legislation or policies that we think were great at the time but afterwards realizing it doesn't work for all in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, a major challenge that we face in the Northwest Territories is climate change and the mitigated effects that it's having on our communities. I know I rattled on a little bit last time about the flood in Aklavik and trying to get an access road in regard to a gravel source close by, and being able to find the gravel that's going to be needed to house up that community so the next time there's a flood they'll know that they'll have some sort of protection mechanism in the community and that they have the gravel sources to be able to respond in regard to any berms that have to be built to house them in case there is a flood in the community. Yet, Mr. Speaker, again the community has to start from ground zero, come up with some sort of a plan in regard to ensuring that the engineering design and the construction of this project is coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, the funny thing is that this gravel source has 54 million cubic metres of gravel which will last for the next decade if we get into it and use it for the Inuvik region. Yet, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to site 177, there was nothing done by way of how many gravel resources are there. Is there even enough gravel in that source to build a road to Tuk? I was surprised to hear that from a resident of Tuk at the Beaufort leaders meeting. Yet this government says it's done due diligence in regard to that capital investment.

Again, this government has to ensure there's transparency, fairness, and that all communities are treated equally and not just cherry picked from among a few. The government has to implement programs and services which are universal, which will serve 33 communities, and not just play us off one against another, as we're seeing happening in the capital budget process.

I think it's important to know that as a government we have the responsibility to be seen as fair, transparent, and that any capital investment that's put in place is being offered to other communities throughout the Northwest Territories and not just one or two.

A major issue that has occurred in my riding and other small communities throughout the Northwest Territories is in the area of dust control. I think it's important to realize that some people who may not think it's a problem should go to one of our communities where you're actually eating dust as you walk down the street, or have to keep your windows closed because of the dust that's blowing in communities, or where the elderly people suffer from asthma and breathing problems and the suffering they go through during the summer months.

There was a program a number of years ago called the Main Street Chipseal Program for some 15 communities in the Northwest Territories. I was totally surprised to realize that the community of Fort Smith was going to be requesting \$6 million to chipseal their streets. Yet the small communities were told that program no longer exists, we can't help you, good bye, see you later, take it out of your gas tax money. Most of the small communities' gas tax money adds up to just under \$100,000.

I think to be fair and transparent we again have to ensure that whatever capital investment that is in place is fair, is transparent, and everyone has an opportunity to participate.

One of the highlights of the budget that jumped out at me was the whole idea around policing. I mentioned it earlier. That step is one step of ensuring safe and secure communities. I don't know what it's going to take for this government to realize that the smaller communities are feeling left out with regard to how they are being treated in light of programs and services, policing, and capital infrastructure. For us to walk away from small municipalities and say sorry, you're now on your own...It works great in tax-based communities where there are major revenues coming in through property taxes, corporate taxes, and other taxes they receive. For us to do justice, we have to ensure there is a program in place to identify communities separately with regard to those communities that fall outside the lines, such as charter communities, band communities such as Colville Lake or Wrigley or Tsiigehtchic, and they're not recognized as municipalities in the sense of the Northwest Territories. They are different, yet we stamp them with the same stamp Yellowknife gets. I do not see that being fair on the small communities to allow them to struggle getting through their deficits, capacity issues, finding simple things, and financial officers, band

managers. I think as a government we've got to realize that there's more to the Northwest Territories than mega projects of \$100 million schools, major dementia centres and looking at walk-in clinics. Whoop-dee-doo. The people in Tsiigehtchic really need a walk-in clinic, but I'm not too sure where we're going to put it.

I think it's important to realize we're here to serve everyone and offer everyone an opportunity to live healthy, vibrant and reliable lives. What is the cost to our health care system when we neglect a community by not having nursing services or policing services or mental health services? What happens to those people when you finally realize they have diabetes or cancer long after these things could have been prevented by simply having a position in the community?

I don't think we realize the financial implications for small communities until they become a statistic with regard to the burden on our health care system. Everything I talk about today can be prevented, as long as we treat everybody fairly equitably, and, more importantly, with compassion.

We're a consensus government. We're not a province. I think it's important to realize that this government has to do a better job dealing with small communities in a way that makes them feel like they are a piece of the Northwest Territories and not simply an outpost for a fishing camp out on the river. I think this government has to get around that and start treating the communities more favourably and importantly, with honesty and respect.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY'S REPLY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate this opportunity. The Minister highlighted during his budget presentation that this is one of the greenest budgets ever and, indeed, I think it is. This makes me happy. We're really getting down to it, finally. But it also makes me sad how little we have done in relation to the need.

I'd like to take this opportunity to read into the record some quotes that outline the gravest of concerns that we, the people of the North, and indeed the people of the world, now face. While I read these into the record I will have in mind the young McKinley Hawkins and other wonderful people of the North and throughout the world.

The quotes come from a book by Gwynne Dyer, a Canadian intellectual, called "Climate Wars". It was just published. I'd like to proceed with reading from a series of quotes from our top scientists on the

issue of climate change. It starts with a quote from John Holdren, director of Woods Hole Research Centre, past-president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This is in February of 2008.

"We depend on the climate for the productivity of farms and forests and fisheries. We depend on the climate for the availability of water. We are at risk from the climate -- from heat waves, from floods, from droughts, from wildfires, from sea level rise -- and what we are seeing is all of these things happening faster. We are seeing not only a rise in the surface temperature of the planet, we are seeing changes in circulation patterns, changes in storm tracks, increases in flood intensity and frequency, increases in drought intensity and frequency, more and stronger heat waves, more powerful tropical storms right across the board. Everything that is expected to result from global climate change driven by greenhouse gasses is not only happening, but it's happening faster than anybody expected."

Mr. Dyer says, recognizing that we are now at 6.7 billion people on the globe and we're marching forward to nine billion, that it is extremely unlikely that there will ever be nine billion human beings on this planet. It's not just...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. If I could have your attention for a moment. I'd like to remind you of our rules for reading extensively from documents that are not before the House. Just to keep your reading from documents short.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarity, I have a number of them, but they are short. Each one is short. Is that acceptable?

---Interjection

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dyer himself says, "It's not just that there's no obvious way to feed the next 2.5 billion; in the relatively near future global heating is going to start depriving us of a large and steadily increasing proportion of the food supply that supports the present 6.7 million."

I'd also like to note a quote from James Hansen, the top scientist on climate change. He says, "If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed, carbon dioxide will need to be reduced from its current 385 parts per million to at most 350 parts per million. We're currently at about 388. If the present overshoot of this target carbon dioxide is not reached, there is a possibility of seeing irreversible catastrophic effects."

Part of the problem is that in the assessments that have been done to date, we have not included the feedback loops, the things that accelerate the whole system. And it's because there's a process in the IPCC reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, that necessarily uses data that's five or six years old and doesn't allow really current information to get involved. What scientists are trying to do now is give us an update that's really current.

Some of these feedback loops that we've heard about: an increased rate of evaporation from warmer oceans that will lead to more warming; melting of the polar ice cover, particularly on the Arctic Ocean, around the Atlantic coast and Antarctic coast. This melting near the two poles will replace highly reflective white ice sheets which bounce 70 percent of incoming sunlight straight back into space, with open ocean that absorbs 94 percent. So we're going from reflecting 70 percent to absorbing 94 percent of the sunlight striking it and converting this into heat.

Another feedback loop is the release due to warming of vast amounts of fossil methane hydrate from the Arctic and also the release of methane hydrate from the oceans. We've heard about those. This methane is 22 times worse than carbon dioxide as a warming agent, so warming will be much faster as you include this feedback mechanism. We know now that this is already happening in the Arctic.

Another issue is that the carbon that has been absorbed by the oceans, which is a huge thing we have in our favour. The oceans actually take carbon from the atmosphere and absorb it and store it so it doesn't affect our climate. Unfortunately, we have now realized that the capacity of the oceans is cut in half because of the warmer temperatures and the carbonation of the water. Now, this starts getting into some complicated science and so on, but the major fact here is that this is another feedback loop that is causing things to happen much, much faster. Again, it addresses this gravest of concerns.

One more quote from Vandana Shiva, director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Natural Resource Policy in New Delhi.

"With more and more land that is diverted for industrial biofuels to keep cars running we have two years before a food catastrophe breaks out worldwide. It will be 20 years before climate catastrophe breaks out, but the false solutions to climate change are creating catastrophes that will be much more rapid than the climate change itself."

I want this House to be fully aware of the context within which we develop budgets and deliver

programs to our people. This is something -- and I feel awkward talking about this because I know people still are not aware of how grave the situation is -- I feel obligated to my people, and the people of the world, to really highlight this and stress we can't just toy at this. We can't debate and argue about this. The science is very clear and it's becoming clearer every day that we speak. We need to really focus and completely green our economy, if you will. Again, I don't want to turn people off that are tired of the green operation, but we need to redo our whole systems, the way we develop our economy, the way we do business, how we educate our children and so on. We need to really start addressing it in a holistic way. Our difficulty is that our time frame is quite short. We know that we're already past what is sustainable. But we also know that we can take that for a while, as long as we return as quickly as possibly or, say, within a matter of decades to a level of carbon in the atmosphere that is sustainable again.

The way this happens, of course, is with each and every one of us and each and every one of our constituents out there acting in knowledgeable ways, becoming aware of the issues and then acting together to address this.

So I once again very much appreciate this opportunity to address this context within which these budgets are developed and go forward. I guess I make a plea, and I would be on my knees if I need be, because we are discussing the gravest issue here for human kind and, of course, for the ecological system out there. Let's really get aware, let's become aware, let's focus on working together on this and let's focus on getting effective and make sure our budgets from this time forward are more and more cognitive of this both demand and opportunity.

Fortunately, I think recognizing everything we do must be within this context, I see the happy coincidence of many great opportunities for doing things in better ways for people that actually will respond to the need to do this. I'm looking forward to working with this government towards that end. The solutions are myriad, it's just that they're desperately needed yesterday.

It's going to take a lot of awareness and commitment and innovation to act effectively on these opportunities, but the goal is great and the outcome is worth our complete dedication and focus. For our people I again make this plea to this House: become aware and act quickly. I will offer my full help on that in any way that's useful.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. The

honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 14-16(3):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC
ACCOUNTS 2007-2008

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Public Accounts 2007-2008. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 16, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 10-16(3):
SETTING OF SITTING HOURS BY SPEAKER

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House.

At the appropriate time I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today.

---Unanimous consent granted

Motions

MOTION 10-16(3):
SETTING OF SITTING HOURS BY SPEAKER
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker,

after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy; Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee; Committee Report 3-16(3), Report on the Use of Laptop Computers and Blackberry Devices in the Legislative Assembly; Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010; Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act; Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act; Bill 4, Public Library Act; Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act; and Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

By the authority given me as Speaker by Motion 10-16(3), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House; and further, by the authority given me as Speaker by Rule 11(4), I appoint the Member of Kam Lake to act as deputy chair of Committee of the Whole for today.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7, Committee Report 2, Committee Report 3, Tabled Document 11, Bill 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The wish of the committee is to proceed with the Department of Health and Social Services and if that is concluded, proceed onto the Department of Human Resources. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we will take a short break and begin with the Department of Health and Social Services.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, everyone. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. The first item is I will ask the Minister of Health and Social Services if she'd like to bring in some witnesses.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses in? Thank you. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Thank you, Minister Lee. Thank you, committee. Committee, we are on page 8-23, health services programs, operations expenditure summary, \$176.717 million.

Before we get to that, for the record, Minister Lee, if you could introduce your witnesses, please.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is director of finance Mr. Derek Elkin and to my left is Mr. Dana Heide, acting deputy minister of Health and Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. It's been so often that we've seen your witnesses there I forgot to have you introduce them. Welcome, gentlemen. Thanks, committee. We are on page 8-23. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move a motion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Mr. Krutko would like to move a motion. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Oh, sorry. Mr. Krutko.

COMMITTEE MOTION 1-16(3):
STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS IN
SMALL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES
CARRIED

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee strongly recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services take immediate and concrete action to improve the delivery of health and social services programs in small and remote communities;

And further, that the department develop a strategy for program and service delivery that is flexible and

responsive to the unique challenges experienced by small communities;

And furthermore, that the strategy address all community primary care and "first contact" care services, including, but not limited to, doctors' visits, nursing services, mental health workers, and dental care services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think I have asked a lot of questions in the last couple of days in regards to this area and I think it's important that by way of a motion we can be able to try to stem some of these problems we are seeing in our smaller communities, especially with regard to the area of programs and service delivery in communities, because what we are finding is that there are different types of sizes of communities. You meet challenges in a lot of the communities. I think it is important that we cannot refuse services to communities especially when we realize that by providing good health care and social services in our communities it does provide for a healthier community.

I think, Mr. Chairman, it is important that we do have to get to the bottom of this problem, especially when we are realizing that there are challenges in regard to finding nurses for a lot of our smaller communities, deal with mental health and addiction issues and, more importantly, the service by way of doctors' care and visits and also the dental care in our communities. I think it is important that we do come forward with some sort of a strategy in regard to looking at these programs and services and realizing that we have to have something that is flexible to meet the unique challenges we have in a lot of our smaller communities.

With that, I look forward to the support from the other colleagues in the House to move this motion forward so we can move on. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be supporting the motion. I agree with the Member about trying to get health care services in the community, whether there are more doctor visits, nurses that are there full time, certainly mental health workers, and I couldn't disagree with the dental care services either.

Mr. Chairman, in this day and age, I think what this Member is asking for is a strategy for implementation. I certainly agree with that. Everyone knows this isn't going to happen overnight, but it is about coming forward with an

action plan so we can provide those real services to the communities that they want and certainly need.

Health care is one of the defining hallmarks of our Canadian society. The older I get, the more I realize how important it is. I think Mr. Krutko has been fighting an admirable battle on this one, trying to get nurses full time in his communities. I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, I also will be supporting the motion that has been put forward by Mr. Krutko. I certainly look forward to the flexibility and the responses to the unique challenges by our communities. It has been noted by several MLAs over the past week or so in terms of the unique challenges faced by small communities. I certainly hope that the Minister takes this motion to heart and comes back with some options or some things that we need to have some more discussion on in terms of how we service our small communities in a way that we would see an increase in terms of our health care in our communities. I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I seek committee's consent to go back to page 8-18 for clarification on the line item. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee, for your indulgence. Under primary community services, primary care, you have a number of line items broken out. I know the other day there was at least one specific item where a Member sought clarity. Could I get the funding allocation for each one of these individual line items broken out? What we have here listed under the main estimates is \$522,000. For example, in looking for what is under funding for seniors 1-800 line, the breakout for NWT Seniors Advisory Council, et cetera, all the way through. If I can I get that on the official record, it would be much appreciated. I think we can do this on one try. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the \$522,000, it breaks down to \$183,000 for NWT Seniors' Society; \$212,000 for Council of Persons with Disabilities; \$62,000 for CNIB; \$20,000 for Rick Hansen 'Man in Motion'; and \$45,000 is for miscellaneous. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thanks to the Minister for that. Does NWT Seniors Games have its own budget line item or is it wrapped into the Rick Hansen 'Man in Motion' activity? Would it specifically have its own number attached to it? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Seniors Games would be funded through the miscellaneous category, but that funding is provided every second year. This year is not the year where we would be asked to fund that. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask a question on page 8-23.

---Interjection

MS. BISARO: Okay, fine.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that we concluded 8-18?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We will return now to page 8-23, health services programs, operations expenditure summary. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My apologies for rushing you. I wanted to ask a question relative to the NWT health centre services funding that goes to the various health and social service agencies or authorities, specifically the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority which does receive funding for an organization in Yellowknife known as SideDoor. It is my understanding that SideDoor is scheduled to receive \$100,000 in the 2009-10 budget year. If I can get that confirmed by the Minister, please. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, that funding would not be coming from this category, but I could confirm that SideDoor is scheduled to receive \$100,000. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the confirmation. Maybe after the next question the Minister can tell me

where it is coming from so I won't ask the question again.

I wanted to mention that Yellowknife MLAs met with the SideDoor executive director a little while ago. They are specifically struggling to meet the financial requirements for an overnight program. The program itself is to provide for youth aged 16 to 19 who kind of slip through the cracks of social service coverage and are a particularly difficult group to find accommodations for. This is an overnight program for them to go to SideDoor if they feel that need and stay overnight from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. if they have to. They are struggling to fund this particular overnight program and are very happy to be receiving the \$100,000 that is scheduled to be put into the budget for them, but their budget actually is about \$200,000. When MLAs met with this particular group, we did suggest that they go to aboriginal groups within the city to try and see whether or not they could get some extra funding there. Of course, they are meeting with us to try and get more funding.

It is certainly our intent to try and have the group find as much funding outside of GNWT funding as possible. With that said, though, I know that the group is really having difficulty accessing funds. I would like to know from the Minister whether or not there is any possibility that even an extra \$20,000 could be found in next year's budget somewhere that would assist this particular organization with their program. It is an extremely valuable program. Again, it is servicing kids who are most at risk. If I could ask the Minister that question, that would be great. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I was at the same meeting, so I understand the ask from SideDoor for additional funding. I have recently communicated to SideDoor and asked them for more information about their revenue. Because during the meeting they suggested that their revenue is much larger than some of the NGOs that I know of who provide youth services. I appreciate that all of the youth shelters and youth programs in the North are not funded as much as they would like. At the same time, the \$100,000 that we provide for SideDoor is larger than any funding we provide to any youth centre for a day programming or otherwise. It is, in fact, larger than the money we provide to most shelters, I believe.

I could say that I will commit to the Member that I will discuss with the officials again if it is at all possible to find anything else. But, as it stands now, I am being asked by every NGO, whether it be the Centre for Northern Families, YWCA, Inuvik Shelter in Inuvik and many other youth centres all around the Territories asking for extra money. We do actually have to work hard to keep that \$100,000 funding for SideDoor. Sally Ann just recently met

with me last week asking for more money. It is just the demands are much higher than the supply. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the answer, to the Minister. I appreciate that everybody has their hand out looking for funds. I think I have to state that this particular community houses 50 percent, give or take, of the Territories population. That is an awful lot larger group of kids that need to be looked after. I also think that some of the kids in this 16 to 19 age group are kids who are coming from the communities and end up here in Yellowknife and then have no place to stay. I appreciate the Minister's commitment to look at finding some funds. As I said earlier, I think even \$10,000 or \$20,000 would certainly be of assistance to the SideDoor for this particular program. I would urge the Minister to do whatever she can, and either I or Mr. Abernethy will be following up with her on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. SANDY LEE: I will look again and I will get back to the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Thank you, committee. We are on page 8-23, health services programs, operations expenditure summary, \$176.717 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 8-24, activity summary, health services programs, grants and contributions, grants, \$25,000. Contributions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Contributions?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I was just calling contributions, so I will call contributions, \$134.026 million. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't be long on my question. Could the Minister, if it is possible, give us the breakdown on the hospital services by way of \$73,000 and health care centres, \$27.456 million? Could I have a printout of that? I don't want to get the response now, but if she can give us a printout for all the Members here so we can see how that money is broken down, if that is possible, thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, will do.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under physician services to NWT residents, does that include the local fees under the \$32 million figure? If it does, can I get the breakdown between the local costs and the local physician, the groups there

versus how much is spent on local doctors? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: We don't have that with us, but I will undertake to provide the Member with the breakdowns. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Although I am sure the Minister will provide all Members, but if she could provide all Members that information and make that known on the record, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I will do that and make that available to all Members.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: In line with those requests, I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Chairman, too, if she could provide breakdowns for the health centres and the medical equipment under \$50,000.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, I will do that for all the Members.

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

MS. BISARO: I have to apologize in advance if this question has been asked and answered already, but I have no recollection, unfortunately. I wanted to reference funding for nurse practitioners. It was quite an issue last year when we considered the budget, that we had nurse practitioners and that they weren't funded, basically. That was a struggle for the department to try to find funding to keep these nurse practitioners in the system and fully funded for. My question to the Minister is, I think our information is that we have a fairly large number of nurse practitioners at this point. I can't remember exactly how many. But I would like to know whether or not all of these nurse practitioner positions are now funded or if we are relying on some federal funding, for instance, which might lapse in the future, or if they are being funded from a program other than the Health department budget. Is this permanent funding and ongoing for the foreseeable future? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: All of that nurse practitioner funding is being funded under THAF and they are expected to sunset under the year. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Okay, thank you. I understand that THAF funding is subject to renewal. I guess, if it is not renewed, we don't get a renewal of THAF funding. How does the Minister propose to keep

these NPs in our workforce and doing the great job that they do? Because I think they bring efficiencies to our system. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: That is a challenge that we need to meet or consider as we budget for the next year. We are working, as a department and me, with the federal government to give us an indication within the next four to six weeks so that we can plan accordingly. Obviously we will have to try to find the funding from within, but it will take a lot of work to do that. It will take a lot of coordination with the authorities to see if they could absorb these positions. It would depend very much on what is available on the ground. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess, just for clarification required from the answer, the THAF funding is expiring at the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year or the 2009-10 fiscal year? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: We will end fiscal year 2009-10. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Thank you, committee. We are on page 8-24, health services programs, grants and contributions, total grants and contributions, \$134.051 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 8-26 and 8-27, activity summary, supplementary health programs, operations expenditure summary, \$22.977 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 8-26, the activity description references supplementary health benefits and catastrophic drug benefits. It is a little presumptive, perhaps, on the part of the government to put those two programs forward when they haven't actually been put into place. I recognize that it is a name change probably for benefits which are currently in existence, but I would ask the Minister if the documents or the budget, whatever needs to be done, but that the name not to be changed to reflect the program which actually is operating, because these two items are not correct. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: The Member is correct; the budget went to print before the government made the announcement that we will delay pending consultation, until April 1, 2010. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Anything further, Ms. Bisaro?

MS. BISARO: No, thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Thanks, committee. Pages 8-26 and 8-27. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give a brief explanation as to details of other expenses on page 8-27, contract services 2008-2009 revised estimates, \$8.2 million and in 2009-2010 main estimates \$10.3 million? Why the increase?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That speaks to the contract we have with Blue Cross, which is the insurance program contractor for supplementary health. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: This increase, is it because of the number of members on Blue Cross or is it because Blue Cross is changing their style of this service? I guess I'm trying to get an understanding as to why they're charging us more than it used to be.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, we know from the actuals under '08-09 that the program Supplementary Health Program went beyond what was budgeted last year. This year's budget is projecting that it will be more than what we spent last year just by not changes in programs, but just by demand. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I'll have some more questions later on. When the Minister says it has more demands, it means there are more people in the Northwest Territories accessing it or it's becoming available to more residents now who deem themselves to be residents of the Northwest Territories? I guess that's what I'm looking for. I'm not quite certain what the Minister is saying. I wouldn't mind just another explanation and I might get it then.

HON. SANDY LEE: In general, costs of everything to do with supplementary health does go up. It's not really the numbers. The number of residents that are qualifying under these programs are relatively stable. The cost of prescription drugs are through the roof; they would go up as much as up to 30 percent. It's just the cost of programs that we provide for our residents. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask a question with regard to medical travel. I'm given to understand that medical travel is one of the areas that the program review office is considering looking at, and I'd like to know whether or not the Minister is aware of that and what kind of an

estimated timeline do we have for a report on the medical travel expenses? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. If I could, before I go to the Minister for an answer to that question, that one is on 8-28. Maybe I could get committee to agree to 8-26 and 8-27. The number is on the 8-28. Medical travel does appear on 8-27 so we'll allow that question there. Minister Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Medical Travel Assistance Program is under review as a part of the THAF funding. We received a chunk of money under medical travel under THAF along with all the other programs that we are funding under THAF money, and part of the stipulation of THAF funding is that we do a review. There is a review underway and it's across the jurisdictions that THAF gets money for. I mean, it's combining Nunavut, Yukon and the NWT. We are almost done with that and I would be happy to come to the Standing Committee on Social Programs to make a presentation on that review. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Two things, I guess. A presentation isn't necessarily required. If the Minister wants to just provide us with the information from the review, that would be great. I'd like to know whether or not this review encompasses the whole area of medical travel for GNWT or for NWT and the department, or is it, as she suggested, just reviewing the part of medical travel that's funded by the THAF funding? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: It includes the entire program. We will undertake to provide the Members with the information we have and then any further information, we will be happy to go from there. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Just one last question: Do we have a rough idea of when this review might be available? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I haven't seen it yet, but my information is that it's almost concluded or is concluded, so I will be able to provide that information shortly. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Thanks, committee. We're on page 8-27, supplementary health programs, operations expenditure summary, \$22.977 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 8-28, supplementary health programs, grants and contributions, contributions, \$12.506 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. That brings us to page 8-31, activity summary, community health programs, operations expenditure summary, \$75.072 million. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: I'd like to move to report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Motion to report progress. The motion is in order. Not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Tie vote. Maybe we'll just get a recount here. All those in favour of the motion to report progress? All those opposed? Motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Thank you, committee. Page 8-31, community health programs, operations expenditure summary, \$75.072 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 8-32, activity summary, community health programs, grants and contributions, contributions, continued on to page 8-33, grants and contributions for \$60.195 million. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to child services, in regard to foster care, I would like to ask the Minister, can you tell me exactly how many children are in care in regard to the foster care in the Northwest Territories and do you have a breakdown by regions or ridings?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The numbers we have are that we have 622 children in care in various methods, many of them are in their own families. I believe the Mackenzie Delta has 31 children in care. Some of these children have been in care for a very long time. So we have 38 children for Inuvik riding; 61 children under Hay River constituency; 31 children under Mackenzie Delta constituency; 47 children under Nahendeh; 57 children under Monfwi; 40 children in Nunakput; 27 children in Sahtu; 42 children from Thebacha; 10 children from Tu Nedhe; 237 children from Yellowknife; and 32 from Deh Cho. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Perhaps you could provide the raw data to committee. Anything further, Mr. Krutko?

MR. KRUTKO: Does the Minister also have a cost breakdown of the cost of each of these children in each of the ridings?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Back to you, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Can the Minister give us a breakdown by way of cost for these children to be in care in the different ridings, breaking down the \$7.6 million item? Mr. Chairman, just to save time, can the Minister just maybe give us a paper copy of that instead of reading them out, if she has it at her disposal. I think that will make it move through a little faster.

HON. SANDY LEE: It will take some work to do cost on the children in care because they're in all sorts of different situations. I should just note, Mr. Chairman, that the vast majority, about two-thirds of these children are in some sort of very temporary situations. Many of them are in their families, about 250 are in their own homes, about 217 are in permanent custody, and the other third is halfway in between different stages. I will undertake to provide the Members with the cost involved. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, does the Minister also have a breakdown on the number of children in southern facilities outside the Northwest Territories and the cost of that?

HON. SANDY LEE: That will be part of the information that we will provide the Members. There are currently 34 children in southern treatment centres. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the Minister, are there any plans to review the Family and Child Services Act to see exactly why is it that there are so many children in care and how many children have been apprehended since the legislation came into force. More importantly, why is it that there are so many children in care? From 622 for a jurisdiction of 40,000 people, that's quite a high percentage. I think that as a Territory we should be appalled at the number of kids who are in care and especially at this number and we're spending almost \$8 million on something that, if anything, there should be more focus on reuniting these children than having them in care. I'd like to ask the Minister, are there any plans to do a review of the Child and Family Services Act in regard to the number of children in care?

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that this is large number and one that we would want to see getting lower, but I do want to advise the Member that the number has been decreasing over the last three years. Out of 622 children, over half of them are with their own families or with extended families or within their communities.

Mr. Chairman, I do want to also say that...I'm not sure how many years it's been; I think it's been about five years since that last report was done and there were some changes made to legislation. It would be worthwhile for us to look at where we are going and if we could relook at how we do child

protection work in terms of reviewing to see if we could do better, with a view to focusing on providing support to families so as to prevent child protection incidents. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, I was here during the 14th Assembly when this legislation was brought forward and one of the key selling points of the legislation back then was the whole area that there was going to be plan of care committees established in every community so that when a child was apprehended, there was going to be a plan of care committee so that they could sit down with the social worker, the parents of the child, and try to figure out how they're going to do either a plan of care order, work out how they're going to try to work out their differences to reunite the child back into its original family. I'd like to ask the Minister where we are in regard to these plan of care committees and what are we doing to enhance those committees in the communities of the Northwest Territories. I'd like to know how many of these committees are in place and active.

HON. SANDY LEE: I appreciate that the legislation provides for plan of care. The department has had workshops, briefings and meetings in communities to encourage communities to establish these committees. But I think even then we're talking...Plan of care speaks to dealing with after the situation that would arise and children coming into child protection issues. I think what we need to do and what I'd like to do as a Minister is to see if we could support the families and perhaps children that face risk and help them so that they don't have to come into these situations. There are programs available. We have them in Yellowknife, Hay River, Simpson and I understand there's one starting in Inuvik. I think that's where we need to go. I understand that, with this program, we meet with families who are expecting children who are at risk and to support the families so that there is less chance of them going into a child protection situation. I am interested in seeing if we can strengthen that program. I would look forward to working with the Members in that regard. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: A final question. As we all know, the residential school phenomena is all over the place now and I think that, personally, someone who has seen the impact of what that has done to our communities, especially our elders and our grandparents. What they did back then is nothing less than what we're doing today under the family and child services legislation. All we're doing is legalizing apprehending children from First Nations families. I think that with the predominant number of 600, I believe the majority of those children are aboriginal children. I personally have a real problem when I know of individual families who are trying their hardest to basically take alcohol and drug

treatment programs, going to different courses, doing whatever they can, but they make the rules so rigid that they can't even do anything without a social worker looking down their throats. For me, I think that this does have to be reviewed.

This legislation is not balanced. It basically favours one side over the other. There is no real legal ability for a family member to get legal counsel in a lot of our communities, to understand what their rights are as parents or to understand on what terms those children were apprehended without having the ability to defend themselves. I find that very disheartening. I would just like to point out to the Minister that this is nothing more than what happened to children in residential schools.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I didn't hear a question there, so I'm going to go to our next Member. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to follow up a bit on the plan of care committees mentioned by Mr. Krutko. I gather that not many plan of care committees actually exist. I would like to ask the Minister whether or not there is any funding provided in the budget to establish and keep up these plan of care committees.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was never any funding made available to set up the plan of care committees; the department has been using internal resources. Part of the work that the staff under social services programming has undertaken is to meet with the communities where they ask, although I have asked them to be proactive and they have done that. They have had a number of workshops in communities. So I think that it would be worthwhile to see if we could work on some budgeting item to see how we could support the communities to set up these committees. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the answer; that is great. I think it would be valuable time and effort to look at designating some funding for this particular portion of the act, and I do appreciate the Minister's comment about using other programs to try and head off kids before they do get apprehended and put into foster care. Prevention is a far better way to go. But if they do have to be placed, then funding for plan of care committees, if that is going to make it easier for them to get established, then I think that is a good initiative to look at.

I did have another question, as well, with regard to there are a couple of addictions initiatives, aftercare for addictions, a couple of initiatives in the budget. When we reviewed the business plans, the Minister

indicated that there was no implementation date at that time. It is a couple of months later. I wonder if she could advise when these particular initiatives might be in force in this next budget year. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, I think I spoke about this in the opening statements, that wherever possible, we want to fund programs that would encourage and facilitate community groups to be able to do aftercare and some of the healing programs. Gwich'in Wellness Camp, for example, is interested in accessing that money and we will look to see, it is not a lot of money -- \$450,000 allocated -- and we will try to be flexible in that regard. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess, just to clarify then, the funds are available as of April 1st and on an application basis. Is that correct? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: By application, but also all of the health and social services authorities are aware of this programming and they will be looking to see what potentials there are in their regions. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: That's good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Minister maybe could give me the number of children that are under permanent custody, which basically makes them a ward of the state. I would like to know how many children are in permanent custody under this program.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Out of 622 children, 217 are under permanent custody. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: The reason I asked the question in regard to these children being in permanent custody, I know in my riding, several of these individuals who were in permanent custody found themselves getting in trouble with the law and as soon as they become either young offenders or end up in our correctional system, the Social Services department seems to wash their hands of them and just walk away. Is there any way that this government could be held liable because they are in permanent custody, which makes them a ward of this government and why is that happening? These children are now finding themselves in facilities that are here in the Northwest Territories by way of our jail facilities or, in some cases, are now in southern Canada. So I would like to ask the Minister, what

avenue do these children have after they fall, basically, victim to a system, where they bounce from foster home to foster home and eventually they find themselves dealing with the judicial system? Why is it that this government allows themselves to walk away from these children after they get into trouble?

HON. SANDY LEE: I can't say that I know all of the details of the 217 children, but I could tell you that some children in permanent custody are for many reasons in need of highly intense care. Some of them, many of them are in need of one-on-one care. Some of them are victims of severe sexual abuse or sometimes from their immediate families. Sometimes they suffer from FASD or many other situations where they need very intense and sometimes permanent support. That is why many of them are in government custody. And it is true that some of them do end up in corrections services as the years go by, and some of them have to do with the fact that they have become adults and they are no longer in care of the government. But I think it is really hard to generalize what happens, and what has happened, to 217 children that would have brought them into care in the first place. It is really hard to generalize them. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, I will use my riding, for instance. There are 33 children in care in my riding. It is costing this government \$488,000 for 33 children. That is a lot of money to have kids basically in foster care in my riding. I take offense because I know a lot of these children and their families. It breaks my heart to realize that the families all mean well, but just because they are poor and on income support and basically they don't have an education degree or they are unemployed, makes them bad parents. A lot of it has to do with substance abuse and basically the problems that we see in our communities from being and trying to break that trend. I think we are better off taking that \$488,000, give it to the Tl'oondih Healing Society and let them run family programs so that the families, the parents, the children, the grandparents, the siblings can go to a program where they work out their problems for \$488,000. That is more an investment and getting a better return on investment than having these kids in care year after year after year. I think, for myself, that is where we should be going in preventing this problem from getting worse and trying to find ways to deal with the outrageous cost of \$7.6 million in which a lot of that investment could be made on the families and trying to work this out internally in our communities with the family members and with the resource people we have in our communities than spending \$488,000 for 33 children in care in the riding that I represent. We have to look at alternatives to break down this problem and I think

we have to do something different than what we are trying to do today.

It's a lot of money we are spending in this area and I think that's something that I feel very strongly about, but I think you will see a difference in the end if we do have such a program dealing with resolving family issues than simply continuing to run through the court system, apprehending children, the cost of the courts and the cost of our social workers, the cost to the communities, the cost to the parents. This is becoming an industry regarding what the residential school was. Again, I make the point that you are probably better off investing that money by way of developing family recovery programs than continuing to expend this type of money. So has the Minister ever thought of developing those programs and investing in family recovery programs versus continuing to keep these children in foster care?

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do subscribe to the notion that we need to look at what else we can do from what we are doing now to see if we could prevent the number of children coming into care. In a community like Fort McPherson where there are 18 children, about 11 of them are in permanent custody. But where there are numbers, I think I would be very interested in looking to see what else we could do.

I think it's really important in our conversations that there are some children in our care who are dealing with things more than simply poor parenting or dealing with parents who have substance issues. We are dealing with some children who have been severely disabled physically and mentally or sexually abused in a very severe way from very early ages. So I think we need to make sure that we understand that there are some children in our care that need serious and very costly intervention. I understand the Member saying that Fort McPherson spends up to \$400,000. We have children in care. We spend more than that just on one person because of their severe needs. So I think we have to understand that there are some children who need very, very intense care. I take the Member's point that we need to work on prevention and we need to involve communities more than what we do now and we should also look at what we can do in our communities to keep the children in the communities as much as possible, whether it be Tl'oondih Healing Society situation or any other. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. I have nobody else on the list. We are on page 8-32 and 8-33, community health programs, grants and contributions, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, can the Minister give any type of indication as to respite care in my

region as there is none in terms of 24-hour care. I know she's going to be working probably with some of the health authorities to see when we can see...I am not too comfortable or satisfied that we are going to get an elders facility. That's a discussion for another time. This is on services and programs we can look at and improve in our region, especially in Colville Lake and other areas. So I just want to ask the Minister if she's got any type of indication that could shed some light to this issue. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The in-house respite care is not a 24/7 service, but it's a service where a family who spends every day taking care of their families, whether it be a child with a disability or a senior who a family has taken care of, it is to give them a break, a time out. The pilot study that was done in Yellowknife, a family has to apply to be on that program and then they get so many hours a week depending on availability or the situation.

We are expanding that program to communities outside of Yellowknife, but the money allocated is about \$64,000. So we'll have to see how...Oh, sorry. I am told it's \$288,000 altogether, but the increase is \$64,000. So we'll have to work out the details as to how they are going to roll out, but we would work to meet the needs of those who need it the most. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I look forward to the Minister's criteria and requirements to see who gets what under this program. I sure hope once she reviews her criteria and requirements that she looks into areas that do not have other services that the other regions have, so she can balance it out in terms of that criteria. I know it might be a hard one to swallow, because I am surprised that a pilot project happened here in Yellowknife. I think the pilot project should have happened in a community that really needs this type of service. Not knowing all the detail and not knowing all the information, I hope this project expands to regions that certainly need this type of service for the elderly people or people who have disability issues in our communities. It's a really welcome program; it's a good program. It's welcome for the families. I certainly hope the criteria is suited for the people that really need it.

HON. SANDY LEE: I was simply pointing out that the pilot program in Yellowknife started three or four years back and I think that just showed the need and the value of giving families who are spending everyday, 24/7, taking care of their children in need who are in permanent custody, not temporary. So it just confirmed the value and the importance of the program. Now we are making the decisions to

expand that to other communities. I will work with the officials to see how we can spread the resources around. It would require training of the staff and such. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I certainly welcome the Minister's comments to see how they can use this money in other regions and certainly if you put it into regions like the Sahtu or any other region that certainly needs this program, you always have to look at training. So you can either do training here or training in the small communities. So I think the point is to provide services for people who really need them. Again, if you don't have those services in some of the small communities, families then have to make trips into larger centres to spend a few days with their children or with the elderly persons. So I think the Minister needs to really look at this again and see what it means to have trained people in the communities. Sometimes the families are so large, you know, they can help other people in the communities. If it needs training, if it needs to be done in the communities, let it get done in the communities with our people. That's what I am hearing. I may be hearing something different, but I think I am hearing it might be a burden to have it in the small communities because of the training. You have qualified people here; you may need just a little amount of training. So I hope that she keeps an open mind, keeps an open heart, to look at where these services can make a difference in people's lives in our small communities. That's what I am hearing, so I guess I am making a plea to the Minister.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I take the Member's point. I think the Member might also be referring to home care support and Home Care Program, where the government and the department has to continue to expand because we do want to support families to our people in need of care to stay home as much as possible. That would be made possible whether they are elderly who are being discharged from the hospital or people who need a little bit of assistance to live in their communities. Home care and home support workers to provide that in our communities and we need to expand that service. This is something different from that, and that is just another way of helping our residents who need a little bit of assistance from the government to do what they do best, which is to take care of their own families wherever they can. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I will be very short. I look forward to the Minister's recommendations and her decisions as to where she can increase support as home care, respite care, for the front-line workers in my communities. Once that report or some decisions are close to being made, I certainly hope the Minister does consider talking to the Members as to her final decisions as to what is

needed. Only then I could tell her how things may be with certain decisions. I am out there to support the people.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I didn't hear a question there. I am going to go to Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Also on the same line of questioning in regard to care, especially in our communities. One thing that seems to be lacking in our communities is sort of palliative care where people, basically cancer victims, are told, well, there is nothing much we can do. They send you home and basically they are left to the family to sort of fend for them. I think the government has to have some program in place to assist these individuals when they go back to their communities, assist the families in regard to these costs and whatnot.

If these individuals were taken into care in a care facility or hospital, you are looking at thousands of dollars a day versus these individuals who basically have to maintain not only basic lifestyle and maintain their own families, but they are also taking time out of their work to maintain a family loved one. I think that a lot of communities...It is a lot of stress on the families. It is a lot of stress on the communities. I know that communities try to do their best to take care of people that end up going back to their communities and especially people that need some sort of care.

But one thing also that I really notice in a lot of our smaller communities is people that do have disabilities by way of either they are in a wheelchair and basically try to get into a public housing unit or even into public facilities. Those communities aren't designed for people with disabilities. I know I've raised this question before in the House. What is this government doing to enhance the people with disabilities in small communities to ensure that they also have some sort of quality of life when it comes to their needs, especially when it comes to public facilities? Either it is housing, offices or care facilities even to just get around in a lot of our communities.

Again, I think this government has to do a better job of doing what we can for adult care, regardless if it is palliative care or else looking at disabled people and their care. I think, also, a lot of our people who are seeing the numbers go up in our communities who are suffering from diabetes, which is having effects on their mobility as the disease takes hold. But it is affecting their ability to get around even in their houses and also it affects their mobility. I would like to ask the Minister, are you guys doing anything by way of study, research or investment of this \$50 million that can go into communities to deal with some of those types of matters? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: I don't know which \$50 million the Member is referring to, but the department doesn't have infrastructure money to help with the access to buildings and such. The department does work very closely with NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities. They are opening branches in Hay River and Inuvik. I understand that does not include all of the small communities, but I do believe it is an organization that has been around for a long time. The more they could branch into regions and smaller communities, the better. A lot of work, whether it is home care or respite care and the palliative care, there is training going on in partnership with IRC and Dene Nation. The Dene Nation just got funding to study palliative care issues. I think it is one that we are going to have to do more and more of. The government will be more involved because as our population ages, the more important it will become for all of our residents, especially our people in smaller communities to be able to be supported to provide these palliative care to support our families in small communities. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I don't want to micromanage the issue, but I would just like to know that I noted in a few different areas that you have that funding to authorities and agencies to provide services to eligible NWT residents including long-term care facilities, group homes, resident care within the NWT. What do you mean by eligible NWT residents? What is the criteria or the eligibility criteria that you are using?

HON. SANDY LEE: I would think that you would have to be a resident of the NWT to be considered for some of these long-term care facilities. Also what the department is working on is to set up a territorial admission committee made up of different representatives on the board so that we make better use of all of our facilities. For example, we have some facilities where there is a local admission committee. They want to concentrate on admitting patients within that community only when there might be residents from elsewhere who need that facility more. So we are trying to work to streamline that process and set some standards so that residents who need the care are accepted and the decision is somehow based on need as well as location. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I just need clarification. I wasn't talking about \$50 million. I was talking about \$15.294 million in regard to adult continuing care services. I would like to ask the Minister, could you give me a breakdown of that \$15 million in regard to where it is being expended, and also what authorities and agencies are spending that money on behalf of this government?

HON. SANDY LEE: I am going to have to undertake to provide that in writing to all the Members. We don't have that breakdown with us. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We are on pages 8-32 and 8-33, community health programs, grants and contributions, \$60.195 million. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 8-33, community health programs, \$18.04 million, I would like to ask the Minister again in regards to those expenditures. Like I stated, in my riding there are some communities that don't have social workers, they don't have mental health workers, but yet someone is spending that money on behalf of those communities. I would like to know what happens to those dollars that is earmarked for a community by authorities and not expended in those communities. I would like to know, do you have a breakdown of that \$18 million? How much is supposed to go to my communities, Tsiigehtchic, McPherson, and Aklavik? If there are none of those positions that is being provided, who is spending the money and what happens to that money if it is not expended in that community?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: We can provide the Member with the breakdown on not only what the money was budgeted for, but actual expenditure on each community by program. I have seen that before. I believe we provided that to the Member a number of months back, so we would be happy to give him the most recent update. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: What are the penalties for authorities or agents that don't get the money, do not expend the money in those communities? Are there any penalties put on them by way of doing an audit or basically telling them that you are not going to fund them, your money will go directly to the community? I have a real problem with the deficits that have been running in the Inuvik authority over the last six years, which they got their budget to run their authorities. On top of it, this government spent \$20 million in supplementary appropriations to bump up their budgets every year for six years. I think that is criminal by way of how that authority has been able to operate and yet your government doesn't seem to do anything about it. I would like to know exactly what the consequences are of not spending that money where it is supposed to be expended.

HON. SANDY LEE: The way it is set up now, the authorities get funding under different programs, whether they would be funded under their administration, and then the authorities that are

eligible get so much money for hospital services and then they get so much for health centres. They get some money under THAF. We get from pockets of money and we distribute them accordingly. I understand that there are some guidelines as to where the PYs and such, but I know the Member doesn't agree with this, But for most authorities, they have the flexibility to move around money within their programs. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Well, that is exactly my point. That is why programs and services aren't being delivered in communities, because they know that they don't have to spend it in those communities. They could move it around any place they want except for those communities it is earmarked for. I, for one, do not agree with that, because the money should be expended in those communities that it has been approved for. There is a formula that is basically allowed for each community to spend their dollars in those communities. Again, if that is the position of the ministry and the way that you deliver programs and services, I think that is a mistake. That is why programs and services aren't delivered in a lot of our communities. It is because you allow that practice to continue where you can move money around any time you want on anything that you want to expend it on. I would like to ask the Minister again, are there rules in place to not allow that type of practice to take place so it is being expended in the communities that it is earmarked for?

HON. SANDY LEE: I take the Member's point. A motion was passed earlier to enhance services in communities. We will be responding to that. I think a way to solve wanting the issue of increasing services in communities does not have to be done by eliminating an option of the authorities to move their money around if they needed to, because sometimes they need to do that. Some of our authorities are governed by their board and the board trustees have to have some option to make some of those decisions. I don't think that is necessarily the reason why there might not be some nurses in Tsiigehtchic. I think that issue could be addressed by answering to that motion that was passed earlier. I think it is really important that we leave some flexibility to the authorities to make some choices and priority decisions. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I don't know about you, but I think that the Beaufort-Delta Health Authority has been making some bad choices. I think that is why we are having this debate here in the House today. If the programs and services were being delivered in all communities fairly, we wouldn't be raising this issue in this House. I would like to ask the Minister in regard to the breakdown of that \$18 million again that she said she will get to me, how soon can you get it to me? Is it before you end this department?

HON. SANDY LEE: We could get you the breakdown by the authorities by the end of today. In terms of what is allocated for each community, I think we are going to need a little bit more time. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I have another question in regard to the non-government organizations' programs and services, \$2.8 million. Is there a chance you can get a breakdown of that and which organizations are receiving this funding in regards to non-government organizations?

HON. SANDY LEE: For that, \$2 million of that goes to Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority, that goes to Nats'ejee K'eh; \$807,000 goes to Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority. Probably most of that money goes to Sally Ann and other A and D services that we fund. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: My next question is going to deal with the emergency shelter in regards to those services of \$2.2 million. You mentioned Sally Ann gets the money on non-government organizations. Do they also receive money under the other listed items in regards to homelessness, strategic initiatives or investments?

HON. SANDY LEE: Salvation Army gets funding for a number of programs. One of them is they do have a withdrawal management program there. People can go there and stay there. It is a residential treatment program and work on their alcohol and addiction. It is a set-up program. It has been there for a long time. I think we could provide a breakdown on shelters. It is broken down by authorities. I don't have enough details here. I think I should undertake to get back to the Member on the details. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: It would be good to get a breakdown in regard to the NGOs and also the way the funds flow under this matter. I know, to use as an example is the Homelessness Strategy initiative, that some people might not think it, but in our communities we also have people who are homeless. Basically, we call them couch surfers. They go from one home to another night after night. They will go find a place to sleep. They end up on somebody's couch and yet these people are not eligible for housing. They have been kicked out of housing. They have basically either been kicked out of the family and yet these people are also struggling in their communities to try and provide them with some shelter also. I know in the past we have asked for some sort of unique Homelessness Strategy for small or remote communities so we can also offer those types of people some means of shelter in communities. Either it is an older unit from the Housing Corporation or building them some sort of little independent unit. It could be just one little

bedroom unit, nothing fancy. But again, it seems like a lot of those dollars are being expended in regards to the youth centres, Sally Ann and other programs. I think that this program should allow for those other people out there who we do see having to walk the streets at night and basically not knowing where they are going to go to sleep, not knowing if they will be allowed into their relative's home at night because of circumstance. I would like to ask the Minister, have you ever considered as part of the strategy and initiative for rural and remote communities for homelessness, people on our streets?

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, on the Family Violence Program the department funds about \$2.2 million, and through that we fund shelters in Fort Smith, Hay River and in the Beaufort-Delta region, as well as some of the shelters in Yellowknife. Under the new Strategic Initiative committee funding, we are looking to invest \$1.3 million more, and part of that funding speaks to the second phase of the Family Violence Action Program where we are looking to expand the services to small communities where there are no shelters. We want to work on children who witness violence as well as working with women who don't necessarily want to be in a shelter. But there has to be some family violence issues or supporting the family and women who want to get some help with that.

Also, we have, over the last two years, expanded or implemented a program called Homelessness Territorial Contribution Plan as well as a small community homeless fund and that is directly related at expanding homelessness programs to outside of major centres. Under our program that we have in the department, we don't have the funds or program to renovate or find a house but we do find little pockets of money, up to about 30 to 40 thousand dollars for communities who want to fix up somewhere just to make it adequate to host either youth or give them lunch or feed them warm food or something like that. But other departments would be responsible for increasing the numbers of housing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Thanks, committee. We are on pages 8-32 and 8-33, community health programs, grants and contributions, \$60.195 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 8-34, community health programs, information item, active positions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I would like the Minister to give me a breakdown on these different positions, based on P1, P2 and P3

and exactly what all you are doing in regards to Affirmative Action Policy in the department in that area.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under this program, most of the positions are located in Yellowknife headquarters and we gave a breakdown previously on what the breakdown is on those three categories and we will undertake to provide the detail for these 24 positions, if we can. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Lee. Thanks, committee. Page 8-34, community health programs, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 8-36 and 8-37, lease commitments, infrastructure. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question. On both of these pages there is quite a few references to residences in a number of health and social services authorities. Could I ask the Minister for an explanation as to why we would lease residences, who stays in them and for what purpose? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Minister of Health, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They are mostly for locums or visiting staff in communities or Yellowknife. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: That's good, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Information item, pages 8-36, 8-37 and 8-38, lease commitments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Information item, page 8-39, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Information item, page 8-40. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification, 8-39 on the health services contribution agreements funding, prevention and treatment, under the Northern Native Alcohol and Drug Addiction Program, is that funding with Health Canada, the Health Secretariat? Does that go toward the aboriginal specific issues or does that distribute across the Northwest Territories in terms

of all of the drug and alcohol programs in the North? First I will ask that question to the Minister.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Minister of Health, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are fundings that we get from various organizations under federal programs, funding from the Northern Secretariat, First Nations and Inuit health branch of Health Canada and the money is distributed to health authorities, band councils, aboriginal organizations and other NGOs all over the Territories through contribution agreements. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, the information that was received from the Minister in terms of other NGOs on behalf of the Northwest Territories, we have been trying to get some things happening in the Sahtu region. As you know, there is a huge population of aboriginal people in the Sahtu region. In terms of NGOs, according to the Minister's information that we receive, there are no NGOs in the Sahtu region. There are NGOs across the North but in my region, when we want to get specific programs for our people in our communities, we are always told that there is no money or it is difficult, or whatever reasons. I guess I am making a point. According to the information that the Minister has given, there are 219 NGOs in Yellowknife itself; there are eight in Hay River; there is a list that goes on. There is nothing in the Sahtu region, unless the information is delayed or it could be outdated.

So these types of funding, like the Aboriginal Diabetes Strategy. I have been seeing in my communities that diabetes is increasing, but yet we still get the diabetes educator out of Inuvik on a rotating basis. I could be wrong again in terms of these types of programs. So these types of dollars that are there for what it is supposed to be intended for, it is getting watered down, in my eyes, and the Minister can correct me if she wants to, but the things that we want in our programs, we don't seem to be getting because it is not going to where it is supposed to be going.

I don't know if I am making sense, Mr. Chairman, but I am looking at these programs in terms of services for my people. Maybe 80 percent in the Sahtu are aboriginal people, First Nations people, so I guess that is where my bone of contention is; are the dollars getting to where they are supposed to. What you are saying is going across NGOs also, so I guess what I am asking for is making sure that these programs come to people in my region, such as the drug and alcohol training. We did have NGOs, but NGOs in my region were like orphans. So these young people, these people, instead of going into a band council contribution agreement, they opted to the territorial government because the

territorial government gives them training, travelling, all these things in terms of the wellness programs. When they tried to do that with the band contribution agreements, they weren't getting anything; very little support. So that is why these workers decided to go into the territorial government workforce. So, I guess, making a long statement here, this funding that you get, Madam Minister, are they going to where they are supposed to be going? Show me some results. I guess I want to see the evidence. I'm not convinced. I'd like to see the evidence where it's helping the people. I guess that's what I'm looking for. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee, can you provide the information in regard to where this money is going?

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Chairman, yes. I just want to assure the Member that this funding goes to authorities, band councils, aboriginal organizations and other NGOs. So NGOs are the last kind of choice of place to go to for these fundings. For example, for the Brighter Futures program there is \$3 million allocated for that and the money has gone to the Gwich'ya Gwich'in, Inuvik band, K'ahsho Got'ine First Nation, Tulita Dene Band, Deline Dene Band, Deninu K'ue First Nation, Lutselk'e First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Liard Acho Dene Koe, Providence Deh Gah Got'ie, Fort Simpson Liidlii Kue First Nations, Wrigley and Hay River Reserve.

I am aware that most of these fundings...We could give you a community breakdown, but they would all go to communities. When we are talking about NGOs, those are exceptions rather than the rule. So we will give you a breakdown of \$10 million. But, no, they go to communities. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I look forward to that, same as the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiatives through that. I really appreciate this, Minister, in terms of what you've been providing me so far. This year, then, I guess the question then needs to be looked at in terms of the northern Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program. Are we thinking in that sense of supporting our communities in types of training programs for our workers in the communities? The Minister has offered to provide more detail, so I'll look forward to that detailed information.

I want to again say that because of the programs in our communities, they're not really reaching the communities where we want them to, as people told us what they want in the communities. It doesn't seem that these dollars are getting into our communities. I guess I'll just wait until the Minister provides them to me, then. I could have further questions later on in the session.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. We're on page 8-39, work performed on behalf of others, information item.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to 8-40, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 8-41, again, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Move back to 8-7, Health and Social Services, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$313.027 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that we've concluded the Department of Health and Social Services?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to thank the Minister and the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

With that, we'll take a short break and come back and deal with Human Resources.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'll call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break, we agreed that we would begin with the Department of Human Resources. With that, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Human Resources if he has any opening comments.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, the Department of Human Resources' proposed budget for 2009-2010 is \$35.079 million. This represents an increase of \$2.8 million or just over 8 percent from 2008-2009. This increase is due to a combination of new funding for strategic initiatives, forced growth funding to address cost pressures, and one-time supplementary funding for collective bargaining.

The Department of Human Resources is a service agency. We provide services directly to employees, and we provide services to management in Government of the Northwest Territories departments and agencies. It is important to emphasize that responsibility for decision making on human resource issues still rests with departments and agencies. In dealing

with departmental managers, our role is to provide advice on the requirements imposed by legislation, policy and the Collective Agreement, and to outline options to support managers in their decision making. We also take the lead on government-wide policy development, and initiatives designed to advance and support human resource management.

The 2009-2010 fiscal year will be the fifth year of operations since human resource services were centralized, and the fourth year since Human Resources became a department. Since amalgamation, there has been progress made on stabilizing services and improving service delivery, but there is still a need for improvement.

I would like to touch briefly on some of our priorities for the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

In order to guide our actions over the next few years, the department has undertaken the development of a Corporate Human Resource Strategic Plan for the NWT public service. This plan will be based on the results of consultation with employees, with managers, with unions, and with Members of the Legislative Assembly, in order to identify our collective priorities and develop a shared vision of how we want to move forward over the next decade. Through the month of January all these stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide feedback, through a survey questionnaire, focus groups and individual interviews. I am pleased to report that response by our employees to the on-line survey was tremendous, with almost 900 employees responding on-line and many more filling out the survey in hard copy. This demonstrates that there is a high level of interest in the development of the strategic plan and the guidance it can provide to our department and our government. I look forward to providing Members of the Assembly with a completed plan before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, the strategic plan will be supported by a short-term action plan, which will provide a road map of the key priorities we need to work on over the next three years, and a framework for measuring progress. In the longer term, the strategic plan will set the stage for partnerships with other levels of government in the Northwest Territories.

Through the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative, the department has been allocated \$2.3 million in new funding, to improve human resource management, with a focus on recruitment and retention efforts, both in the Government of the Northwest Territories and for community governments.

For the government's public service, this funding will be used to address the priorities identified within the Human Resource Strategic Plan. For community governments, priorities will be identified under the leadership of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, in partnership with the NWT Association of Communities and the Local Government Administrators of the Northwest Territories. We believe there are areas where we can work in collaboration with community and aboriginal governments to improve public service capacity at all levels of government.

However, we are not waiting for the strategic plan to be complete to take action on some key priorities. We know that we need to improve and stabilize our service delivery. Employees are waiting too long for clearances and responses to inquiries on benefits. Managers are waiting too long for competitions to be completed.

The department has already taken action in a number of areas to address these issues:

- First, we are reviewing the allocation of resources within the department to ensure the top priorities are being addressed;
- Second, we are implementing an aggressive training program to improve the customer service focus of our staff;
- Third, we are developing a staff training plan to ensure that our staff have the skills they need to do their jobs well; and
- Fourth, we are reviewing work processes to identify areas where we can work smarter. By way of example, this year we set a record for early issuance of T-4 slips, due to a process improvement that was put in place a few months ago.

Mr. Chairman, another priority that can't wait is to look at how we can be more effective in recruitment and retention of aboriginal people into the public service. There have been many reviews of the Affirmative Action Program in the past, but none of those reviews has resulted in a concrete implementation plan. We expect that the strategic plan will contain recommendations in this regard, but as a first step, we had a meeting of the newly created Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. This group will report back through the Deputy Ministers' Human Resource Committee, and provide advice based on their own experience about what needs to be done.

Another concern, which we expect will be addressed in the strategic plan, is the need to improve training and development opportunities for all our employees. Over years of fiscal restraint and budget tightening, most departments have eliminated dedicated resources to ensure that their staff has access to training and development

opportunities. This need is critical in the regions where there are not often as many training opportunities available to staff, which is why we are proposing that part of the new strategic initiatives funding be used to support two regional positions.

Finally, I should note that the Department of Human Resources has a key role to play in supporting strategic initiatives of this government. There is \$100,000 included in the budget to provide dedicated support to the development of the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority's consolidated primary care clinics.

I will be pleased to answer any questions that Members have regarding the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Human Resources if he'd like to bring in his witnesses. Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree he brings in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

For the record, Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses, please.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my right I have Debbie DeLancey, deputy minister; on my immediate left, Mr. Tom Williams, associate deputy minister; and, my far left, Charlene Woodward, director of human resource strategy and policy.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. At this time, I will ask if there are any general comments in regards to the Department of Human Resources. General comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the presentation by the Minister in terms of their operations with Human Resources, it seems as if the Minister is making some movements which I am very pleased to see, read and hear what you are doing. I am certainly looking forward to the corporate strategic plan for the Northwest Territories in terms of how this is rolling out in a framework that is going to be implemented through the HR system here and the discussions we are going to have in terms of improving. We are always improving our staff who work with our people to improve services to our people in the communities. I look forward to seeing ways that this department is going to work within our government for

efficiencies and the effectiveness of delivering programs.

I am very happy that the Minister indicated in his presentation of a huge on-line response in terms of the feedback you are getting. That gives me a signal. There are a lot of people out there that want to do things. If you get a good response, that means the apathy isn't there. These people in your department or within the government, I believe, Mr. Minister, they have enough trust, confidence, that when you ask for an on-line survey it means you are going to make good on it in terms of what they are going to offer and their suggestions. I take that as a good signal when you get a good response. These people in the GNWT want to see if they can make a difference by offering some of their suggestions. In that sense, I take it as a really good suggestion.

Mr. Chair, the department has outlined a number of initiatives and two caught my selective listening. The two that really caught my ear were the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. I think that's something that is long overdue and not knowing too much about the committee, the structure of the members, I think this committee could provide some solid recommendations, advice, to HR within itself to increase the percentage of senior management within government. Some departments are doing really good, some are improving, some are not doing too good in terms of increasing the level of senior management of aboriginal candidates into the system. I am hoping, not knowing what this whole committee is about, that this committee could certainly...Actually, I wouldn't mind a copy of the structure of this committee, records, to help with the HR in the government.

I look forward to seeing the goals that are set in terms of increasing the aboriginal senior management in some of the departments any way you could help to increase it, providing that they are qualified, they earn the title to get there and there are some others that certainly need extra support to be there. So there are some employees that are in the position for a long, long time and some of them, I think, should be given some of the opportunities to move up. I am not saying it's not been done, but just the way I look at things sometimes. The Minister can correct me if he wants to, but I just want to look at those types of issues that I think that this department is moving a long way. I look forward to some of the other issues as we discussed in the Minister's budget proposal, Mr. Chair.

Those are some of the issues that have caught my ear. One that really stood out to me, again, because of my selective listening, is the \$100,000 going towards the Yellowknife Health and Social

Services Authority for the consolidation of primary care clinics. For me, that goes against what I have been saying just with the Health Minister in terms of what we want in our small communities. We are putting \$100,000 towards a consolidated health care clinic in the capital here and we just finished the budget with the Minister of Health and Social Services and HR is putting this kind of money. I am going to have to question you later on, Minister, because I am just reading what I have been presented. For me, it's like gee whiz. It's a crying shame here that this kind of money gets into projects like this. So, again, Mr. Chair, this is just what stands out for me and the Minister does provide some answers that it might be just a shame, you know, with this kind of money.

Anyhow, overall, I am pretty satisfied with what the Minister presented. It's the one hiccup and I wouldn't mind some answers later on. But when we get to detail, Mr. Chair, I am looking forward to seeing some improvements in the overall GNWT in terms of northern and aboriginal senior management getting into positions where hopefully they will make a difference in our communities. I think they will and I believe they will, providing we give them support, encouragement and opportunities. I think they will do good jobs. There are lots of good people in the region, the communities, who I can name off the top of my hat right now in terms of where they could excel in the government. I just want to make those comments to the Minister right now, Mr. Chair, in terms of his presentation. These are just comments. I can wait for feedback later on.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to touch on a couple of things that were raised as a result of our Standing Committee on Government Operations. We were quite concerned with affirmative action. We wanted to look at affirmative action targets be included in each departmental business plan. That was something we were in favour of and as well as an adequate portion of the strategic investment for improving GNWT human resources through management through a competency-based on-the-job training program is something we were pursuing. I think in the Minister's opening statements, he did mention something along that line in terms of improved training and developing opportunities. Maybe at the appropriate time, I would like to hear more about how they plan to do it.

The key thing, Mr. Chair, is for us to develop key targets for creating the representative workforce that we are striving for throughout as a target for all our departments and us as the Government of the

Northwest Territories. It's quite clear that some departments have no problem achieving those targets and others don't only because they are specialized or they have a certain hire level skills required. Just the same, that doesn't mean that we throw up our hand and say we can't fill these positions. We can do it through internal recruitment and/or, like the Minister said, through improved training. So that's something we will be looking at.

As well, in our meetings we did mention the accumulated backlogs and it's still a little bit of an issue out there. That's something that I would like to let the Minister know that it still concerns us and I know that, in fact, I think we had recommended to see if they can hire some extra staff to help them with their backlog. I don't know how far the ministry has gotten with that. They have to get some extra help to help them with the backlog, because once we clear these off we can further concentrate on the job of HR which is to provide assistance to all our departments in terms of recruitment and human resource needs. If we are going to be handling old files from one to five years old and spend lots of time on them, then other areas of the department will certainly suffer, Mr. Chair.

I think that just in terms of new hires and recruitment and assisting other departments with their recruitment needs, I think I heard a couple of examples where the departmental managers work with HR and they are able to speed up the hiring process from an average of two months, almost three months to do a hire, because I know people continue to raise that with me about how long it's taking to hire and recruit. I think some kind of hybrid or if we allow departmental managers, be it Transportation or Health and Social Services or MACA, to be involved with HR, that extra manpower may help us with recruitment. I think that's something that we should look at instead of trying to let HR do a recruitment in an area where they aren't really familiar with. Maybe that's part of the process. Maybe I am speaking of something that I am not aware of. Maybe that is part of the process already. I would certainly encourage more of it, because I know of a couple of examples in my riding where that occurred and people were able to get interviewed a lot quicker and the departmental managers were able to know what people they are interested in hiring. I believe it made it a lot quicker only because part of the process of hiring quickly. In other words, it's not so much for the departments but for us as service providers to the communities. It's the communities that require health workers or MACA workers. They are the ones who need these key people in place. If we are going to take three to six months to hire people, then that's three to six months that the small communities aren't able to access these services. Well, they can, but probably at great cost. Maybe there is extra travel, maybe

they are constantly dealing with another regional staff. So it's about consistency and delivery of service to our smaller communities, which is the benefit of us being able to have an expeditious Human Resources department.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will just conclude my statements. I just wanted to share those few comments.

Sorry; maybe I will ask a question with regard to recruitment of aboriginals and our targets. The Minister advises in his opening statement that he has an Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. Maybe the Minister can expand on that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Are there any other general comments? If not, I will allow the Minister to respond to the general comments so far.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Very briefly, with regard to the response to the consultation with the Corporate Human Resource Strategy, we were pleasantly surprised with the response from the employees and certainly it will help us have a much better HR strategy. We also held a number of focus groups to make sure that we had input from all the different categories of employees. As well, we're expecting significant response from the hard copies of the survey that we mailed out. I think we mailed out about 1,800 hard copies.

With regard to increasing the aboriginal representation of senior management, this is an area that we recognize is very important and is something that we feel should be representative of the public service. Currently, the percentage of aboriginals in senior management is at 16 percent. As part of our human resource strategy we will be taking steps to improve on that.

As far as the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee, this is very preliminary. We held an initial meeting. It was chaired by the deputy minister of ENR and the associate deputy minister of HR. We had two aboriginal employees from each of the regions and I was very struck by how committed and seriously the participants took this responsibility. As soon as we finalize the terms of reference, we'll be sharing that with all of the Members.

With regard to the \$100,000 for the YK clinic, that's one-time funding so that we can hire a human resource officer to help with writing job descriptions, dealing with the changes in the UNW Collective Agreement and to help with the competitions to fill these positions.

On the affirmative action targets included in each department, this is something we've asked our consultants on the human resource strategic plans

to give us some best practices and guidelines and to help us develop government-wide targets.

With the backlog, we were pleased to get some direction to seek some additional resources through the supplementary funding process, so we hope to deal with the backlog once and for all.

In terms of new hires and recruitment, right now it takes us 10 weeks to staff a position. Our target is eight weeks and again we'll be looking at best practices or e-recruit or we could even look at the Ontario model where the managers have been given the responsibility to hire. I think we need some checks and balances on that if we are going to meet some of our priorities. Certainly, that's an area that we'll be looking at; letting the managers manage. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Any other general comments in regard to Human Resources? Detail. We can start in regard to the department summary, page 3-7. With that, we'll defer that page and go to infrastructure investment summary, information item. Agreed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 3-9, active position summary, information item.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 3-10, 3-11, directorate, operations expenditure summary, activity summary, \$464,000. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a question under other expenses, the details. There is no TSC chargebacks for the directorate for this next year. Are they all moved to another part of the department or there just aren't any? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've taken that and consolidated it into the corporate human resources category. We've put them all into one section. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We're under directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$464,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): To page 3-12, active positions, directorate, information item. Questions? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 3-14, 3-15, human resource strategy and policy, operations expenditure summary, activity summary, \$5.470 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you. Mr. Menicoche had his hand up first but I guess he's not looking up, so there you go.

I did want to ask a question. I'm not sure if it belongs in this section of the department or not. It's my understanding that the department has established a working group for persons with disabilities. I wonder if I can get a bit of an update on where that working group is at, what they are doing and when we might see some specific actions in regard to their terms of reference. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a departmental working group and we have met with the working group that is also established in Health and Social Services. We have met with the Yellowknife Association of Community Living and we've started to develop a plan to increase...First of all, we wanted to have a number of presentations to improve on the sensitivity of senior management within the government, so we'll have sensitivity training for GNWT managers and employees. We are starting that with a pilot project within the Department of Human Resources. We will develop an awareness program for Government of the Northwest Territories managers and employees. We are allocating \$50,000 in funding to start this work. Most importantly, we are working in partnership with the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities and other stakeholder groups. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: Thank you for the explanation. I guess I would like to know when we might expect to see the actions of this working group translate into an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in our workforce. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As far as we can determine, there are about 20 employees or .44 percent of the GNWT workforce who have self-identified as disabled. When you look at the Stats Canada figures, approximately 8.2 percent of the NWT labour force is considered disabled. In my view, I think we should be able to start seeing some results towards the end of the next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the answer. The numbers that you expressed, they are what they are. Our record on employing persons with disabilities is pretty abysmal. I guess I'm just

surprised that it would take a year before we would see anything concrete in terms of an increase in persons with disabilities being employed in our workforce. I would like to ask the Minister if there isn't anything in the short term, which to me would be a matter of months as opposed to a matter of years, that the department can do to try and increase the number of persons with disabilities who we are hiring. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We will be starting these actions as soon as the budget is approved. Part of that would be to develop a recruitment strategy which would be designed to attract persons with disabilities into the GNWT workforce. In my estimation we would need some time to develop partnerships so that we would have the appropriate supports in place for when we have employees with disabilities that come on stream. Certainly, if we can do it faster to see results, we definitely will do that. I guess I was leaning towards being conservative.

One more point that I forgot to mention is we held a focus group with our disabled employees to see which areas we could improve upon to hire more people with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: Just one last comment. I appreciate the Minister's being conservative and I would certainly hope that his estimation is really conservative. I look forward to seeing measures in next year's business plan which will indicate that we have had an increase in these types of employees in our workforce. Thank you. No question there.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: That would be our intention as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 3-15, human resource strategy and policy, operations expenditure summary, \$5.470 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 3-16, information item, human resource strategy and policy, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 3-18, 3-19. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thought my question was more appropriate here. I had several situations and maybe the Minister can address it for me. When it comes in terms of trying to get our representative public service, I know that in my riding I had about four or five individuals apply on public service jobs with our government but they were screened out. So they've come to me and said, look, we got screened out. When that

happens, there's no mechanism for an appeal to take a second look at their application. Maybe somebody made a mistake here. That makes the people that are applying...It happened to them more than once; there were a couple times. They tell me, Mr. Chair, they actually tell me, look, government wants to extend every effort to hire aboriginals yet I'm not even getting to the interview stage. I don't know if in the Minister's strategy if his new strategic plan is to somehow address this. I'd certainly like to see how we can address this. If our people aren't getting to the interview stage, no wonder our numbers are low. Maybe the Minister can address that. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Just for the record, we're on page 3-19, management and recruitment services, operations expenditure summary. Minister of Human Resources.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The hiring of aboriginal people is one of our top priorities and is provided for through the affirmative action policies of this government. If people feel they are being screened out unfairly, then, of course, they have recourse through staffing appeals. There are independent staffing appeal officers that will hear the appeal and if there was something that wasn't done properly, they would rule on it. Our preference is to have individuals meet with our human resources staff who can work with them, counsel them, and also work with management in the government to try to find positions and jobs for aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Just a little bit of clarification on recruitment services. When somebody doesn't get to the interview stage, Mr. Chair, they don't get a chance to appeal that job or that position at all. They don't even make it to the interview stage or they get screened out. When people get screened out they don't have a process to appeal or a process to complain and that's...I think we should have that for an identified P1 applicant, that if they're going to get screened out before they even get an interview that there's got to be a good reason for it. Maybe something like a school teacher applying for a doctor's position, that's a legitimate screening. But if someone's got strong administrative skills and they're being screened out for an administrative job, there's something wrong here, Mr. Chair, and we should address it and make it part of our strategic plan. There's no reason for somebody that's administrative applying for an administrative job to get screened out. That's something that I'd like to raise at this point. There must be a way to address it. I would ask the Minister to look at some kind of mechanism to prevent this in the future. Thanks.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I guess I see that the existing processes should have sufficient safeguards to make sure that didn't happen, because our human resource officers participate in the recruitment and also the review of the applications. If anybody has the qualifications and is screened out, then definitely that would not be in concurrence with our Affirmative Action Policy and it should be brought to our attention.

Secondly, if they are screened out and they feel that they have the qualifications that meet the job requirements, then they do have the right to appeal. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: If that's policy or guideline, maybe if I can get a copy of that so that the next time somebody contacts me, I can provide them with at least an alternative or a way for them to address their concern that they got screened out improperly. The key message for me on this line item is that it's happened more than once. It happened in the past couple of years at least four or five times that people got screened out. I'd just like to raise it. It sounds like there's a mechanism there, Mr. Chair, and I'd sure like to have a copy of that for my future reference so that I can address it with the constituents and/or people applying and identifying themselves as P1. I'm happy with that answer and I'll await the hard copy of that policy or guideline. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, my question is also in regard to recruitment and retention but it's more in regard to small communities. I'll use the situation in my riding where we had a nurse who was basically in the community for three months and one of the things was that she was willing to stay longer but because it took so long she was nabbed by the health system in the Yukon where she got a job. Again, it comes down to this whole process of recruitment and retention and trying to retain people who are already in the system. But to stay in the system you have to go through this whole process of renegotiating, trying to have that position extended or whatnot. I'd just like to know, is there a better process than how you are able to...I believe this person was a locum. So to extend their contract and having to go through a whole new process where you give them a three month contract, go back and renegotiate the terms and then extend that person's term. Is there a simpler process than extending these term limits on these contracts by way of locums in communities so that we can, if possible, retain these people longer in those communities so we don't have to go through the system where the person is willing to stay, willing to serve a longer period of time? Because it took so long for that process to happen, the individual got

recruited in another jurisdiction in the Yukon. Is that something that your department could consider looking at? Is that something you are looking at?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Certainly, that is an area that we want to improve on and is an important focus on the Corporate Human Resource Strategy that we are developing, because we definitely want to speed up the staffing process so that it would prevent those types of situations that you raised. I think that if we can find ways to speed it up, then we just have to make sure that we have enough checks and balances so that it is done consistent with the priorities and objectives of this government. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, also another area that I think we have to be constant with or consider is in regards to when we basically put out calls for certain positions. We basically develop a sort of criteria for a person you are looking for. A lot of times those same people are here in the North but they may not pop up with the criteria you are looking for. They are almost there but they are not quite certified or they don't have the certification to fulfill that position.

I think one thing that we are missing in this government that they used to have in the past is in regards to...It is too bad that we still don't have it. It is in the whole area of training and in-house training where you actually have people that you hire at a certain level and give them the time to achieve that objective of what the condition of that person you are looking for. We can't find the people that we want but we have people in the North living here who have certain certifications, but they may not have a master's degree but basically have a diploma of some sort that gives them that certification. They have the basic understanding of that position. I would like to know is that something that we can consider when we talk about recruitment that we offer these positions, subject to those people concluding those positions. I hate to use the position of health care workers or looking at mental health workers because I have been talking about it for three days.

The point I am trying to make is that there are people in the Northwest Territories who have certain degrees, but may not meet these standards of what we are looking for but they are here. How can we entice those people to come work for the Government of the Northwest Territories, give a little bit of training, get them certified and get them into the workplace?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, this is something that we are looking at

through our Corporate Human Resource Strategy. The Member is correct; it is something that we used to do when the budgets would allow us to do it, because it is a little more expensive way of doing business. It is certainly something that I know some of the departments have been doing, especially for hard-to-fill positions. We have been working with individuals. Certainly it is always easier to deal with before competition goes out, so that if we know of individuals that need a little bit of training, we call them under-filling. We can under-fill positions and work with them to get their required training. This is certainly an area that we will be looking at through the Corporate Human Resources Strategy. Of course, as a government, we encourage and utilize equivalencies on most of the competitions that we run. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: Also, another area that this government should seriously consider when you talk about recruitment and management is the whole area of job sharing. I know there are a lot of people in the different areas, especially where there are stressful positions. I use social workers...People in that area, a lot of times get burnt out. They want to stay in the government but they want to move on and maybe do something that is not as stressful, maybe go work for Education versus working for Health. I think we should have a system in place that allows those people to be able to move within the government. They bring certain expertise but also they basically have an opportunity to job share or be able to work within the government so they can get experiences in different areas. It is sort of the same fundamentals but it is just a matter of moving say from income support to Social Services to Justice. But at least once they decide which career path they want to take and maybe go back to school and become a lawyer, a doctor or a psychologist, at least give them the opportunity to get some experiences in the different departments. I am wondering if that is something that has been considered in regards to try their own, continue to maintain what we have but also allow them the flexibility that they can move to certain areas that they might be interested in and not just put them in a cubicle and say here, you are stuck here for 20 years, you are not going to get out. Is that something that you have considered in regards to the flexibility of having our long-term staff in the government which remain in the government which also want to be able to move on to different areas?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Job sharing is something that we encourage. It is provided for us through the collective agreements that we have. It is something that we find is working really well for those that choose to do so. I think what you are talking about is what we refer to as transfer assignments. This is something that we do a lot of in the government. We try to encourage that by making sure that we

post jobs in sufficient time so that if people are interested they can approach us and, by all means, if they are individuals that are looking at moving or looking for a change, certainly we would encourage them to contact us or work through their managers, because we want to keep all of our employees and make them happy. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I have a last question in this area. In regards to your opening comments, I know that you said you are working collaboratively with community and aboriginal governments to improve the public service capacity at community levels. I think that there used to be ways of seconding people within the government to go work for aboriginal organizations or work for municipalities so that you are able to fill in the gaps where you know there are good people in government but they can do just as good a job in our communities. That is the biggest challenge we face is the whole capacity issue in a lot of our communities dealing with MACA or dealing with the band councils. You have a good band manager and a good SAO, a hamlet goes a long way to have somebody there that has some internal government experience so when they do go working for one of the different organizations within municipalities or bands, they bring that knowledge with them. A lot of the times that is all that is needed for a lot of these groups to move forward. I would just like to know if that is something, in regards to that statement, where you are looking at possibly going. I know there was a recruitment program in the past for people who were able to get seconded for a couple of years to go work for a different organization and then come back to the government after that transfer. Is that still there?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I think that is part of our line of thinking. We have written to all of the aboriginal governments and municipal governments seeking their input into how we can collaborate and work closer together to help develop capacity as part of our corporate human resource strategic planning. As well, through strategic initiatives, we have identified funding to go to the Department of Human Resources, but it will likely be transferred to MACA whereby we will be working with them to see how we can work together with the municipalities and aboriginal governments to help them develop capacity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: There is something on the page that I always wanted to ask about. It is called "other expenses." I know previously it used to be always asked in this House. What are these other expenses?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It is broken out by regions, regional centres. We have \$110,000 for management unit, \$21,000 for client services, \$21,000 for allied health recruitment, and then we

have a breakdown between regions. We have \$25,000 in Tlicho, \$52,000 for Fort Smith, \$42,000 for Hay River, \$138,000 for Inuvik, \$48,000 for Sahtu, \$42,000 for Deh Cho, for a total of \$499,000.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee, Page 3-19, management and recruitment services, operations expenditure summary, \$7.295 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 3-20, management and recruitment services, active positions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be consistent with my questioning here. I would like to ask the department if they can give me a breakdown in regards to these positions in regards to P1s, P2s, and P3s. If you don't have that information with you, I would like to maybe have the paper copies. I would just like to know where we stand in regards to the Affirmative Action Policy in the HR.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: For the department, we have 37 percent aboriginal employment, but if the Member wants a breakdown by P1s, P2s, P3s, we will provide that to him. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: Also, is it possible if we can have a breakdown by people with disabilities and maybe gender?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It may be a privacy issue, but if it isn't we will provide the information to Mr. Krutko. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee. Page 3-20, management and recruitment services, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are moving on to 3-22 and 3-23, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$10.207 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions with regards to the funding for community governments mentioned by the Minister in his opening remarks. I am really

pleased to hear that that is an initiative that is being taken on by the department. I have mentioned quite a number of times that capacity for community governments is certainly an issue, so it is good to see that the Department of HR is going to be assisting community governments with some of their difficulties.

I did have a question, though. I am a little confused in sort of terminology I guess. In various places, we are advised that we have a strategic initiative of \$2.3 million for recruitment and retention strategies for GNWT and community government but then on page 3-23 I see Maximizing Northern Employment and somewhere in the last month or two I was given to understand that Maximizing Northern Employment program didn't exist anymore. If I can get an explanation of that contradiction, that would help me out. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The \$2.3 million is funding that has been provided through the strategic initiatives process and the Maximizing Northern Employment is an ongoing program within the Department of Human Resources which provides for graduate employment, graduate internships, summer student employment, promotion, recruitment and planning and GNWT-wide initiatives such as developing a new recruitment program and cross-departmental training for engineers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the answer. With regards to the strategic initiative and the funding for community governments, I wonder if I could get an explanation of what sorts of activities are going to be put forward with regards to community governments. How are those funds going to be used for that particular purpose? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are working with the working group with regards to the allocation of this funding. This working group is made up of representatives from LGAT, NWT Association of Communities, MACA and the Department of Human Resources. We haven't made any decisions yet, but some of our initial thinking is that the funding would be used to implement a number of different programs. For example, the development of a municipal internship program, a marketing and recruitment initiative to attract young people to work in municipal government, support to LGAT to extend their capacity building initiatives and also to look at our communities for pooling of human resource-related functions amongst communities. For those of you that don't know what LGAT is, it is Local Government Administrators of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS. BISARO: Thank you for the explanation. Those are great objectives. I look forward to getting more information on how this working group determines specifics. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. We are on page 3-23, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$10.207 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, the question I have for the Minister is on page 3-22, on GNWT orientations. Is that in your orientations? Do the senior managers who have responsibility for a region like my own have some specific cultural related orientation package for them? Some of the senior management that do have responsibility for our region may know the geographical area, the description, the profile, but they don't really know the people or the culture. They rely a lot on the senior managers at the community and regional level. But they who have the authority to make decisions sometimes make it in the best interests of the corporate world but they don't really have the cultural community sense of the regions. Is that something that Human Resources looks at in terms of GNWT orientation, having some of these people who are in a position to make a difference in our lives, are they somewhat involved in a regional orientation setting in terms of their language, knowing the people, knowing their culture or is it mostly in books that they read and they just check off this and that in terms of what they know about the Sahtu people? I don't get a sense of how they are orientated into our region.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member brings out a good point. This is something that we feel is very important and something we need to be doing a better job in this regard. I don't think we have one cultural awareness program or one size fits all for the government, but I know that different departments probably do different things. Right now, our focus has been to try to make sure that every new employee of the government gets provided with an orientation. I think we are starting to look at what different governments or different regions are doing with regard to cultural awareness and this is something that we are going to have to put more importance on and try to develop something that we can use much more broadly. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I certainly look forward to the day that the Minister presents a cultural orientation package for the House. I know he's going to try hard in terms of what package that would be suitable as a government as a whole. He also makes some good

points that our region is different in the Sahtu. There are cultural beliefs and values that need to be implemented for that specific senior management employee. It may be different for Gwich'in, Inuvialuit and that's good because you are going to have those people do the training with those people, which is good. So that's what I am looking at is when the Minister can present us with a paper saying this is how we'd like to go forward. I am not sure how long it will take. Like he says it's a huge department. As a pilot, maybe you could start with your own department. It would be good to have senior management come on the land with us as people. Then they get to understand what we are talking about with our programs and services. It's good for them to learn our language. It's good for them to know our culture. So sometimes they have some sensitivity with decisions that need to be made.

Our region could learn a lot from them also. So I think that's something we want to look forward to. I hope there is a day within this government that senior management can be on the land for a week; deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, directors from down south who come here and they can live on the land with us for a week. Then you've got a strong government. I think you should be pushing strong for that orientation. Survival of the fittest. Our people will teach you, as you will teach the people. You have to learn that way.

I think I've done enough in my statements, Mr. Chair, so I'll see what the Minister has to say.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Part of the \$1.3 million identified for training, we saw using some of that to help develop cultural awareness programs. As well, we were looking at using aboriginal governments who already help us with providing cultural awareness to health workers, and nurses, and teachers, and I see our Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee would also help us in that regard with regard to what kind of cultural awareness would be useful and helpful for our employees. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are on page 3-23, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$10.207 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Activity summary, grants and contributions, corporate human resources. Any questions on that page?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Moving on to page 3-25, active positions, information item.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 3-26, 3-27, employee services, operations expenditure summary, \$11.643 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My last set of questions, I promise, for everyone who is groaning. I wanted to reference the reference by the Minister to backlog pay and benefits issues. I understand that they're making some good progress and that's a good thing, but I also wanted to visit two issues that have come to my office, both of which are the same and it's a recall, an invoice for holidays used over and above the allocation for people who have left the employ of the Territories.

I understand that the department is trying to make sure that people have not been overpaid for holidays that they took and hadn't earned, but I am concerned that these notices are coming 18 or more months after the person has left the employ of the GNWT. So I guess I'm trying to understand from a department perspective how an individual would be given their final pay, given their record of employment, basically signed off and yet a year or more later would be given an invoice for holidays taken that weren't earned. So if I could get an explanation from the Minister as to why a final pay notice or a final pay is given and why a record of employment notice is given to somebody who has left our employ when the audit on what's owing and what's due has not been done. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just make a couple of comments to set the scene, I guess. One, right now, with the Financial Administration Act, we really have no choice. If we find an error and there is a need to collect from an employee, current employee or retired employee, we have to go and collect and part of the problems with some of the recent events has been with some functions that went wrong with PeopleSoft in the past. Also in doing the T4s, some of the problems come to light, and so we're looking at the issue and we are trying to find ways.

Obviously we feel we can do a lot better when we contact the individuals that have arrears. We can do a better job of explaining and also we are looking at what our requirements are. We think we should be able, in certain cases, where we've gone through the audit and everybody signed off on it, that where the mistake is not the fault of the employee, that we want to find ways of maybe writing it off. This is something we will have to work out with the Minister of Finance, but we are looking at that and we agree with the Member that we need to do a better job of dealing with this. Also, we will be making changes to PeopleSoft effective April 1st that will put in some checks, balances and

safeguards so that we should be able to catch most of these kinds of issues. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I want to thank the Minister for that answer. I guess I would just reiterate I don't understand when a final pay is being calculated and worked through that these amounts owing for lieu time or holidays aren't discovered. If it's human error, that's fine, I understand, but I am having great difficulty in understanding why they aren't caught when final pay is determined. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Well, in the most recent examples that were brought to our attention, it was staff error. When we did an audit for T-4s, it was caught, so with existing procedures and systems, we have to go back and recover. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for the explanations. I appreciate the fact that the department is looking at this issue and trying to determine that if everything has been signed off and the employee and the department agree on what is owing or not owed, that they are not going back to employees and recall, you know, \$1,500, \$2,000. If that's the case, if that's what we end up with, I think that's a really good solution. Thanks. Just a comment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We're on page 3-27, employee services, operations expenditure summary, \$11.643 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next page, 3-28. It's an information item. Active positions, employee services. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we'll move back to the department operations expenditure summary, page 3-7, Human Resources, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$35.079 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I get a breakdown of the contract services of \$1.5 million?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Member want us to read it to him or does he just want us to give him a copy?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister, if you can provide a paper copy so all the Members can have a copy, that will be good. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one point here. In the Minister's opening comments he

mentioned something about \$100,000 to the consolidated clinic here in Yellowknife. I don't see anywhere in here where that makes reference to. Is that just an announcement that the Minister is making? Unless, save it for tomorrow.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess the Member was out when I responded to general comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ohhh.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It's under corporate human resources and there was \$2.4 million in strategic initiatives, of which \$100,000 is one time funding to hire human resource officers to help with writing job descriptions, doing job classifications and helping with the transfer to UNW positions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I know everybody is getting excited in here, but could we have some order in the House. It's getting a little loud in here. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you. I lied about my last question. I just noticed on page 3-7, and we talked a lot about it last year, about under other expenses. I noticed it turned up under corporate, corporate...whatever that section is, but corporate HR strategy or something. Anyway, we have \$2 million in other expenses. I wondered if I could get a bit more of an explanation as to what that is. I thought last year we had agreed that we would have no more other in other, so I'd like to ask the Minister if he could avoid that next year in his budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of HR, could you explain to the others other?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We put our strategic initiative at \$2 million and change in there, probably because we didn't find a better place to put it because the program design is still being developed and hasn't been finalized as of yet. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: Thank you. I understand that, but I guess if that's the case, then if we have to have a \$2 million other expense next year, please add a footnote to explain it. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Certainly we will make sure we do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 3-7, Human Resources, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$35.079 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, does the committee agree that we've concluded the Department of Human Resources? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Oh, did you want me to move to report progress?

---Interjection

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Ohhh. Sorry; I wasn't paying attention. Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010, and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? Honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, item 24, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Tuesday, February 17, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements

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| <p>4. Returns to Oral Questions</p> <p>5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery</p> <p>6. Acknowledgements</p> <p>7. Oral Questions</p> <p>8. Written Questions</p> <p>9. Returns to Written Questions</p> <p>10. Replies to Opening Address</p> <p>11. Petitions</p> <p>12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees</p> <p>13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills</p> <p>14. Tabling of Documents</p> <p>15. Notices of Motion</p> <p>16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills</p> <p>17. Motions</p> <p>18. First Reading of Bills</p> <p>19. Second Reading of Bills</p> <p>20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters</p> | <p>- Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act</p> <p>- Bill 4, Public Library Act</p> <p>- Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act</p> <p>- Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act</p> |
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| <p>- Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy</p> <p>- Tabled Document 11-16(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2009-2010</p> <p>- Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee</p> <p>- Committee Report 3-16(3), Report on the Use of Laptop Computers and Blackberry Devices in the Legislative Assembly</p> <p>- Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act</p> | <p>21. Report of Committee of the Whole</p> <p>22. Third Reading of Bills</p> <p>23. Orders of the Day</p> <p>MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 17, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>---ADJOURNMENT</p> <p>The House adjourned at 7:48 p.m.</p> |
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