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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, May 29, 2009****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, 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 10:07 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 71-16(3):
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES ACTION PLAN

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Members of the 16th Assembly, we are, first and foremost, Northerners working together. As a government, we are moving forward with a plan of five strategic initiatives that are focussing and organizing our work and initiatives to meet the goals we share as an Assembly. Our plan is built around the 16th Assembly's vision, Northerners Working Together. It is responsive to the priorities that we have identified, most importantly it is focussed firmly on achieving the potential of our future

One of the key priorities under the 16th Legislative Assembly's strategic plan is healthy, educated people with a focus on prevention by promoting healthy choices and lifestyles and the role of personal and family responsibility.

In order to advance this goal, we need to continue to invest in prevention and promotion programs that promote the overall health and well-being of Northerners. We need to concentrate efforts and resources in early childhood development, early intervention and upstream prevention with a focus on population health.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our recent accomplishments and future directions aimed at furthering the priorities of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

The NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan, A Foundation for Change, sets out the strategic direction and actions required to improve the well-being of all residents of the Northwest Territories and aims to provide and promote affordable, effective and responsive health and social services.

Health and Social Services has several initiatives already underway within the Building our Future initiative.

We are expanding programming for children and youth through respite care in communities outside of Yellowknife. Respite care provides planned relief for caregivers, families and the people with disabilities they care for. Relief is necessary to decrease burnout and stress and allow caregivers to provide the best possible support and thereby the best quality of life for those with disabilities. This action focuses on improving outcomes and opportunities for children and youth.

Under encourage healthy choices and address addictions, we successfully launched our 2009 version of Drop the Pop to 38 schools across the Northwest Territories. This successful campaign encourages our children and youth to make healthy choices and promotes the Assembly's goal of healthy, educated residents.

We will build on our partnerships with aboriginal organizations to establish culturally appropriate community treatment options for youth and adults dealing with addictions, such as on-the-land treatment programming. We are currently working to establish a child and family service delivery model that will be culturally appropriate and incorporate best practices. We will be looking to do a pilot project in a small community that will provide an alternative response for the delivery of social services and provide opportunities for a traditional community-driven response that is in the best interest of children and families.

This April we launched our oral health campaign. This campaign provides toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, bibs, and education materials to schools and health centres in all communities. Our Lift the Lip campaign highlighted the importance of good dental hygiene for children.

Once again our campaign will encourage healthy choices and promote healthy, educated residents. As we all know, if we can encourage healthy choices in our youth, we will be able to prevent many of the issues we see in our current adult population.

We are working in partnership with the Coalition Against Family Violence to expand services to smaller communities and to reduce impacts by

supporting children who witness family violence. Through the Small Communities Homelessness Fund we are providing resources to small communities for the provision of services and emergency shelter for homeless persons. In addition, the Homelessness Assistance Fund provides emergency financial and travel support to individuals and families facing homelessness.

We have devoted extensive resources to training community-based staff from across the Territory in the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training -- ASIST -- model of suicidal intervention. This is an important step in protecting the health and safety of our most at-risk people, especially our youth.

We are evaluating our Community Counselling Program to ensure that it meets the needs of our smaller and more remote communities. We're committed to working with the communities to provide a service that is relevant and meaningful and assists community members to achieve their personal wellness goals.

We're working with government and community partners to expand child and youth mental health programming. This is a strategic and preventive measure to increase protective factors and to reduce risk factors for future difficulties.

Through the Strengthening Continuum of Care for Seniors strategic action we have committed to supporting seniors by providing assistance and support for the construction and ongoing operation and maintenance of the Territorial Dementia Centre scheduled for completion this year. Once occupied, residents of this facility will be provided with a home-like environment that offers as much freedom as possible and reinforces a sense of belonging and independence.

We recently opened the Hay River Territorial Supported Living Campus. The campus will provide support for adults with special needs and disabilities and allow Northerners currently receiving services in the South to be closer to their families. The campus provides housing for up to 10 residents and two respite beds, which will give families caring for loved ones planned relief. There will also be a day program centre that will provide programs to both residents and clients from the surrounding area. This campus will provide residents with an opportunity for personal growth, life skills, and peer and social supports.

Earlier this week I was very pleased to announce a partnership with the City of Yellowknife and BHP Billiton to provide funding for the establishment of a day shelter for the homeless. This joint investment over three years will ensure that some of our most vulnerable citizens have access to a safe environment during the day and shelter from the elements, including washroom facilities. This initiative will further the Assembly's goal of a

healthy, educated population focusing on vulnerable individuals.

While we've had many recent successes, this does not diminish the challenge faced by the NWT health and social services system. The cost of maintaining four hospitals and 19 health centres for a small population results in a very high per capita cost. We have a critical shortage of health care professionals, including nurses and social workers. We are heavily reliant on locum physicians and relief nurses.

Our current physician institutional-based model is extremely costly. Our social services are not well integrated and having eight regional boards of management means that our service delivery is not consistent across the system. Add to that the high risk lifestyle of many of our residents, an aging population, the rising cost of health care, and the rising burden of chronic diseases, and it becomes very clear that our current system as is, is not sustainable.

In order to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the NWT health and social services system we are focusing on initiatives aimed at providing affordable, effective, and appropriate services now and into the future.

The Foundation for Change Action Plan focuses on delivering the right services using the most appropriate service provider. We will fully implement a primary community care model utilizing all health care professionals to their full scope of practice. Through technology we will deliver services remotely and provide support to frontline staff in isolated communities, enhancing patient safety and care. We plan to look at all health and social services facilities in the NWT to ensure they are operating at maximum capacity and efficiency. Where they are not we will have to make decisions to ensure maximum efficiency.

We are also taking an inventory throughout the NWT of community health and social services capital needs. We will review existing governance structures to ensure that regional priorities are effectively communicated and reflected in the Health and Social Services strategic and business plans. To ensure accountability we will set performance benchmarks and targets that measure progress towards achieving our goals and monitor progress through quality assurance and performance monitoring. We will focus on services that will help to mitigate future costs; programs like promotion and prevention, chronic disease management, and enhancing continuing care to reduce costly long-term care and facility living.

To be effective, social programs will need to be better integrated, services to the clients will be seamless, and all social programs will be better linked to ensure the most appropriate services are provided to those individuals accessing the system.

We will roll out electronic health records and electronic medical records to reduce health care costs and improve quality of care. This means that a health professional with an Internet connection can access a patient's health information any time or anywhere from all sites in the NWT, resulting in better information and faster results for the patient. Our new filmless X-ray system will allow health professionals in remote communities to examine X-rays and ultrasounds over a high-speed Internet connection. This means that we will no longer have to wait for X-rays to be sent by mail to have doctors review them. We can now upload them and have a doctor review the image in a more timely fashion. This new digital system will prevent the loss of film and reduce cost associated with producing hard copy film. This is an example of using the latest technology to provide a better service for the residents of the NWT in a more cost-effective manner.

The department is expanding its TeleSpeech Program, replacing 14 outdated telehealth units and adding 16 new units to schools and health centres. These units will ensure that residents, mainly children, will be able to access the speech language services they require in their communities. This is another positive example of how technology is being used to deliver services in our small communities.

Health and Social Services alone cannot ensure the future sustainability of our system. We will need broad support from all levels of government and community organizations. Individuals and families will need to accept personal responsibility for their overall health and well-being. We need to change behaviours today to ensure we meet our goal of healthy, educated people for the future.

I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of our recent and planned initiatives aimed at moving forward with the 16th Legislative Assembly strategic plan.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 72-16(3):
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STRATEGIC PLAN

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of 2009 I advised Members that Municipal and Community Affairs was embarking on a strategic planning process in which the department would take stock of where it is currently at and lay out the key directions for the future, recognizing the current realities facing our stakeholders and partners.

MACA's work on developing a strategic plan will contribute to the overall advancement of the

priorities of this Assembly. The Assembly's goal of healthy, sustainable communities is one of the cornerstones we are utilizing in advancing a new strategic plan for the department.

Given the many changes in the past three years, it is time to review the achievements and milestones MACA has reached in collaboration with community governments, their representative organizations, sport organizations, and other partners; identify current and emerging issues and position ourselves to continue the positive momentum well into the future.

Through an inclusive process, MACA has developed a draft strategic plan that is now out to key stakeholders for review and comment. The draft was recently presented to the Northwest Territories Association of Communities at their annual general meeting in Inuvik. The delegates were very engaged and interested in the process and provided high level endorsement of the directions contained within the plan. Similar consultations are underway with other key partners to gauge their level of support and recommendations for future directions.

The draft strategic plan highlights for key themes that will guide the work of the department in implementing its diverse mandate for the next five years. The first theme, "A Foundation for Leadership," recognizes that competent and effective elected leaders are necessary for community governments to function competently. As well, the financial policies, programs and partnerships that contribute sound financial management need to be in place and accessible to support community governments in making solid decisions.

The second theme, "A Clear Path Forward," recognizes that MACA needs to ensure it has the proper tools and resources to effectively support clients. Up-to-date comprehensive legislation and policies, meaningful communication tools for connecting with clients, strong seamless partnerships, both internal and external to the department, and a skilled informed workforce that proactively adds value to everything in which they are involved.

The third theme, "Stronger Safer Communities," speaks to the importance of MACA's work in supporting communities to address key local issues such as community infrastructure planning and construction, land management, public safety in areas such as fire protection, emergency management, clean drinking water, and environmental planning and stewardship.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the last theme, "Invest in People, Build Communities," speaks to the need to focus on building the skills of community government staff as well as on sustaining vibrant

healthy communities through quality of life programming such as recreation and volunteerism.

These four broad themes reflect the high level strategic directions the department is proposing to move forward over the next few years. The supporting actions and strategies will roll out in a manner that strives to balance needs with available resources, always keeping in mind that our clients and stakeholders are the key drivers of the department's work.

Mr. Speaker, community governments and MACA's other partners are facing a range of interesting challenges and opportunities, and as Minister, I am pleased to confirm that the department is striving to position itself to meaningfully partner with them to meet shared goals and important milestones. Once the final strategic plan is approved, I look forward to providing regular updates to Members on the activities undertaken by the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 73-16(3):
 UPDATING OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING
 THE NWT LABOUR FORCE

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in order to maximize opportunities in our northern economy, we need to have the flexibility and capacity to adapt to change. We need to be able to adapt training and programming as industries develop, and as our population grows and changes. The NWT Labour Force Development Plan provides the strategic framework for this activity. This plan was developed in 2002 to ensure Northerners were able to participate meaningfully in society. The measures were strengthened and linked through partnerships and alliances, as well as labour market information and exchange.

Some of this work in the new areas has already started. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to implement a Territorial Nominee Program. Starting in July, this program will assist immigrants who can contribute to the economic and social goals of our Territory in gaining permanent resident status.

Education, Culture and Employment also offers the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers which provides a range of employment activities to older workers in the communities experiencing ongoing high unemployment or those affected by downsizing or closures. This initiative is funded through the federal department of Human Resources and Skills Development. Programs such as this one will likely become increasingly important

as our population ages and we experience fluctuations in economic activity.

In addition to this work, there are new opportunities within the Northwest Territories for collaboration with industry and partners. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Northern Workforce Initiative between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the three diamond mines allows coordination of our efforts, but is not reflected in the existing Labour Force Development Plan.

As the new framework is developed, we will continue to ensure we provide Northerners with excellent career development services and opportunities through our ECE service centres. We are also working with HRSDC to establish an NWT Labour Market Agreement to ensure that individuals who are not eligible for assistance under employment insurance have access to programs and services that meet their specific labour market needs.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to presenting the final report to this House when it is completed. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 74-16(3):
 GOVERNMENT OF THE NWT SUPPORT FOR
 THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal people of our Territory have a long proud history of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The transfer of life skills relating to this proud history ensures that these values are sustained and important social and cultural links are maintained to the land and its resources.

In the Northwest Territories, these traditional and cultural skills are recognized and supported by our government as the foundation of our traditional economy, which services to advance the diversification and sustainability of local economies as identified in our goal to provide all communities and regions with opportunities and choices.

As a government, we actively support the harvesting and marketing of wild fur as a fundamental component of our modern economy.

I was happy to note that Northwest Territories trappers were, again, the top performers at the Fur Harvesters Auction sale last month. In addition, Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs from the Northwest Territories outsold all others. Our furs provided the largest single section of marten or Canadian sable, offering 12,790 pelts, generating an average price of \$62, with a highest sales price of the auction of \$187. Production of marten has increased by 31 percent. The principle buyers were Hong Kong, China, Russia, Greece and Italy.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: These positive results, Mr. Speaker, are a reflection of many years of promotion, support and training facilitated by our government through the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program.

This year we have 728 people delivering fur to this program, which represents a 16 percent increase in participants overall; something that bodes well for our government's strategic priority to pursue growth and diversification in the Northwest Territories economy, but, more importantly, in the preservation of the traditional economy and specifically our trapping industry in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is also investing in the preservation of another traditional life skill: the construction of birch bark canoes. This skill is one that has existed in the Deh Cho for thousands of years. However, with the passing of elders and harvesters experienced in the art of making canoes, it is a traditional life skill that we risk losing.

Beginning June 3rd, the Liidlii Kue First Nation is sponsoring a project in Fort Simpson that will see a number of youth learn this rare, time-honoured and valuable traditional art.

Over the 10-day course, young students will learn how to gather material from the bush, carve the ribs and frame of the canoe, cover the frame with birch bark and, finally, to seal the birch bark with spruce sap and gum to make it water tight.

We anticipate that the proposed June 12th completion date of the canoe will coincide with Treaty Day celebrations in Fort Simpson. The young people participating in this program will then present the finished canoe to the community as part of the celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative in Fort Simpson is one of many traditional life skills projects provided annually for school-age youth under the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment's Take a Kid Trapping Program. Since 2002, over 5,000 youth have participated in different components of the program. Last year alone, 1,450 young people participated in the program.

The program success is due in large part to the strong partnership that exists between the departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Municipal and Community Affairs, Environment and Natural Resources, and Education, Culture and Employment and the talent and skills of the many local residents and elders who support the program in various communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FOOD MAIL PROGRAM

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to do my Member's statement on an acronym, FMP, Food Mail Program or as my people in the Sahtu would prefer, Feed My People. Today I would like to think about the possibility the Food Mail Program can work. This federal government program has recently been reviewed by a consultant, Mr. Graeme Dargo, who recommends the short-term overhaul and replacement. I would like to think that it can, and indeed it should, be fixed.

Our people in the North need all the tools available to help fight the high food costs. Northern stores that sell groceries receive discount costs on freight charges. The Northwest Company, who owns and runs Northern Stores, say they added their mark-up to the product and delivery costs to determine the retail prices that we pay. This being true, we should see people benefiting from lower prices of postage and freight but, of course, there is no control on how much the mark-up a grocery chain applies.

For example, in Tulita, for 10 pounds of potatoes, we pay \$25. In the Beaufort-Delta, I heard a case of pop is going for \$63.

Mr. Speaker, one of our strategic goals in this 16th Assembly is to reduce the cost of living. Mr. Dargo sees the next step as doing away with the freight cost discount on personal orders. I do not agree with this step. The main reason for taking away the personal orders are to increase sales in our stores.

Mr. Speaker, to some degree, we have a dependency on northern retail stores and to a larger degree these Northern Stores have the benefit of a captive market. So, therefore, I would like to keep the right at least to have the choice as to how our people spend their hard earned dollars on food to feed their families. A little competition shouldn't hurt the Northern Stores. Mr. Dargo stated in his report that personal food orders aren't fair and favour privileged people who have cars and credit cards. This may be true; however, that doesn't diminish the fact that, in my region, my people always have wanted the right to healthy food to feed their families.

Feeding one family is a costly matter in the Sahtu and throughout the Northwest Territories. What can be the logic in pursuing people who are a bit more successful? An awful lot of people in my riding, indeed throughout the North, have these things: a credit card and a car; well, maybe a pick-up. As

well, communities hold celebrations and regional gatherings. They often purchase food as personal food orders.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you colleagues. As well, communities hold celebrations and regional gatherings. They often purchase food as personal food orders. They have many reasons to do this. Maybe they are looking for something different, something maybe that is not available in the communities, maybe trying to save more money. Why would we punish these community groups? I have heard from several constituents on this from people with health issues such as diabetes who, through personal food orders, get good quality food they want and need. They have done this because, despite their best efforts to get their local stores to stock the food stuff they need, the local stores just aren't interested. The stores are focussed on basics and give them all the food for the money they would like to make. This problem is not better. Let's support personal choice.

In closing, I support the personal Food Mail Program and I think that as Members we must forward the outcome of this report and be involved in discussions about it and how we can work on lowering the cost of food for all people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Feed my people.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONGRATULATIONS TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we get near the end of each school year, Grade 12 students look back on their past years of school and then look forward to the next phase of their life. Graduation ceremonies are or will be taking place all over the NWT as high school and college students celebrate their achievements and the completion of their secondary schooling.

Graduation is often seen as a modern day rite of passage into adulthood. Yellowknife students will be marking this moment on May 30 and June 27. Tomorrow, graduation ceremonies take place for 72 students from St. Patrick's High School and for six students from Ecole Allain St. Cyr who will form the first graduating class for NWT's very first French language school.

At the end of next month, 159 students from Ecole Sir John Franklin School will celebrate their high school leaving. Today I want to recognize all Yellowknife Grade 12 students for their perseverance, their dedication and their hard work

over their last 12 years of school. Congratulations to each and every one of you on reaching this significant milestone in your life. Bask in the glow of your success for you have earned it. As you move on to the next stage of your life, whether it be further education, entering the workforce or travel, I wish only the best for you. I know you will be great ambassadors for your community and for our Territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME SUPPORT AND ECONOMIC RENT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to bring up an issue very important in my region as how the NWT Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Employment calculate the tenants' income when determining rent. According to my constituent's public housing rental subsidy summary of some people, even the same housing units are assessed differently. In fact, there have been different assessments done even on the same person. I have been receiving a lot of comments from all of the Nunakput communities regarding the issues. Many people in small isolated communities live in the NWT housing units because there is no other option.

Mr. Speaker, although northern allowance settlement allowance is non-assessable income, evaluation is a complication, formulated as not complicated to see if there is enormous inconsistencies but the policies on how the staff and regions are expected to use them. All the tenants under the public housing rental policies, regardless of their employment or circumstances, should be treated with consistency, unless reasonable circumstances such as elders, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, it seems, though, the people who don't work for the government in the Northwest Territories are treated different and unfair. Mr. Speaker, it is wrong. Northern allowances and settlement allowances are given to people living in small remote communities all over this great Territory because of the high cost of living even though these allowances...People in my riding pay 80 percent more for basic necessities than those living in major centres.

Mr. Speaker, we can't even afford to live a healthy lifestyle. This is wrong. The government calculates all these allowances as income. It is wrong. The people's incomes are reduced. They can't buy groceries. It is a shame.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of ECE and Housing. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NEW HOME PURCHASING INSURANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about insurance for what is usually the most expensive item that an individual or a family can ever purchase. That is, of course, the family home. Imperatively, if you buy a new lawn mower and it doesn't work, chances are you are able to take it back to whoever sold it to you and get a replacement or even your money back. Mr. Speaker, if your car malfunctions, you can take it back for warranty and get repairs. However, what happens when a contractor does not complete a house as promised, and, equally bad, you get a lemon, Mr. Speaker? The courts tend to be the only remedy before you.

Many provinces in Canada have enacted legislation to protect new home purchasers. As an example, in Ontario there is a new Home Purchasing Warranty Plan Act which describes mandatory responsibilities for the builder when they sell you a new home. Mr. Speaker, it outlines warranty coverage for the builders and vendors as they are required to provide to the new homeowner when they buy that new home or condominium. These regulations describe additional warranties and provide detailed requirements for the registration of the builders and vendors.

Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporation is empowered to administer and make sure that this is enforced. In Alberta, the New Home Warranty Program offers protection for purchasers who buy a house constructed by a builder who is a member of this program. Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia those builders must be licensed.

As anyone can see, there are varying degrees of home warranty protection, but the bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, the consumers are protected. Mr. Speaker, families are protected. What can a person presently do in the North if their house is deficient or a contractor goes bankrupt or leaves them in the lurch? Nothing, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a very difficult situation that families face. Let's avoid the crisis before it happens.

Later today I will be asking questions to the Minister of MACA about looking into creating a legislative initiative that will protect our northern homeowners when they go out and purchase a new home or a condo. I believe consumer protection is a primary responsibility of a government and I certainly hope that this government will demonstrate that it feels the same.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INCOME SUPPORT AND ECONOMIC RENT

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

I would like to talk about public housing and the difficulties that tenants are having once they find employment.

In the communities of Tu Nedhe, as I'm sure is the case in other communities, the issue of public housing tenants getting a job and having their rent increased -- in some cases substantially -- continues to be a big problem. More times than not the tenants will work for a while and determine that they cannot afford rent. Then they are quitting their jobs and have no way of catching up with their arrears which have accumulated during the time that they were working. In many cases this employment is the first employment that tenants have had in years. However, once a new rent is calculated and additional expenses related to work and child care expenses, the tenants can no longer afford to remain working.

I believe that the incorporation of a six-month grace period where the rent of the tenants when they go to work does not change for six months would go a long way to keeping them employed and would give the people an opportunity to become homeowners. However, this will only work if the NWT Housing Corporation staff immediately begin to work with the tenants and start the process of counselling the tenants towards becoming a homeowner. In small non-market communities there is not an abundance of houses available on the market. In most cases the tenants would buy NWT Housing Corporation owned units.

Once a tenant becomes a homeowner the government would no longer be required to provide income support to these tenants. This will create or enhance local housing markets in communities and there could also be more revenue to the GNWT through the sale of public housing units. And this will also reduce the cost of overall O and M of the Public Housing Program.

This government should do all they can to encourage people to work and get off income support, which is provided by the government. Ultimately this six-month grace period would have long-term benefits for both the communities and the GNWT.

Later I will have questions for the appropriate Minister.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND
COOPERATION

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to encourage Northerners to talk to your MLAs. I've been sensing a lot of despair around here lately about we're kind of saddled with the situation we have right now. We're saddled with the leadership and the circumstances around the past two years that we've had in this government.

In fact, I don't believe that's true, in spite of Mr. Miltenberger's characterization of the unhappiness on this side of the House as being bitterness and creating acrimony. In fact, I see the majority, if not almost all Members of this House, as being honourable Members who have been elected to come here and do a job on behalf of their people. I see nothing but good motives and a true desire to do the best that we can to represent our people.

The fact of the matter is we can't bury our heads in the sand and act like nothing is out of order here, that there are no leadership problems in this government. If we are sensing that, the people out there who are our constituents must be sensing that as well. I mean, this kind of hits an all-time new low for this Government of the Northwest Territories, what we've had to experience. It didn't start last week, it didn't start a month ago. It started at the beginning of the 16th Assembly and I'm not going to stand here today and recite the whole list of all the failures when it comes to leadership. But now things have sunk to a really all-time low.

We can choose to ignore it. We can try to brush it under the carpet. About a year ago I stood up in this House and I said, you know, I'm not out to get the Premier. And I said I don't want the job. I don't see anybody else over there that I want to see have that job either. I said that about a year ago. But you know what? A year has gone by. I've gotten to know quite a few Members better. I do think we have options. There are alternatives. But it's going to take the backbone and the leadership of the collective membership here to stand up and say, you know what? We have some problems here. We need to deal with them. Let's face it head on. Let's go for a change of leadership here. We have got people capable of stepping into that role. We do. But it's just going to take the backbone to stand up and say we need a change.

So we don't want to operate in a vacuum. What I'm asking the people of the Northwest Territories today, who are observing this and must also feel despair over the situation, is to get in touch with your MLA. Voice your opinion. I know in saying that I'm going to take flack too because there are lots of people out there who don't like me, but I'm willing to take that. I have to stand up and say enough is enough. We deserve better.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW
KAM LAKE BYPASS ROAD

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about the development of the new Kam Lake bypass road. Construction has started on this key piece of public infrastructure here in the city of Yellowknife. In April I had the opportunity to attend a ceremonial rock blast at the construction site. The federal Health Minister, the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, our Transportation Minister, the Honourable Michael McLeod, and Mayor Gordon Van Tighem were all on hand to formally kick off construction of this road.

Mayor Van Tighem, the SAO Max Hall, and city council, certainly the City of Yellowknife deserve a great deal of credit for providing their portion of the funding for this road and for all of their support in making it happen.

The road would not have been a reality had it not been for the federal government and its Building Canada Fund. I'd like to thank the federal government for their investment in this road and for all the other infrastructure dollars they've recently been providing us with.

Of course, thanks should also be given to this government. Even though not a financial partner, they have supported the project and coordinated the funding from the federal government. I want to especially thank Transportation Minister Michael McLeod and his staff at the Department of Transportation for advancing this project.

At this time next year, if all goes as planned, the city will finally have an alternate route to Highway No. 3 and into Kam Lake Industrial Park. Kam Lake Industrial Park is the economic heart of our capital city. The long awaited route will mean many trucks will no longer have to travel on Old Airport Road, public safety will be improved, and as an industrial park, a secondary access route is a must. This road will also open up access to the new Engle Business District, providing more industrial and commercial property for the city. This will also be a key component in any future development of airport lands.

The road design also includes a multi-use trail along the west side of the road to accommodate pedestrian and non-motorized vehicles.

In closing, I also want to thank all of my colleagues, both in the last government and in this government, that have shown support for this project and this much needed piece of public infrastructure over the years.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WATER TREATMENT PLANT
IN JEAN MARIE RIVER

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today is on the water treatment plant and plans in Jean Marie. Firstly I'd be remiss not to thank Minister Robert C. McLeod, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, for the tour in the Nahendeh riding this spring.

---Applause

And also for the second day in a row I find out how a Minister's statement is appropriate to my issue.

---Laughter

The Minister this morning spoke about health, sustainable communities, and as well as the key issue for Jean Marie, which is a stronger, safer community. Just about a year ago I spoke in this House about the quality of the drinking water in Jean Marie and once again this spring people in Jean Marie River are facing discoloured water when they turn on their taps. Although this water passes the current safety guidelines, it is still unpleasant and unpalatable to the people.

I understand that Jean Marie will get an upgrade and a proper water treatment plant sometime next year, but right now, however, the community needs a temporary solution for this coming fall, winter, and through the spring season until this plant is constructed.

I am told that the military has portable units to ensure the safety and clarity of drinking water. These can be set up reasonably quickly and serve a population the size of Jean Marie River. It would be valuable for Municipal and Community Affairs to have such information on these units and to have even these units available for emergencies and situations such as I am describing.

I think that more needs to be done to ensure that smaller communities have the support they need to make sure that the water is safe and palatable for the people.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NURSE PRACTITIONER POSITIONS
IN THE NWT

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about something that I consider to be an incredibly positive step that the Department of Health and Social Services, Aurora College, and the Registered Nurses Association of

the NWT and Nunavut are taking to enhance the role of nurse practitioners in the Northwest Territories. Specifically, the establishment of a PLAR process for registered nurses in the NWT. PLAR stands for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition and is defined as a process of identifying, assessing, and recognizing skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through work experience, unrecognized training, independent study, volunteer activities and/or hobbies.

In the nurse practitioner PLAR program, northern nurses who feel they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform competently as primary health care nurse practitioners will have the opportunity to have their existing education and experience assessed, complete some required mandatory courses, complete necessary case studies for assessment purposes, validate their competencies, and then write the Canadian Nurse Practitioner Exam. If these nurses complete the program, they will be registered as primary health care nurse practitioners in the Northwest Territories.

This is a one-time opportunity for northern nurses and in total seven northern nurses entered the process and are currently in Phase 2, which involves the completion of mandatory courses and the beginning of some of the case studies. This is a great program and three partners -- the Registered Nurses Association of the NWT and Nunavut, Aurora College, and the Department of Health and Social Services -- should be applauded for the hard work and commitment to nurse practitioners in the Northwest Territories.

The Department of Health and Social Services is providing financial assistance to the nurses as they go through this process. This is good and I support this direction. They've provided financial assistance for NP students in the past and I hope they do it again in the future.

My concern is that in the past, when northern nurses have completed their nurse practitioner training where the department provided full financial support, some came back to work and were told that there were no nurse practitioner jobs available for them. To me this was a bit short-sighted. Investing all that money and time and not utilizing the skills when the nurses returned was a poor use of resources.

Fortunately, Members on this side of the House raised concerns and NP jobs were created and maintained. In the end all were offered NP positions in the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, it did cause a significant amount of stress in all of those involved. I don't want this confusion and uncertainty to happen again.

Prior to the completion of their studies, the department must ensure that a proactive plan is in

place to ensure that all of these new nurse practitioners are placed into nurse practitioner positions in the NWT.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. ABERNETHY: As I was saying, the department must ensure that a proactive plan is in place to ensure that these new nurse practitioners are placed into nurse practitioner positions in the NWT upon their registration as nurse practitioners. We must avoid the confusion and uncertainty.

At the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services some questions on this topic.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REGULATORY REFORM AND THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REGIME

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few brief comments on the huge issue of regulatory reform and the resource management regime and make some suggestions for progress we can make now.

This issue has been moving on and off the back burner for as long as there has been resource management regulation. All players -- government, industry, aboriginal groups, non-government organizations and regular citizens -- agree that the systems are complicated and frequently don't meet the needs of society as a whole or the individuals and groups who have an interest in seeing them work. It is certainly a matter worthy of rigorous review and it is crucial to all our interests that resource management regulation works efficiently and effectively. But we need to make progress.

Lately, Members have been presented with another stack of documents outlining the current state of reviews and the various interests competing to see their needs met. We have the McCrank Report and the GNWT's approach to regulatory improvement; we have Alternative North's thoughtful analysis of the McCrank Report; we've seen the five-year NWT environmental audit; and we've heard a submission in committee from the NWT chambers of Mines, Commerce, and the Construction Association. Where do we go from here?

I'd like us to make a start on the things we can do right now. The analysis we now have in hand contains several points of common agreement that we can move on swiftly.

Board vacancies have to be filled. Board action freezes when quorums can't be met. This government can make it our business to lead and push, keeping our own appointments up to date

and pressing our partners to make the appointments needed to keep all our business moving. We need to be persistent and insistent. That's a simple one.

Second, boards can't work when they are starved for funds. We've bought into these processes, so we're committed to make them work. We can't let individual cases languish while we look for a solution to overall costs. We must help ensure sufficient resources to allow our processes to work while we look for ways to maximize value across the board.

Finally, this government has shown strong leadership in pursuing comprehensive resource management plans. Everyone agrees that land use planning is a major key to success. Land use plans provide certainty and the essential knowledge base for major decisions. We need to keep the momentum of our leadership going and push forward this major area of common agreement.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME SUPPORT AND ECONOMIC RENT

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak today in regard to the negative impacts we're seeing in income support and the household rents that are being charged by the Housing Corporation by way of economic rents. The ideal situation that everyone should have a job, everyone should have an opportunity to work, but, more importantly, we all know realistically we have high pockets of unemployment in our communities.

A lot of people in our communities have an average income per year that is less than \$18,000. Yet the economic rate charged in our community is \$2,300 a month. That is totally unjustified. The take home pay of an individual who might find himself getting a job, which in most cases our jobs in our communities are seasonal at two months or three months a year, yet those individuals have to also continue to raise a family, continue to maintain their lifestyles, continue to provide for their families and provide for the individuals and other family members in our communities.

I think it's very important that this government seriously considers looking at the policy that was in place prior to the decision to move the income subsidy to ECE from Housing. There was a policy in the Housing Corporation where it clearly stipulated that if an individual who was employed for a number of months was able to find a job, that there was a probation period allowed for those individuals to retain some of those earnings over a period of time -- a couple months -- make them aware what their economic rate was going to be so

that they were prepared for the economic rate when it was given to them so they knew ahead of time. They knew what it was going to cost if you continued to work, but at least we gave them the opportunity to save during those periods of time and get themselves into the employment opportunities in our communities. In a lot of cases those individuals ended up being homeowners, being able to access programs in our government because they had a good paying job.

What we're seeing now is that as soon as an individual goes to work, he basically...

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. KRUTKO: I believe that we have to allow individuals and the people in our communities to be able to build capacity, not only in regard to human resource capacity but also the skills that they need to take advantage of other economic opportunities, regardless if it's in the oil and gas industry or the mining industry or even for apprentice programs we're trying to deliver in our communities. Fulfill those obligations so we don't see employers coming in from outside our communities, taking these jobs away and leaving. Because when even our employers in our communities are stating themselves that they have had a lot of good employees. They've had people working for them part time in regard to municipal contracts. But because of this policy, the incentive for these individuals to work part time, they're penalized in regard to the economic rent where they're not able to carry it through.

I believe this government has to reconsider this policy and implement something similar. I will be having questions in regard to the Minister responsible for ECE.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to recognize a young constituent who has been working for us all week. Alan Huynh has been working as a Page and he's been doing a great job. I would like to comment that all of the Pages have done a very good job for us this week. Thank you very much to all of them.

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

MR. HAWKINS: It gives me great pleasure to recognize as a group, of course, all the students

from Mildred Hall School who have been paging. Mildred Hall, of course, is a school in my constituency. In particular, the Yellowknife Centre constituents are Paige Elkin and I believe it's Kaine Kindla.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'd like to welcome anyone visiting in the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 355-16(3): INCOME SUPPORT, ECONOMIC RENT AND EMPLOYMENT

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about public housing and the rent difficulties tenants are having once they find employment. I have questions for the Minister of the Housing Corporation or the Minister of ECE, I suppose; whoever is going to be addressing this issue. Is the Minister prepared to work with the other Minister from the other department to incorporate a grace period for public housing tenants so that the rents don't change for six months when starting a new job?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that has been raised by a number of Members in this House over the last while. As we move forward with our discussions to look at ways to remove disincentives for employment, certainly this is an area that has to be explored. This is really not an area that the NWT Housing Corporation is responsible for anymore and we will bring this to the attention of ECE as we continue our discussions. Yes, we will look at this issue.

MR. BEAULIEU: Considering the response of the Minister that it's not really an area of the Housing Corporation on the grace period, my understanding in any event is that the public housing rent scale is passed down to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. I want to ask if the Minister understands the long-term benefits to the GNWT and the tenants of incorporating a policy such as the grace period policy.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I believe the Member's asking my opinion on this and I'll have to respond by saying absolutely.

MR. BEAULIEU: Again, because there is no policy, this is becoming a difficult line of questioning. Does the Minister have enough units in the communities right now through the detached Public Housing Program or public homeownership

units that are built in the communities should such a policy be put in place for the tenants to move into as homeownership clients?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: The Member is raising the grace period that the NWT Housing Corporation had as a program historically. It's something that's been transferred over to ECE and we'd be glad to have that discussion with ECE and we'd also be very happy to keep the Member informed. The Member has raised the issue of having tenants that are, could potentially or historically would have gained benefit from this program being considered for tenants or as clients for homeownership. The answer is yes, they would probably make perfect candidates for homeownership and we certainly are encouraging our tenants that are changing their careers in their life and move on to higher paying jobs to apply to the Housing Corporation to purchase some of their public housing units that they may be staying in and are having difficulty meeting the full economic rent. Our staff are out there encouraging people. There is a public campaign to increase the awareness of our housing programs and this is part of it. We certainly support the suggestion made by the Member.

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

QUESTION 356-16(3):
WATER TREATMENT PLANT PLAN FOR
JEAN MARIE RIVER

MR. MENICOCHE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my Member's statement I spoke about the Jean Marie issues with their water and the potential of the water treatment plant being built. I just want to ask the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs what the plan is to get the water treatment plant built for Jean Marie River.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I think I need to thank the people of Nahendeh for their hospitality during my tour there. A few more and I'm going to have to buy some bigger suits because I think all we did was eat in every community.

---Interjection

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: That was before, during, and after meetings. There is a new water treatment plant and it was an issue we heard in Jean Marie. They were quite concerned about the quality of their water. There are plans to have the design and construction started. They are on the list for a new water treatment plant as part of the bundled water treatment plants. They're scheduled to get started during the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

MR. MENICOCHE: As the Minister had heard in Jean Marie, they are, of course, very concerned about their water. In my Member's statement I spoke about a portable purification unit. Is that something that the Minister can research and look at or maybe indeed they already have something like that available already.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We'd be pleased to do that because it is something that we heard about when we were in Jean Marie River, is a portable filtration system. If it's something that could be useful and something that is feasible to have at our disposal, then it is something we would have a look at and I will follow up with the Member once we get that information.

MR. MENICOCHE: I'm pleased to hear the Minister is willing to research that. I'd like to go just above research, because I know they're out there and if the Minister can seriously look at even implementing or utilizing such a facility in Jean Marie this coming fall, winter, and spring season until the new water treatment plant is built.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I have committed to researching it and one of the components of that will be seeing if it's feasible to operate in the community of Jean Marie. The water there is still within the water standards that are set, but there is a concern with the community and we have to take that concern very seriously. So I will do that and we'll get some information back to the Member to work with him in the community.

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

QUESTION 357-16(3):
REGULATORY REFORM AND
REGULATORY BOARD VACANCIES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Today I spoke about the things we can do now to help the regulatory system do its work while we continue with our reviews of regulatory reform. Are there currently any vacancies of GNWT appointments on the regulatory boards in which we participate and do we know what they are?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there is one, but I will get the complete list of the board members and I will share that with the Member.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for that commitment from the Minister. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister confirm that he will make it an active priority of his department to take a proactive lead now by working to fill its vacant board appointments and pushing

our partners to get theirs up to date as well? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The issue of regulatory reform board appointments is a priority of the government's. We've pulled together a government response. We've shared it with the Members. We've met with Minister Strahl to make the case on regulatory reform, board appointments, consideration of transferring the authority to make board appointments to the government. So it is a priority for us. We're going to continue to work with all our fellow stakeholders. We don't see ourselves, really, as a stakeholder, but a partner with the federal government in this process. So, yes, that is a concern for us and we've been pushing on that because the issue of quorum is affecting the ability to do business. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that commitment, to the Minister. I'm really trying to focus in on the things that we all, I think, across the agencies, things we can actually get done. So I appreciate that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister table in the House a list of the current vacancies on the joint boards, of which it is a member, and the length of time each of these seats has been vacant, as well as the dates when each of our appointees end so that we can be on alert and bring this to attention as need be? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I will commit to table that information before this House rises next Thursday. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 358-16(3):
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND NEW HOME
PURCHASING INSURANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I talked about lack of consumer protection in the area of new home warranties, whether you buy a new home, whether it's a modular or a condo or whatnot. But, Mr. Speaker, in essence, the consumer is being left unprotected. And, of course, as I said earlier, the only remedy, really, that is provided for you are things like the courts.

Mr. Speaker, my question would be directed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs because he is in charge of the area of consumer protection. So this may first hit his doorstep as an issue. Perhaps it could end up elsewhere within the government, but the issue is: Would the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs look into an initiative that would help develop a new policy, perhaps maybe new legislation, somewhat built on

other jurisdictions, that provide that type of warranty for the new home purchase? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know from experience that there are some home warranties provided but usually that's if you're building for the Corporation, that there's usually a one-year warranty. I'm not sure how that works out in the private market. Any time there's a desire or a wish from consumers or people out there for the department to have a look at something and see if there are ways we can work with it, then we'll do that. I can commit to the Member that we will have a look at it. I'm not committing that we'll do anything once we have a look at it...

---Laughter

I don't think that came out right. We'll have a look at it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: He committed to not doing...I don't know what he committed to there. Maybe if the Minister could restate his commitment clearly to the House. I know he was clear, but no one else understood it.

Mr. Speaker, in essence, Ontario and B.C. have new home warranty programs that are there for the assurance of the purchaser and, yes, I'm sure you could run out and find some places to provide insurance, but ultimately it's the state run to have certain levels of regulations and policies in place for those types of situations. If the Minister would put it on record again that he'd certainly examine the issue and perhaps maybe take it to the point of a discussion paper to consider is it something worth pursuing, that's really what I'm looking for at this stage. Not brand new legislation today, but if he could continue to the stage of developing a discussion paper, that's what I'm searching for. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we will commit to having a look at it and doing some research and gathering some information, and then we'll see if it's worth coming forward with a discussion paper. Then we can take it from there. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 359-16(3):
HSS ACTION PLAN

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I would like to thank the Minister for her update on what the department is doing. But I was struck by some

language towards the middle of the statement and I'd like to ask a few questions of the Minister.

She stated our current physician institutional-based model is costly, our social services are not well-integrated, and having eight regional boards of management means that our service delivery is not consistent across the system. A couple of sentences later on she said that our current system is not sustainable. I can't argue with the assessment. These are facts. But I am a little concerned by the language. The language suggests that a change is necessary and that the department is about to make changes. I would like to ask the Minister to, perhaps, interpret her statements and advise what changes are being contemplated in this area of boards by the department. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if...Oh, I just can't see the light from the sun.

---Laughter

I can't see if it's lit up or not. Mr. Speaker, the statement is referring to the Foundation for Change, which is the Minister's and department's action plan. We had a briefing and discussion with the standing committee and, really, it's talking about if our system keeps on operating the way we are and where it's very institutionally-based and physician-based in terms of our programs that we're offering in our smaller communities; even in Yellowknife, it is not sustainable. It is important for us to look at what we could do to change that. When we are talking about the fact that some of our social programs are not consistent across the board, it's because all of our authorities are block funded, basically, and they are able to move money around and depending, because of using the money that's created by vacancies and such. So we want to be able to work closely with the authorities so that our programs are as consistent and similar in all our regions as possible. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I didn't really hear an answer to my question about whether or not changes are being contemplated. I guess I would like to ask the Minister again: In terms of boards, if programs are not consistent from one board to the other, what changes are the department planning on making or are there specific plans relative to the boards of management and consistency of programs? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, no, that statement was not meant to suggest that there are changes to boards of management. What we are trying to do is tighten the provisions in our contribution agreements that we have more

rigorous accountability back and forth between the authorities and the departments.

Also, I should make it clear to the Member that I presented this Foundation for Change Action Plan to the Standing Committee on Social Programs as preliminary discussion and we will continue to update the members in committees so there will be no surprises, changes or anything like that happening. We just wanted to start the discussion. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I thank the Minister and I do appreciate that it is an ongoing document -- the Foundation for Change -- and that the committee has been involved in it. Maybe, you know, now that the Minister couldn't see the light before, maybe she does see the light.

I wanted to ask the Minister: When the Foundation for Change was produced, were there consultations with stakeholders in the health and social services community at the time that the document was developed? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, I looked for the light to come on, I just couldn't see it because the sun was on it.

---Laughter

I know...It's Friday. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Foundation for Change Action Plan, it is a rolling document, it's a consultative document and we're talking with the Members. I know our officials have been discussing the plan with the CEOs. I've invited chairs of all of the authorities to come to Yellowknife so we can have more in-depth dialogue on that document. On June 13th we're going to have a meeting with all of the chairs. We plan on consulting widely, but we have just begun that process. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 360-16(3): RESIDENCY SCREENING CRITERIA

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my questions by thanking the Minister of Health and Social Services for her recent visit to Hay River and the opening of the assisted living facility in Hay River. It is a wonderful addition to our community and to the North, in fact, because it will serve clients on a territorial basis and it is a much appreciated and added infrastructure and presence in our community.

Mr. Speaker, in attracting or screening, I suppose, the applicants for the clients who will be cared for in that facility, an interesting question has arisen. When someone who lives in the Northwest Territories goes to Alberta prior to us having

specialized services to meet their needs, and they are there for a number of years, what has happened in some instances is that, in fact, they have become Alberta residents by virtue of the length of time that they have stayed there and the support services and financial support they have received from the Alberta government. Now, when those clients may wish to apply to be repatriated to the Northwest Territories where they are from, this is the glitch: they're no long considered NWT residents. How does the department plan to deal with that issue? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that's entirely the case, because I think all jurisdictions try to make sure that the residents that they take in from elsewhere remain the residents of the jurisdictions they come from so that they could bill. For example, we have lots of residents with a long time in Alberta, the Alberta government makes sure that they continue to be considered as an NWT resident even though some of them have been there 5, 10, 15 years. We have residents in Nunavut in our facilities who remain Nunavut residents and we bill them. I think we are looking at every possible resident we have in Alberta or elsewhere who could be moved to that facility. We are also looking at, and we know of residents in surrounding areas who are exploring, they want to come and meet, they want to look at the staff, they want to see how they could visit. So there's a lot of work being done to review all possible residents' cases that could be considered suitable for that facility.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I know of two specific cases in my constituency. One came to light a number of years ago where a young person had been in a specialized care facility in Alberta and when they turned 18, in fact, the Alberta government did assume responsibility for their care and deemed them to be Alberta residents. So I have known of this happening and I know of one other specific case where a client from the Northwest Territories, who has been in Red Deer, has become an NWT resident. So what I would like from the Minister is assurance that in the screening criteria, credibility and weight will be placed on the fact that these people were born and raised and have family, like, all those kinds of things will come into place, and it will not be solely based on residency in the case where they've been away for a number of years. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, I understand the Member's point. I think there are exceptional cases on each side. We are not just looking at the residency status of that particular person. We're a small community, we know of our residents even

though they've been away for a very long time from some of our communities. We know where the families are, we know whose families they belong to, which regions. So we are looking at it, because we do want to repatriate as many of our residents as possible no matter how long they've been away, even if they become residents of another province. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 361-16(3):
NURSE PRACTITIONERS POSITIONS
IN THE NWT

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Health and Social Services and are in follow up to my Member's statement. I just want to start off by, once again, applauding the Minister and her department for forming the partnership with the RNANTNU and the Aurora College to implement the PLAR process for nurse practitioners. I think it's great.

Having said that, I'm curious whether the department has developed a process to ensure that all of the northern nurses who successfully complete this NT PLAR are offered nurse practitioner positions within the NWT upon registration as nurse practitioners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question. Yes, the NPs and the practice of incorporating the NPs into our system is a key part of the Foundation of Change Action Plan that I've spoken about, and we will do everything we can to offer the new potential graduates that will be coming out, the new NPs that are coming out of the system, to be employed in our NWT entire system. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: I would like to thank the Minister for that response. I just would like just a touch of clarity on that. Has the department actually put in, sort of, proactive steps to ensure that they actually roll into NP jobs rather than go back to their old nursing jobs? It would be kind of a waste of money to invest all that time and effort financially into these individuals and not actually guarantee them some sort of NP position upon successful completion of their training and studies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: If I remember correctly, even the previous NPs were offered jobs, it's just were not necessarily what they wanted or the places they wanted.

I can advise the Member and the House, Mr. Speaker, that we have currently about 25.5 NP positions across the NWT. There are 11 vacancies and they are spread all over the Territories. There are three from Yellowknife, one in Fort McPherson, one in Inuvik, one in Tuktoyaktuk, one in Fort Liard, one in Fort Simpson, two in Norman Wells, one in Behchoko. Some of these NPs that are being trained right now, at least seven of them are CHN, so they can have a place that they came from and it is my hope that they will choose to go back there. In fact, some of these positions are being held vacant waiting for them to come back. For seven NPs that we're going to have, we have 11 vacancies and, hopefully, we can match them up. We will do everything we can to keep them here. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 362-16(3):
FOOD MAIL PROGRAM

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my question to the Minister of Transportation in terms of the Food Mail Program. Mr. Speaker, the review has been completed and I would like to thank the Minister for his support in terms of this ongoing issue. I would like to ask the Minister: Now that the interim review has been completed, is he going to work with the Department of Indian Affairs in terms of engaging the communities that most need this type of program being implemented into the communities? How are we, as people in our small communities, going to engage in further discussions to improve the Food Mail Program?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that has been raised by the Member on a number of occasions requesting that this whole area of food mail, the subsidy program be reviewed and looked at. There has been ongoing concern regarding the delivery, regarding some of the costs that were becoming a problem. The federal government has responded by having a consultant and a number of people look at the issue. They've come forward with a number of recommendations and these recommendations will be brought forward for discussion.

In the last session we were also requested to have the discussion with the federal government regarding a presentation to committee. We have undertaken that. I've talked to the Minister of Indian Affairs about the possibilities of having some of his staff come forward and he had agreed that he would look into the situation and suggest that to his staff to come forward. We have not heard yet.

So there are a number of recommendations and the committee, the group that is heading this up will undertake to have the discussions with the appropriate people. I am assuming that we will have some feedback that we will respond to. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Again, I want to let people know in the Northwest Territories that the Minister of Transportation has been really helpful in terms of getting this issue in the forefront of the federal government. The review has been long overdue.

Upon reading it, Mr. Speaker, I found some very interesting reading, especially the recommendations that were laid out in terms of eliminating the personal food orders in this program here. I strongly object to this issue here. I would like to ask the Minister in terms of him communicating with his counterparts in terms of what type of discussions can this committee have in our small communities that rely on the Food Mail Program and also have some benefits of using the personal food mail orders that they use from time to time? What type of commitment can the Minister give in terms of having this committee go to the communities in the Sahtu that benefit from the Food Mail Program, especially the personal food orders?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, this is not a program a community involves us as part of their committee. We have, of course, a real interest as to the findings and the recommendations. There has been some very good work, I think, brought forward. The consultant's report clearly identified that some changes are needed. There are challenges coming forward. There is a federal Food Mail Program review team that has been put together. They will be contacting the northern consumers and also stakeholders in the northern communities to consult and provide some feedback. That is their responsibility. We certainly can, if the Member has any issues and would like us to formally provide some feedback to this consultant report. We would certainly do that. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the committee has also identified in one of the recommendations as to the possibility of the involvement of a provincial/territorial government in terms of taking over the Food Mail Program. However, that is going to have to be analyzed very carefully in terms of this recommendation. The Minister has offered some type of involvement. I think it is the onus of this government to look at all 11 communities who are benefiting from the Food Mail Program in terms of putting together conditions in terms of this government here in terms of how some of the recommendations can be implemented into the Food Mail Program.

I would ask the Minister, Mr. Speaker, in terms of laying out some options as to how he has made the

offer to involve in our position forward through the Department of Indian Affairs in terms of the report and recommendations and how this government can be engaged and implemented in some of the recommendations. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member requested a review of the program and has many times and on many occasions suggested that there are changes required. That is taking place. It is being headed up by a review team. They have come forward with a number of changes and suggestions. We are not in a position to always come forward and intervene in that process. There is a process that is straightforward that the committee can be involved in and respond directly. I think that it may be more disruptive for us as a department to start our own process to have feedback, to have committees and stakeholders take part and respond to us. We would be open to any suggestions the Member may have. However, this is really a program that is being headed up by INAC. It is their program. They have a process. We would like to see it unfold with as little disruption from our government as possible. Having said that, there are areas that we probably will be providing our own feedback as it affects our government. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, that is the avenue I want to look at in terms of the Minister has indicated getting feedback from his department. These are some of the areas that we can be involved in terms of being a support to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, if the Minister can assure us that the committee will be coming to see some of the people in our communities in terms of feedback. I haven't seen them in Tulita, Deline, Colville Lake or Fort Good Hope. When can they come into our communities and talk to our own people, the consumers? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we can certainly pose that question to Indian Affairs. Once again, it is not the committee that we control. We can't really tell them where to go and who to talk to. They have indicated they have a plan to consult the northern consumers. They have a plan to talk to the stakeholders. We have requested them to provide some appropriate people to come and meet with the standing committee. We certainly can try to get a schedule of the communities they plan to visit or how they plan to do the consultation. I would be glad to share that with the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 363-16(3):
INCOME SUPPORT, ECONOMIC RENT
AND EMPLOYMENT

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed to the Minister of ECE. It is in regards to my Member's statement on the challenges that we are facing in our small communities, especially the delivery of housing in regards to the economic rent that is being charged by local housing authorities. More importantly, the ECE program by way of income support in regards to how we are supposed to approve services that are in our communities.

I think one thing that is lacking is that we don't really look at the social and economic viability in a lot of our communities. One of the things I see is that we have a high pocket of unemployment in our communities. We know statistically what the total household incomes are in a lot of our small communities. In most cases, it is less than \$40,000 per household, yet in Yellowknife it is in excess of \$120,000 per household and yet the programs are delivering in the same sort of policy. I would like to ask the Minister of ECE, in light of the plans that took place between the Housing Corporation and ECE in regards to the Income Support Program and the housing supp, the Housing Corporation had a policy in place before the transfer took place which basically allowed a tenant of the Housing Corporation who was unemployed for a period of time to basically transition into employment for a couple of months so that they can be able to get a job, but, more importantly, retain some of those earnings so that they can purchase items that they need and prepare them so that when they do get charged economic rent, that they have the resources to do so and not use the hammer approach where you basically nail them with the first pay cheque they get and take as much as you can and then say, here, go to work the next day. I think this program is not working. I would like to ask the Minister of ECE: Would he consider that policy and implement that policy, which was in the Housing Corporation, in light of what has happened in our communities?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the Member's questions in this area. That has been brought up on previous occasions at our deliberations with the communities and also the Members when we were before them. Certainly it has been delivered by the NWT Housing Corporation for a period of one year in 2003. At that time, it wasn't really an effective program. There were only four intakes from the clientele. We are looking at other jurisdictions on how we can successfully and effectively deliver the program.

We are looking at the great period that the Member is alluding to. This is an area that we talked about. Now we are developing a proposal on a working centre because we certainly are supporting individuals that should enter the workforce. We are doing what we can as a department. Certainly we are looking into that. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, in the economic reality, what we are facing here in the Northwest Territories, especially with the downturn in the oil and gas industry, especially in my riding in the Beaufort-Delta, we are seeing people finding it harder and harder to get a job. Whatever jobs they can get, like I stated earlier, are short-term jobs. I know the Minister of ECE, who is also responsible for education, culture and developing the people for the workforce that we have to ensure that the policies we have are not hindering people from actually going to work. If anything, we are penalizing them to go to work. I would like to ask the Minister: Would you not only look at what is happening within Housing but look at the policies within ECE programs to ensure that there is some sort of a transitional period that allows for individuals who want to basically take training or get a job, being able to sustain some sort of a lifestyle without totally taking away all of their income by way of these policies that this government administers? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly, as I stated, we do support the communities. The members can take on any job that is available to them. We are involved with the various programs, whether it be with the federal or territorial government. Just today I have announced the Labour Market Development Initiative that certainly will provide more opportunities for individuals that the Member is speaking of. It also deals with the income support clientele as well. Also we do have a Ready to Work Program where we provide basic skills and training to individuals who are on income support so we can get them off income support and through the workforce level. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, we work closely with the Housing Corporation with their new Housing Initiative. The funds have been announced. Where some individuals have been paying high rent, they can certainly get into a program. We continue to deliver those programs, but we are trying to meet the needs of the communities. I appreciate the Member asking the question in that area. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister: How soon can he come back to the House in light of his discussions he is going to have with the Minister of Housing to relook at this policy that was in place prior to this decision to consolidate income programs into one? I would like to ask the Minister: How soon can he come back to the House

with that discussion or even a draft policy that we can look at as Members on this side of the House?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly we need to expedite this process because we have been discussing this within our internal departments, both my department and also the NWT Housing Corporation. We can certainly say within a couple of months. We want to have at least a draft discussion with members of the standing committee and get their input into the system and move forward on a decision that could be made at that time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to ask the Minister if he would clearly consider looking at the economic and political realities in a lot of our communities as I mentioned earlier. The incomes are a lot different in our smaller remote communities compared to our larger regional centres like Yellowknife and that being taken into consideration whenever you develop a policy. Consider the high unemployment rates. Consider the social and economic conditions in our communities so that we do have policies that are not territorial-wide but they are structured, work with those communities, get them productive and we can see a change in the lifestyle of our people and in our communities. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, again, thank you to the Member because my department certainly is monitoring our discussion here today. They certainly are discussing what the Member is alluding to. Certainly we like to hear the input of Regular Members as well. Those are experts around the table from the communities. They need to provide the information to us that we can implement our programs so we are looking forward to that. I am looking forward to meeting with the standing committee at a later date. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 364-16(3):
ELIMINATION OF GRUBSTAKE PROGRAM

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have some questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. It gets back to something I have been talking about previously. That is mining and resource development here in the Northwest Territories. Our modern day economy was founded on resource development. It remains a cornerstone of our economy today and I think we are fooling ourselves if we look into the future and resource development is not a key component to our economy and the future development of this Territory.

I have some questions regarding the elimination of the Grubstake Program, Mr. Speaker. It was only \$65,000 but it got prospectors started out on the land looking for mineral deposits. I think it is not the amount of money that really bothers me; it is the principle and what is going to fill the void and how are we going to get people involved in prospecting and the message that it sends. The first question that I have to the Minister is: What was the rationale for cutting the Grubstake Program and what will replace it, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rationale for reducing spending in this area was for a number of reasons, primarily the lessened demand for this funding program, the uncertainty and the returns of investment and also we had a need to reprioritize our expenditures. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, from the time a mineral deposit is discovered and potentially a mine is developed or there is some more potential there, it can take upwards of a decade. I think it is important that, as a government, we send the message that we are open for business. We want to get prospectors out on the land. The Minister didn't answer the question. What will replace the program or how is the government getting that message out there that we are interested in prospectors getting out and finding some other mineral deposits here in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, as a government or as a department, we saw the need to refocus our efforts into the areas of land use and regulatory initiatives and to maintain some of the existing programs we have in our geoscience department. I think you have to remember that the federal government is responsible for mining in the Northwest Territories and other northern territories. We will communicate your concern to the federal Minister responsible for mining. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, going forward, then, what I am hearing from the Minister is that the government will not have any support to prospectors that want to get out on the land and do prospecting in the Northwest Territories. Our government will have no support for them. Is that what I am hearing from the Minister? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I didn't say that. I said I would communicate his concern about the lack of support for prospectors to the federal government. We already have existing programs that prospectors can access for funding through application. If it is seen as a priority need, we are starting our business planning process and we can

address that through that process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

QUESTION 365-16(3):
ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR
INCOME SUPPORT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement was on calculation of income support. Will the government review the policies used to calculate the tenant's income for the month rent for the NWT housing unit to ensure fairness and consistency regardless of the employer or the situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The settlement allowance that the Member is referring to in his Member's statement does cover areas of different subsidies, whether it be clothing, fuel subsidy or transportation. Our Income Security Program covers the clothing and the fuel, so we need to separate those items. I think it is a simple request from the tenants to talk to their employer to say if they can have it as a vacation travel as opposed to a general subsidy program, they could be exempted from our Income Security Program if we go that avenue. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Will the government work with the community offices and residents over the summer and will the government commit to changing the policies that the staff uses to calculate the income of the tenants and the monthly contribution of the NWT Housing Corporation? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the question is to myself and the Housing Minister. I am sure the Housing Minister is listening carefully as well. I think this area, certainly I can commit from my department, to meet with community representatives because we do have representatives in the region to meet with the community, meet with the Members, to highlight what we do cover. If there is a way that we can change our policy, then we can certainly discuss that on an ongoing basis.

Within our Income Security Program, there are always reviews and changes that occur. So, certainly, but at the same time I think that tenants, individuals being assessed, should consult with their employer as well to highlight that their settlement allowance should be under vacation travel. Mahsi.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Will this government review all northern settlement allowances implications of the tenants living in the

small and remote communities with the high cost of living? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, within our own income security area, we can certainly do our part, but most of the program is under the federal government as well with the settlement allowance. So the federal government needs to...It's their jurisdiction, but we will deal within our own territorial government our Income Security Program that we can work with. Mahsi.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really look forward to bringing the Minister on a constituency tour and letting him hear it firsthand and all my Ministers are welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I didn't hear a question there, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 366-16(3):

TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION PROJECT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of ENR -- Environment and Natural Resources -- and it's regarding the Taltson potential expansion. Mr. Speaker, I will make it clear first that I am certainly in favour of the Taltson expansion. I think it's the right way to go. It's certainly the future of our power source and it does the right things the right way.

Mr. Speaker, the concerns that have come forward from the constituency and "from people in the know," who are concerned about two areas. In essence, if we go forward with the expansion, do we have the capacity to facilitate the agreement and, secondly, the essence of the agreements aren't necessarily being signed or being stalled, because I have heard it's an unworkable solution.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Minister of Environment is do we have the capacity and the expansion to meet the needs of the three diamond mines that we are supposed to be signing a contract with that the expansion and the agreement are supposed to be based on? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That area of the Taltson expansion would probably fall within either myself in the Power Corporation but, more importantly, because it is a new initiative we are looking at under the Ministerial Energy Committee, I would like to redirect that to Minister Bob McLeod.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made some considerable progress recently in our discussions with the diamond mines on the Power Purchase Agreements. So certainly we have the capacity to conclude those negotiations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: I am not saying it isn't a good business case built on the principles of sound economics, but, Mr. Speaker, I have been informed by people in the know that the capacity levels required by the three diamond mines could be up to the range of 88 megawatts. Of course, if I've taken the math provided by Industry, Tourism and Investment's NWT Energy Facts newsletter. When I consider the capacity levels, I am not sure they are operating on the same page. Mr. Speaker, when was the last time the Department of ITI has gone back to get some clarity on demands required by these three diamond mines? Because if you follow the old newsletter, they only need 43 megawatts, which is 50 percent, I understand, of what their present need is. So when was the last time those figures have been updated? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We operate on a first provider basis and there is a corporation that is leading the negotiations and they are the corporation that would be the one that would be involved with constructing the expansion. That information is updated on a regular basis, so we know exactly what the diamond mines' requirements are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that it's through that arm's-length process, but, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the figures are correct and current, because as I understand it, BHP alone may be requiring up to 30 megawatts which would consume all the potential expansion of the Taltson considering the present day use by Hay River, Fort Smith and I believe Fort Res. So when you add that demand, we may only be able to supply power to one mine, not considering the need of up to 35 megawatts of Diavik and Snap Lake, which is about 22. So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to provide some updated figures to demonstrate that we are on top of this situation and would he be able to table any information to be able to show that we are presenting a workable solution getting this partnership agreement? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we do provide regular updates to the standing committees and certainly, I think we have been requested to provide a briefing. We will invite, as a committee, the Member along and we are developing a Hydro Strategy and the hydro, Taltson hydro expansion is not the only hydro project that we are looking at. With our Hydro Strategy, I think you will see that we are looking at developing a significant amount of hydro energy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't raise this issue because I am against the project. It's quite the opposite. I am for the project. But the problem is I am not sure the project is being designed in a way that it can meet the capacity and demands of the three diamond mines. Mr. Speaker, that's the issue. Considering it's been at least a full year that these negotiations about the power purchasing agreements have been going on, what has been the delay in getting those signed so we can go forward on this project being assured that it can be a business case that works for the NWT? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: There are a number of issues that are involved and issues we are working on. We are quite prepared to sit down and provide a briefing to outline those issues and there is also still work going on in fine-tuning the actual expansion project, so we are quite prepared to brief the Member on this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 367-16(3):
PERFORMANCE BONUSES

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Premier and I am sure it will come as no surprise that I am going to ask the Premier some questions on performance bonuses. I ask every session. As I have said before and I will say again, I don't really have a problem with performance bonuses when bonuses are actually given for performance above and beyond expectations or for accomplishing significant milestones. It's now the '09-10 fiscal year. The employees, the excluded employees, senior managers and deputy ministers are in a period of time when they can earn more bonuses. So I am curious if the Premier has met with his deputy ministers and has set some targets and milestones with them that can be used to assess whether they, in fact, earn or have performance above expectations at the end of the fiscal year to earn those bonuses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we are speaking about the previous year, I have had meetings with deputies for the, I believe it's the previous year on that subject matter. I haven't talked about this year. Those meetings would be set up and organized. The first meeting I had as Premier with the deputies, we did lay out the expectations and how it would go going forward,

but I did have one round and set and informed them of my decisions in that area. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: I am happy to hear that the Premier has had those meetings with the staff in the previous fiscal years. I am curious when he will have those meetings with the staff in this fiscal year. I think it's really important that we send a message from the top down that bonuses are, in fact, bonuses and must be earned through exceptional or performance above and beyond which is expected. If the Premier were to meet with his staff and set those expectations, we would know what they are being rated against later, but it would also send a message down that the deputy ministers should be doing that with their senior managers and their excluded employees. So I am curious: When will the Premier be actually meeting with his deputy head to set those expectations that must be met in order to get paid, and what will be worthy of bonuses, and will he be encouraging those expectations that must be met in order to get paid and what will be worthy of bonuses, and will he be encouraging his senior managers and deputy ministers to use that same model down through government to ensure that bonuses are earned, not expected? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, this area of performance for pay or pay for performance has been discussed quite a number of times and helped in the discussions I had around making a decision around deputies and the expectations from there. It is following those meetings as we give them the decisions and outline what the expectations are as we go forward. We follow up on that with letters to them and through the Ministers as well. So we are about to engage in the next round. I haven't had dates as of yet, but I will inform Members when that is about to occur. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The time for question period has expired. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to return to item 5.

---Unanimous consent granted.

**Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
(Reversion)**

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize today Mr. Sharam Masagi, Mrs. Nasi Masagi, Mrs. Zhila Nadji and Mr. Kayhan Nadji, a well-renowned architect in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Mr. Phillip Mercredi up here in the stands. Thank you.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, M. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Carol Manning, one of the Pages with us here today from the Great Slave riding. Thank you, Carol, for all your hard work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. If we have missed anyone in the gallery, welcome to the House. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 17:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT, NO.
4, 2008-2009

BILL 18:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2009-2010

BILL 19:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 2,
2009-2010

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, June 1, 2009, I will move that Bill 17, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2008-2009, be read for the first time.

I give notice that on Monday, June 1, 2009, I will move that Bill 18, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2009-2010, be read for the first time.

I give notice that on Monday, June 1, 2009, I will move that Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 2, 2009-2010, be read for the first time. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Committee Report 5-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Auxiliary Report on the

Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2007 Election, and Committee Report 6-16(3), Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009: Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories, with Mr. Bromley in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have before us for consideration today: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Committee Reports 5-16(3) and 6-16(3) and Bill 6 and Bill 14. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee today wishes to deal with Committee Report 5-16(3), the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Auxiliary Report and Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, and would like to get into general comments on Committee Report 6-16(3), the Government Operations Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I believe we will start with a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order and we are going to start with a review of Committee Report 5-16(3), the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Auxiliary Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2007 Election. I would like to call on Mr. Hawkins to kick us off.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, an additional report by the Rules committee dealing with three specific issues related to the report of the Chief Electoral Officer was read into the record on May 27, 2009.

This committee report, 5-16(3), dealt with criminal records checks for candidates, special ballots improving enforcement, and the following recommendations are included in the report. Mr. Chairman, I will now read the motions.

COMMITTEE MOTION 44-16(3):
RULES AND PROCEDURES REPORT 5-16(3):
SPECIAL BALLOTS OFFICER,
CARRIED

Mr. Chairman, I move that this committee recommends that the Elections and Plebiscite Act be amended to establish a special ballots officer that would be responsible for special ballots and would possess the authority to hold advanced

mobile and polling date polls for voters not resident in their home community on polling day and at locations identified in regulations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is in order. I believe everyone has a copy. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Mr. Hawkins.

COMMITTEE MOTION 45-16(3):
RULES AND PROCEDURES REPORT 5-16(3):
POSSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR
SPECIAL BALLOTS,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that this committee recommends that the Elections and Plebiscite Act be amended to give the special ballots officer the authority to use e-mail and Internet technologies for the distribution of special ballots when the Chief Electoral Officer is confident that the technology is secure enough for use.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

COMMITTEE MOTION 46-16(3):
RULES AND PROCEDURES REPORT 5-16(3):
ELECTION OFFENCES,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that this committee recommends that the Elections and Plebiscite Act be amended to change the act to allow as many offences as possible to be prosecuted using a strict liability standard and as many offences as possible to be prosecuted under the Summary Convictions Procedures Act.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Mr. Hawkins.

COMMITTEE MOTION 47-16(3):
RULES AND PROCEDURES REPORT 5-16(3):
ENFORCEMENT MEASURES,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that this committee recommends that the Elections and Plebiscite Act be amended to give the Chief Electoral Officer the power to enter into compliance agreements, issue compliance orders, and issue formal cautions.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Mr. Hawkins.

COMMITTEE MOTION 48-16(3):
RULES AND PROCEDURES REPORT 5-16(3):
LATE FILING FEES,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that this committee recommends that the Elections and Plebiscite Act be amended so that late fees can be imposed on later filers of elections expense reporting.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I believe the motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

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

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Auxiliary Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2007 Election has been concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. Next on our list to consider is Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. Excuse me. That was Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. We've agreed to do that next. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Bill 14, the Honourable Michael McLeod, to introduce the bill.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to appear before the committee today to review Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. The NWT Motor Vehicles Act must be updated regularly. This ensures that new initiatives and best practices that improve safety and meet the needs of the travelling public are formalized in legislation.

Bill 14 consists of 12 amendments. The amendments are important to the regulation of vehicles and drivers on the NWT highway system. This will help us to better respond to the increasing pace of change related to motor vehicles.

Some of the key highlights of the amendments are:

- Expanding the list of individuals that have access to accident reports. This will include anyone directly involved in an accident, not just the driver, vehicle owner, insurance company or agent. The expanded list would also include passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, and property owners.
- Requiring drivers to reduce their speed when approaching roadside emergency vehicles. This will protect emergency and enforcement personnel when performing their duties.
- Establishing an offence for driving a motor vehicle on a highway while the lights are obstructed by snow, ice, dirt or mud. The lack of visibility is a safety issue. As with a similar amendment made to the act for windows and licence plates, we don't anticipate any significant public concerns. We expect police will exercise discretion as to whether to issue a ticket to a driver depending on the circumstances.
- Increasing the grace period from one to two years during which a person can renew an expired driver's licence without retesting. This will save time and expense for the clients and also for the department.
- Regulating the inspections of emerging vehicle types. This will ensure that new classes of vehicles are safe to operate on NWT highways. Examples include right-hand drive, low speed, and electric vehicles.

Other amendments include:

- Establishing the specific authority for driver's licence demerit point regulations.
- Providing nurse practitioners and registered nurses with the same duties and liability protection that currently exists for physicians under the MVA.
- Expanding the liability for equipment offences on commercial vehicles to the owner as well as the driver.
- Providing explicit authority for the registrar to collect personal information for purposes related to the Motor Vehicles Act.
- Expanding the list of agencies that may request copies of registrar's records to include provincial and territorial Crown prosecutors.
- Authorizing the registrar to issue temporary permits for unusual vehicles and special events.
- It also includes minor changes to language and word usage to make the act consistent with other territorial legislation.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the need to update the Motor Vehicles Act on a regular basis. It allows us to operate more efficiently and, most importantly, it provides us with a better means to ensure the safety of the travelling public.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. McLeod. I would now like to ask the chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, which reviewed this bill, to make comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure conducted its public review of Bill 14, An Act to Amend to the Motor Vehicles Act, on May 26th, 2009. The committee thanks the Minister and his staff for presenting the bill to us.

The bill amends the Motor Vehicles Act. A new short-term permit is created and an application for a driver's licence may now be based on a licence that has been expired for up to two years. Nurses are required to report medically unfit drivers in the same manner as required of a medical practitioner. A person is prohibited from operating a vehicle with obscured or damaged lights or reflective devices. And drivers are required to reduce their speed when close to emergency vehicles with flashing lights.

The registrar's duties are clarified with respect to the disclosure of records. Drivers and employers are held liable for contraventions in the operation of commercial vehicles. The authority for a demerit point system is expanded.

Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole. This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 14 and individual Members may have additional questions or comments as we proceed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I now would like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he would like to bring witnesses into the House.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. I will now ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Mr. Russell Neudorf, deputy minister of Transportation, and also Garry Dziwenka, senior policy analyst, and Ian Rennie,

the legislative counsel with the Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I now open the floor to general comments on Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did raise a committee issue in regard to review of this bill. I think it's something that we have to be cognizant of. A lot of the time the road conditions that we operate on are basically because of the climate or weather conditions that we're operating in. Especially when you're driving on the highway such as the Dempster Highway and basically you're in the fall time during the rainy season and you got mud from one end of your vehicle to the other end. I think we have to be realistic when we enforce some of these laws that we make. It has to be realistic to the climate and environment that we're in. Regardless, it's the person issuing the license. He's going to have the same problem you have in regard to covered taillights by way of mud or even in the case of a lot of travelling public, especially tourists who come up the highway. For them especially with motorhomes, you've got mud from one end to the next and you're looking for the next station to wash your vehicles off. In most cases, you're talking a couple hundred kilometres apart.

I think that we have to be realistic that when people are issuing these licences they have to be aware of the condition of that particular day, especially with the condition of our highways. Unless you want to amend the bill and consider that this only applies to paved highways where you can see it, realistically you shouldn't have muddy plates on paved highways. But highways that basically are built from gravel and mud and whatnot that during the rainy season you will see this problem.

The same thing applies to snow conditions that we see in the winter months when you you're driving through a blizzard or a major snowstorm. There are going to be these times when basically...So I'd just like to get some clarification from the Minister if he had an opportunity to think about this.

I think that you have, whoever is issuing or basically charging someone under this offence, it should be either a summary conviction or some sort of notification that, you know, you have a problem in regard to the dirt and mud that is on your vehicle. Or even in this case snow conditions. I think that you don't want to have someone get a criminal record simply because the condition of the road they're driving on caused the effect that that person is being charged with. The person didn't personally go out there and coat mud all over his signal lights. It's a natural thing of how we operate vehicles in the climate that we're in, in the condition of the highways we operate on. I'd just like to ask the Minister exactly has he had a chance to think about

this and see exactly how we can, you know, whoever's enforcing this legislation don't use it as a tool to start charging people every time they drive by with mud on their signal lights.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the changes are in the area of trying to upgrade the act to improve safety on our roads. We certainly recognize that we're not going to have the RCMP stopping every vehicle as they drive down a muddy road. But at the same time, if the conditions are dry and it's sunny out and you're driving on pavement and your taillights are all covered in mud, that's something for consideration.

The act uses the words "unduly diminishes the effectiveness of the light or reflective device." That is key, I think. We expect the RCMP to use discretion as they provide enforcement in this area. The conditions have to be realistic. If it's raining and it's hard to see the lights, then we would expect people to also take the due care and attention to clean their lights. We already have the act that covers windshields and licence plates, so we're expanding it to the area of lights. We think this is appropriate.

MR. KRUTKO: I think again there has to be something in the legislation that whoever's basically enforcing this new law, that they take into consideration that they do consider the circumstances of the time of the issuing or charging someone. Like you say, if it's sunny out, well, I have no problem with the law applying. But in most cases, especially the Dempster Highway, I mean, we have a lot of mud on that highway. Unless you're going to pave it next week or next year, great, do that. But I think it's something that we have to be realistic about, especially driving a lot of our highways that aren't paved and that we have to be, you know, whoever is issuing the licence either it's a highway officer or the RCMP, that they've got to be within reason of how they enforce that legislation, not to use this as a way to simply pull somebody over and say, well, sorry, you got mud on your taillights and I'm charging you while the rain's coming down in buckets.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we completely agree with the Member's comments. We don't expect to have somebody stopping every five kilometres to clean their taillights when it's raining and they're on a gravel road and there's a lot of mud being tossed up. We did take into consideration, though, the reality of how this may be causing some stress or concern with drivers and have discussed this issue and how to frame this piece of the act with the RCMP and with a lot of the bylaw for feedback. And they, I think, all have responded by saying that discretion is something that needs to be utilized when issuing tickets. We

are also going to be monitoring the level of tickets issued in these areas and circumstances that they're issued in. We'll have opportunity to monitor it for the long term.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Anything further? Moving on to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. From a slightly different point of view, actually, I support that change. It was actually something I brought to the Minister's attention probably about four years ago with a concern raised from the constituency where people can follow along the vehicle, obviously, in front of them and they can't see with the snow covering their taillights. Then they have to see that it's the motion of the vehicle that's slowed them down. It makes it very difficult. I would see it as a consistent policy.

On the other hand, I would also see that Mr. Krutko has a point, which is you just drive for six or more hours on the Dempster and it's all dusty or whatnot. I suspect it's been my experience that most of our RCMP officials use enough discretion and latitude to look at the situation as it applies. I have no worry about it being applied fairly and consistently. So I support the amendment as suggested going forward.

The one area I'd like to have some clarification on, and it speaks to the second page of the Minister's opening remarks, and it refers to the example of right-hand drive vehicles. I'm just trying to understand exactly what this means and what this will mean going forward for people who have right-hand drive vehicles on the road, as well as those who would like to register new right-hand drive vehicles going forward. If the Minister could provide some clarification as to what that's supposed to mean.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just trying to remember if it was this Member or another Member that raised this issue and brought it to our attention. It's certainly an area regarding a discussion that happened historically and it was an issue that has been raised in this House by a couple of people. The provision is not intended to punish motorists who are caught in a storm or travelling on one of our roads that has had rain or other types of conditions that would generate some mud or ice. But it's intended to deal with people that are travelling our roads and not taking the time to ensure that their vehicles are safe.

Regarding the authority to establish and deal with special emergency vehicles, that's something we needed to have clarified. Right now we have general provisions in our act to deal with these type

of vehicles that really don't have it clearly defined. They don't fit in the common type of vehicle that is found on our highway and we need to be able to set rules that will govern and ensure that these vehicles are safe for use on our roads. That includes all low-speed type of vehicles, electric vehicles, and right-hand vehicles.

MR. HAWKINS: So is it the Minister's opinion in the context of the department's position, that is, that they will not be restricting right-hand drive vehicles or is this more of an enabling type of change to formally allow them to be on the road whereas they have sort of slipped through the cracks before without formal recognition?

I can understand there needs to be different provisions in respect to this, and I appreciate that. I have a fair amount of experience from driving right-hand drive vehicles and I know very well of the issues that you need to be aware of. I'm just trying to see is this more of an enabling process that's being developed here and...Well, let's start with that. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: The Member is correct. It is enabling legislation that would allow us to put the proper authority in this area so that we can deal with some of these issues and ensuring the safety of our travellers and that these vehicles are also safe.

MR. HAWKINS: Where exactly would we see the change and when we expect the type of detail to be drawn forward? Will it be in regulations that will be brought to Members for approval? Will it just be one of those things we just say thank you, looks good and then we don't see it again until someone shows up at the DMV to register their right-hand drive? Also, if there are any changes such as suggesting that you have to add additional mirrors, et cetera, will it be designed around the existing vehicles on the road? Are they enforced under the grandfather clause, but vehicles going forward...Those types of details, Mr. Chairman. When can we expect that information? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we are looking at dealing through regulation change. Up to now we've been dealing through policy and I'm not sure when we'll have it all in place. As soon as we're ready, we'll be glad to share that with the Member. I don't have an exact date, but fairly soon.

MR. HAWKINS: I look forward to seeing that detail from the Minister sent to my office. Last question on this specific area which is if somebody came in today to register a vehicle that was a right-hand drive, would they be turned away or would we allow them to register their vehicle? Is there some scenario that they don't get caught and told to come back, you know, in six months? Would they be able to register their vehicle today as other right-hand drive vehicles had been registered and are operating on the road today?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we do have existing policy that allows us to register the vehicles the Member is indicating. This bill will provide the authority to make regulations respecting special vehicles.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Moving on. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I can see the value of many of the changes that are suggested under this bill. I, too, would like to share the concern about enforcement, particularly in my riding. I've got many, many miles, many, many kilometres of gravel roads and during inclement weather, the conditions can deteriorate real quickly. I'm concerned about enforcing a new level of minor infractions that may be more of a detriment to the travelling public, to the drivers, as opposed to those that are concerned about taillights being covered. I wish there was a better way to address them than to start creating fines and criminal records for our drivers.

But, again, I'd just like to reiterate that oftentimes when we create laws...

---Interjection

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Excuse me. For the record, that was an alarm clock, there, Mr. Chair.

---Laughter

So I would just like to have the Minister explain to me one more time about the intent of this particular reference for obstructed taillights and headlights. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, this is an attempt to enhance the safety on our highways. I would expect the Member's constituents would be happy to know that there are laws that require people to clean their headlights and their taillights and to have indicators so that people are clearly visible, especially on the gravel roads where there's a lot of dust. This is not intended to target people that are travelling in storms or muddy conditions. It's actually intended to protect the people on our highway systems from motorists that are acting, probably, in a careless manner. The RCMP and the people we have contacted all agree that it's difficult and will probably not be want to issue tickets or fines to anybody that are travelling in conditions that make it difficult to have their taillights clean. But if there are conditions where the road is dry and there is a need to have vehicles visible through the dust and other challenges including fog, then there's no reason that a person shouldn't have his taillights cleaned. There is current legislation that requires us to have our windshields and our licence

plates. We're building on that and requesting the regulations be changed to include taillights.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think I've raised this in committee but I'd like to raise it here again. I know there's concern out in the public, especially amongst taxi drivers. I think people are aware, over the years we've had cases where taxi drivers have been in situations where they've been strapped in their car with their seatbelts fastened and attacked by passengers, and seatbelts have been such an encumbrance that there is the opportunity for serious injury or the occasion for serious injury to the taxi drivers. In recognition of that, I know quite a number of jurisdictions -- I think about eight in Canada -- have passed legislation in acts such as this that allow the taxi drivers to forego the use of seatbelts when they have passengers, for that very reason of safety. I'm just, for the record, wondering if the Minister has considered this in this amendment to this act and where we're going from that. I think it's a valid point that deserves some recognition and action. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, these current changes to the Motor Vehicles Act don't include the taxi seatbelts. It is something that we intend to examine. We have to, of course, look at a balance between the safety of the driver and also of others on the highway. There is, as the Member indicated, five jurisdictions that have exempted taxi drivers and there are two, Quebec and BC, that have special exemptions so that they don't have to wear seatbelts in specific situations. We are planning to look at this. We have indicated to the Members in committee, taxi seatbelts is an issue that we will be examining. We will be looking at the merits of an exemption and also we'd like to do consultation with the stakeholders involved. That's something in our plans to do. Thanks.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate those comments from the Minister. I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, when the next amendments to the act are being considered for action.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We expect that we'll be able to deal with some of the issues and recommendations as we conclude the consultation and we, more than likely, will be able to deal with it through regulation changes. A time frame on this, we would expect around a year.

MR. BROMLEY: Again, I see this as an unfortunate situation for those that are facing this on Friday and Saturday nights. Yellowknife has a recognized problem in this area, as do other communities in the Northwest Territories, and I'm

sure for taxi drivers that are facing this on a weekly basis, it's an uncomfortable situation. So I hope the Minister feels that sense of urgency from a small but important part of our service industry and will keep that in mind in planning the schedule for that change. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Once again, it's an issue where we have to look at the balance of the safety of the driver and passengers in the instance of a vehicle collision, but at the same time we have to recognize, as the Member has stated, abuse of passengers and other safety issues. That's something we need to look at. It's currently not in this change that we're proposing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just getting back to my original point, I'd just like to read out what the existing legislation reads. It says, "No person shall operate on a highway a vehicle with any light reflective device that is obstructed, cracked or in other condition that unduly dismisses the effectiveness of the light of the reflective device." I mean, that is exactly what you're talking about. That, I support. But what I don't like is when you basically amend this thing in light. I mean, if somebody is obstructing a light by putting 100-mile-an-hour tape and you can't see the signal light, I can understand that you should pull them over. But I think it's important that the changes that you're making in which basically by putting the changes in there, it's exactly dealing with the point I was making earlier. This only applies to highways where there are mud conditions, dirt conditions, in regard to gravel highways. And what, basically, you stipulate in your agreement that, you know, by changing the word of obstruction by adding snow, ice, dirt or mud, applies to those road conditions, but what you're already saying that the intent of the legislation is already there. So I would just like to know why do you have to change it so that the legislation will impose an effect on one section of residents who mostly live on highway roads or even winter roads or whatnot, but on paved highways this is not really an issue. It's an issue for communities which basically have gravel-based highways or even the winter roads.

Again, I'd just like to get an understanding of what's the significance of the change and why is existing legislation, as it's worded right now, not working.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're trying to follow the Member's wording. The clause that he's read is 143.1, which is the new clause that we're adding and he's indicated he supports. The new clause that we've added is 143.1 which reads, "No person shall operate on a highway a vehicle with a light or reflective device

that is obscured, cracked or in any other condition that unduly diminishes the effectiveness of the light or reflective device." So I think we both agree.

MR. KRUTKO: Well, if that's what I'm reading, I agree with it.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Are there any other general comments? Is committee agreed that there are no further comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Can we proceed to the clause-by-clause review of Bill 14?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Okay. Bill 14 is on tab 14. Does committee agree to move to page 1, clause-by-clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 1, looking at Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. We're going clause by clause. Clause 1.

---Clauses 1 through 40 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): To the bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we have concluded Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

---Bill 14 as a whole approved for third reading

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Bill 14 is now deemed ready for third reading. I'd like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, you can escort them out.

As per committee direction, we're going to move on to Committee Report 6-16(3), which was tabled on May 28, 2009, in the 16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories: The Standing Committee on Government Operations Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009. We'll begin with general comments. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Are there any general comments on Committee Report 6-16(3)? Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I, for one, being a member of the committee and also being a member of the previous committee back in

the 14th Assembly, feel quite strongly or hopeful that this time that the recommendations that are being put forward will be acted upon by this government in the term of this government. Because what I saw from the previous recommendations -- we had some 60 recommendations in the 14th Assembly in regard to a special committee on languages which was one of the responsibilities we had to look at what has happened to those recommendations and, more importantly, what has the government done to ensure that those recommendations were considered and yet were acted upon. I was very dismayed to realize that a lot of time and effort was put into this by not only the members of the committee back in the 14th Assembly, a lot of residents of the Northwest Territories, aboriginal groups, language groups, took part and were very serious in regard to the situation we find ourselves in regard to aboriginal languages, government programs and services.

Since then, nothing has really happened by way of changing or improving the services for languages and, if anything, we ended up in court because of this issue in regard to the francophones of the Northwest Territories. If anything, the legislation we do put forth, the recommendations should be seriously considered and acted upon.

Now, since the 14th Assembly, we are now in a position of finding our languages worse off now than we were prior to the 14th Assembly in which some of the aboriginal languages and the language group I represent in regards to the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, their languages are being threatened by the number of speakers or the major decline in speakers in those two cultural groups. We now are in a position of having to find ways to get these languages back to some sort of safe state of affairs and realizing that they are now in danger.

I think that we, as government and as legislators, have to do everything that we can to ensure that when recommendations are made by way of special committees or in this Legislative Assembly, that we do take them seriously and that we do act in the best interests of all Northerners and, more importantly, to preserve something that makes us unique in the Northwest Territories, which is basically the languages that we have, the special unique cultural significance of these languages, the people, the aboriginal groups and also ensuring that the cultural component of languages are protected. Without the language, you don't have a culture. Without culture, you don't have the history and the background that you need to ensure that the history of the Northwest Territories is preserved and protected.

Again, I would just like to state as a Member that has served on this committee and served on the previous committee that after the frustration that I

felt and the reason I put my name forward for this committee was to be on the Government Operations committee was to deal with this legislation and review this legislation. After seeing the amount of effort and time that we put into the recommendations in the 14th Assembly and it not be acted upon and finding out the state of affairs that we are in today, it is because of a lot of that. Again, I would like to seriously ask the Cabinet, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to take these recommendations seriously and take the language revitalization and aspects of this bill and how we are trying to find unique ways of restoring, maintaining and, more importantly, preserving our languages and our culture in the Northwest Territories for future generations. With that, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Next I would like to go to the chair of the committee that conducted the review, Mr. Kevin Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was actually a great day yesterday that we were able to table this Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009. I really think that the title is appropriate. It is called "Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories" and most in particular we say "reality check" because as we did our work we found that our aboriginal languages are in serious decline in all sectors, even our strongest aboriginal speaking communities. There is decline.

Before I go on, because of the formal nature of the proceedings yesterday, we weren't able to recognize the rest of the committee, which is Mr. Robert Hawkins, the deputy chair; yourself, Mr. Chair, Glen Abernethy; Mr. Jackie Jacobson, MLA for Nunakput; and Mr. David Krutko, who just spoke earlier here. As well, we did not have an opportunity to recognize Mr. Tom Beaulieu, the Member for Tu Nedhe, who was able to use a lot of his time to help us carry out this work as the standing committee travelled and discussed the issues and heard the issues from the communities.

We certainly are suggesting many abrupt changes in the way we are doing business as the Government of the Northwest Territories, most particularly towards our aboriginal languages. The French are making great strides in utilizing the legal field for continued entrenchment of their rights. For me as chair, I view it as a positive thing for them. I am glad they are heading that way. At the same time, what we heard in the communities was that our aboriginal languages must be as important to our government. Because the French are working that hard, we have to work that much harder at aboriginal languages. We have nine official languages in the Northwest Territories. To do the

work nine times that the French are asking for is rather difficult. To think that is why in our report we would rather see an aboriginal language secretariat set up that can manage all nine aboriginal distinct linguistic groups. I think that is critical. I also think that regional delivery model systems are also critical. There has to be a way to ensure that those aboriginal speakers and elders that wish to be served in their language of choice, that the ability is there.

Needless to say, it doesn't make sense to have a Gwich'in speaker located in Fort Simpson when there is just not enough speakers there to support that role and, alternately, having a South Slave speaker located up in, say, a community of Tuktoyaktuk just does not make sense. What does make sense is the ability to deliver the local language locally. I certainly strive towards seeing that.

One of the biggest things we heard, of course, throughout our report we said in the report and the media yesterday, was that the existing system is not working for aboriginal languages. The SCROLA or report did lots of things to enhance and talk about revitalization of the aboriginal languages. In fact, they set up an Aboriginal Language Revitalization Board instead of a language board. They created the office of the Commissioner. But I think what that had done, in my assessment there, Mr. Chairman, was that it spread all of our resources too thin. I think the attempt of our report and our recommendation is to try to consolidate these resources. I don't think there were enough specialists or people to actually support two big boards. We are suggesting one. We are suggesting an aboriginal languages secretariat. We are suggesting that the role of the Commissioner change. Even though the wording says deleted but I believe the role of the Languages Commissioner people expected to be more than just an oversight role. They want to see promotion. They want to see revitalization and support from that type of office for aboriginal language and that is what we talked about a lot in our report.

With that, those opening comments, Mr. Chairman, once again I would like to thank committee members for their hard work and to all the language frontline workers that are out there that provided their expertise and their input. I look forward to working with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment as they deliberate this report. I think we did ask them to respond to us specifically within a certain number of days and certainly I would like to see that feedback and see some significant changes before our term ends here in about two years, Mr. Chairman. With that, thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on my list is Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This was an exciting report to do and be involved in. At my house we speak many languages because we have the benefit of my wife having been able to speak her cultural language as well as my in-laws who are able to speak it. You really get a sense of value of language and how it is so important to culture and identity. When you go to communities and you see people lose their language, my heart really goes out to these people and you think of how language is so linked to culture and how when you start to lose the language and the meaning of the culture starts to fall off, my heart really goes out for that type of problem.

Going through this report and this review when we went out there on this special committee, it was exciting to see the participation and the passion by people and saying we have to stop where we are today. We have to get this train back on the tracks and solve this problem. When you get into certain communities such as the Gwich'in, what you will find is you have 250 or 260 speakers of the language left and as many people noted time and time again, the vast majority of those speakers are elders, and five, 10 or 20 years, that could almost permanently devastate that language by losing its... There are a lot of things that need to be sort of taken into account for right now.

This report I think is, first and foremost, a good report. I certainly hope that the government hears the call for action. There are many things that can be done and the recommendations sort of speak to that.

It has just been mentioned by our chairman, Mr. Menicoche, about the details that can be done, but the important thing that I really wanted to highlight during opening comments was the passion of the people wanting to save their languages, to keep them on for the next generation and the generations that follow that. If we can do anything, I would certainly like to see that we build up a partnership of accountability where we allow community groups to be more involved and take control and set the destinies of how they want their languages to be brought back. I would like to see things like a library or a resource centre developed so we can help build centres of expertise. I would like to see more elders brought into the school. They may not have the PhD or the Masters that traditional teachers may have, but there is a real connection when you can bring in someone of that type of experience, and young people can learn a lot even if it is just respect from our older generation. There are a lot of values that could be all tied in.

Although we visited many communities, there is one I wouldn't mind highlighting, which was Deline. It was really remarkable how people jammed into the community hall there and wanted to talk and

how they, when we were done their meeting, still had a lot to say and wanted to make sure that we heard their voices. My appreciation goes out to that community, because they really threw themselves into making sure that they wanted to be heard. Yet again, I continue to use the word "passion" because it is so important. The passion and fight for wanting to make sure that their language survives was brilliant.

I don't know if other people mentioned it, but the first leg of our community outreach in getting information, we had Mr. Beaulieu and I, from my perspective, would like to thank him for joining the committee. He is not a typical committee member, but we needed more folks to make sure that the review had enough membership and a good quality diverse membership. I want to thank him for joining on, because his participation helped and I thought it was great.

Mr. Chairman, the report is only as good as with what we do with it. If this turns out to be another expensive report that finds itself in a nice pretty or fashionable way on a shelf and something we can say we did but we do nothing with it, we wasted everyone's time. The report is as good as we want to empower it, as well. Here is the enabling opportunity to make change. It really will come down to interests and measurement and, of course, the almighty dollar. I am hoping what gets proven out of this process is a plan that says, wait a minute, what is more important? Is it the money or is it finding a way to solve this problem? I certainly hope that someone will take account and say languages will be more important at this time to save than say it costs a little too much this time, maybe we should ignore it. When the languages become extinct, it will cost us a lot more money trying to find ways to bring it back after it is gone and I think it would be a real loss.

Back to what I talked about at the very start. From my own experience, language is very important in my household, so I have a deep appreciation for how important languages are across the Northwest Territories. Growing up here all my life, I have always known people and I always had a lot of respect for people who can speak more than one language. You can see a lot of pride taken in people who do this and you could also see a lot of sadness in people who can't communicate with their children or their grandchildren because there is that disconnect.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to finish off with this last point. Language to me is a bridge between the cultures and the generations. It is a shame that some of these bridges have been falling apart. Now is the time to repair them. I look forward to government taking strong account to this in finding ways to bring it back. With Minister Lafferty who is in his own right someone in the Dogrib region that

they really aspire to because he speaks his own language. He presides over his region as a role model who uses his language regularly. I am hoping that type of leadership in that department will say this is so important. We are going to do something now. If we don't have the money, well, we will find the money and we will find ways to make it work. Mr. Chairman, with that, I wish to thank committee for being part of this report and helping make it possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Languages embody whole ways of knowing. They are the context and the carriers for the unique accumulated and customized and even hard won knowledge that has enabled a people to thrive in a particular and often demanding environment. As such, we cannot allow them to expire, to dwindle away.

The comprehensive languages review that we are hearing about here today and yesterday has provided firm direction that will hopefully help ensure the preservation and ongoing use of our languages, but the task is, clearly, large. I think we have lost about two thirds of the languages in the world. Unfortunately, the trend in our aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories is not good. I think this committee has recognized this and proposed a great plan. I am hopeful and I am committed to ensuring that the government will actually adopt it. And then we face the big challenges of implementing it.

Certainly I have concluded that there is really an excellent quality to the analysis and preparation of the options and the presentation of the materials in the report. This is really great work. I would like to offer my appreciation and congratulations to the committee, their hardworking staff and the many language practitioners and promoters who have contributed to this work.

I fully endorse the approach of dealing with the provision of government services under new specifically targeted legislation and the separate effort on the protection and promotion of languages through policy and/or legislation. Whichever it is, a priority for me will be that the chosen approach be clear and there be good evaluation of the effectiveness of it, particularly in regards to the protection and expansion of aboriginal language use.

Of course, the reason we are talking about this in this way today is that the approach we have taken in the past has not been effective. The biggest challenge we face is that lack of success aggravates itself over short time frames. This brings me to what I regard as the largest opportunity that we have in language promotion and that studies of

the development of the human brain have shown and that is early childhood education.

I know the Department of ECE, Education, Culture and Employment, is promoting language nests, I believe the term is used, where there is work starting to happen with very young people, little people. This is where we have a huge opportunity to make progress on this. It is well demonstrated that if very small children from birth or even from before birth up to the age of three or four years of age are exposed to use of languages, traditional languages, they develop the ability to pick up those languages whether or not that is pursued early in life or later. Those first few years are critical. I hope that we actually will move to recognize that in programs that are put in place.

This is a large report and a large plan and it's going to take big resources. It's also going to take time. It's going to take time to implement. We need to be talking to the Government of Canada on legislation and so on. In recognition of this, the committee has included a transitional provisions program. To me, the importance of that cannot be stressed enough. Because this plan will take time to put in place and to fund, we really need immediate and short-term actions to be set in place right away. So I hope this government will recognize that right away and read that provision first and get it going while we do the heavy slogging to get this really good plan adopted and actually in place.

I think that's really what I wanted to say. Again, the diverse ways of knowing what languages provide are based on the intimate relationships with the land and the different areas of the land, the different environments out there that have developed over eons. As many people know, we are facing a lot of challenges, increasing challenges as human society across the globe. We are seeing big changes in the North, right down to our precipitation and the way we travel on the land, the safety that we used to be able to use, the traditional knowledge to ensure safety and so on, those things are changing. There is so much knowledge in each language that we have and we have 11 official languages and we need to hang onto that knowledge. Yes, we do need to adapt our languages as time goes on and the report addresses that, but to me this is extremely important; diversity of languages and the knowledge held therein is in the order of environmental diversity and the need to preserve that.

So that's my comments, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that opportunity and I look forward to seeing this put in place. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Next on my list is Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to add my voice of appreciation to the comments that have

already been made. There is not much new I would add, but I want to put my own stamp on my thoughts regarding this work. I certainly am appreciative of the work of the committee. This is a very comprehensive and in-depth report. They did a great deal of work to get the report to this stage and I think the committee members and the staff that worked with the committee members to produce this document are to be commended.

The preservation of language, no matter which language, is extremely important and is something we have recognized, I think, in some of our goals and objectives and through our strategic planning documents. But at the moment, you know, the analysis that the committee did and the results that they have produced in this document pretty much indicate that we are not doing what we should be doing to preserve our language. Many of the general principles that come out in this document mirror my own thoughts. I felt for some time that if we really believe in the preservation of our 11 official languages, we ought to be doing more than what we have been doing.

I see that there is -- and these are mirroring some of the comments in the report -- a distinct lack of an organized approach to the preservation of our languages. Adequate dollars have not been diverted, directed towards the delivery of our language programs, towards the management and accountability of our programs and to the promotion of our languages and to research and development to preserve our languages. So all those areas I don't think we've devoted enough resources to and it's evident in the fact that language, use of aboriginal languages and all our languages, aboriginal languages particularly, is declining.

The report points out some of the faults or the lack of authority of the Commissioner and it goes to, again, the inability of preservation of languages and use of languages. I feel that there is a lack of support, currently, through policy in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and a lack of support for HR capacity relative to languages.

I thoroughly approve of the proposed reorganization of structure as it's laid out in the report. I think if it's a priority for this Assembly to preserve languages to make sure that our aboriginal languages are going to continue, then we have to take action. We have it as one of our priorities, but I really again have to state that I don't think we are putting enough resources towards that particular priority. I hope, as my colleague Mr. Bromley mentioned a few moments ago, that our business plans are going to reflect the necessary direction of funds towards languages and working towards increasing the language education in schools, outside of schools, promotion, all those things that need to be done.

I want to see that the business plans show a change of direction from the current and an increased focus on language. You know the expression "we have to put our money where our mouth is," I think that's something we need to think seriously about as we go forward with looking at business plans and setting priorities for the next budget. If language really is important, then we need to devote the resources to it.

I hope, as other Members have stated, that this report is...I hope we act on it. I hope it's not a report which we simply take, say nice things about it and then basically don't do the actions. It's really important that we carry through on this. I agree with Mr. Bromley again when he says that it's going to take time. It's going to take a long time, but we can do one thing at a time, one foot in front of the other and we will get to the point where our preservation of language will be better than it is today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Next on my list is Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Myself, too, I would like to thank the committee and the staff for all the hard work that was put into the report. First of all, I hope it doesn't just get put on the shelf and let the dust gather on it.

Language is so important. I mean, we have 11 official languages in the Northwest Territories and being born and raised in Tuk, it's Inuvialuit. It's so important. I mean, you used to be able to do traditional harvesting with your grandparents. You used to be able to understand them when they're speaking, but now it was out of the system for the last 15 years now, but the IRC is really taking initiative on itself and putting it back into preschools and from K to 6, which I am really proud of in the Inuvialuit settlement region and Nunakput.

Saving our language and our culture is a big thing. It shouldn't rely on just how much funding we are going to get. It's too important. We have to take the initiative and these next steps to preserve it.

I would also like to thank all the people who showed up while we were on our community tour and who are really interested in saving and preserving the culture and our language. We do have 11 official languages, so we have a big task at hand to not only promote but to serve the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. I have nobody else on my list. Is there anybody who has some additional general comments? Is committee agreed that there are no more general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is non-debatable.

---Carried

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 5-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Auxiliary Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2007 Election; Committee Report 6-16(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009: Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the NWT; and Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, and would like to report progress, with five motions being adopted and that Committee Report 5-16(3) is concluded and that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have a seconder for the motion? Mr. Menicoche. ---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of Caucus tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m.

Orders of the day for Monday, June 1, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions

9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 17, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2008-2009
 - Bill 18, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2009-2010
 - Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2009-2010
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy
 - Committee Report 6-16(3), Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act, 2008-2009: Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories
 - Bill 6, Species at Risk (NWT) Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, June 1, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:53 p.m.