



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

4th Session

Day 2

16th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, October 16, 2009

Pages 3307 - 3340

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker
Hon. Paul Delorey
(Hay River North)

Mr. Glen Abernethy
(Great Slave)

Mr. Tom Beaulieu
(Tu Nedhe)

Ms. Wendy Bisaro
(Frame Lake)

Mr. Bob Bromley
(Weledeh)

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen
(Hay River South)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Mr. Jackie Jacobson
(Nunakput)

Mr. David Krutko
(Mackenzie Delta)

Hon. Jackson Lafferty
(Monfwi)
Minister of Justice
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

Hon. Sandy Lee
(Range Lake)
Minister of Health and Social Services
Minister responsible for the Status of Women
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
Minister responsible for Seniors

Hon. Bob McLeod
(Yellowknife South)
Minister of Human Resources
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment
Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board
Minister responsible for Energy Initiatives

Hon. Michael McLeod
(Deh Cho)
Minister of Transportation
Minister of Public Works and Services

Hon. Robert C. McLeod
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs
Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation
Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission
Minister responsible for Youth

Mr. Kevin Menicoche
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Michael Miltenberger
(Thebacha)
Deputy Premier
Government House Leader
Minister of Finance
Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board Secretariat
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

Mr. Dave Ramsay
(Kam Lake)

Hon. Floyd Roland
(Inuvik Boot Lake)
Premier
Minister of Executive
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations
Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation

Mr. Norman Yakeleya
(Sahtu)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Tim Mercer

Deputy Clerk

Mr. Doug Schauerte

Principal Clerk of Committees

Ms. Jennifer Knowlan

Principal Clerk, Operations

Ms. Gail Bennett

Law Clerks

Ms. Sheila MacPherson
Ms. Sarah Kay

Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	3307
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	3307
4-16(4) - 80 th Anniversary of the Persons Case (Lee)	3307
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	3307
Condolences to Tu Nedhe Families on Passing of Family Members (Beaulieu).....	3307
Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) (Bromley).....	3308
Natural Resources Wealth of the Northwest Territories (Groenewegen)	3308
911 and Cell Phone Services in Small Communities (Krutko)	3309
Municipal Elections and the Right to Vote (Bisaro)	3309
Health Services in the Sahtu (Yakeleya).....	3310
Long-Term Care for Elders in Small Communities (Menicoche)	3310
Food Rescue Program and Donation of Food Act (Abernethy).....	3311
Condition of Ulukhaktok School (Jacobson)	3311
Stanton Territorial Hospital Development Plan (Ramsay)	3312
Crossworks Diamond Cutting Facility and the NWT Diamond Strategy (Hawkins)	3312
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	3313
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3313
ORAL QUESTIONS	3313
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	3324
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	3324
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	3325
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	3339
ORDERS OF THE DAY	3339

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, October 16, 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. Michael McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 10:04 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 responsible for the Status of Women, Ms. Lee.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 4-16(4):
80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PERSONS CASE

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to mark an important event that occurred 80 years ago this Sunday, October 18th. Emily Murphy's nomination to sit in the Canadian Senate was challenged on the grounds that she was a female and therefore not a person under the British North America Act, the Constitution of Canada at the time.

"Women are persons in matters of pain and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges," an earlier ruling had determined.

Thankfully, Emily and four other women, who together have since become known as the Famous Five, appealed the decision to the British Privy Council, the highest level of appeal for Canada at the time. When the judicial committee of the Privy Council rendered its decision it stated, "Yes, women are persons...and eligible to be summoned and may become Members of the Senate of Canada." It went further to say, "that the exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbarous than ours. And to those who would ask why the word "persons" should include females, the obvious answer is, why should it not?"

As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, on the 80th anniversary of the Persons Case I would like to honour the work and tenacity of Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby, the Famous Five who changed the political and legal landscape of Canada.

This important action made it possible for all the Sandys, Janes, and Wendys, and all our sisters all

across the NWT and Canada to run for office, hold office, and represent our communities and our great Territory.

I'm happy to note that last week the Senate voted to name each of the Famous Five women honorary Senators, the first such move by the Upper House of Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONDOLENCES TO TU NEDHE FAMILIES
ON PASSING OF FAMILY MEMBERS

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Since we last sat, a number of my constituents have passed on and I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about them and pass on my condolences to their families.

From Lutselk'e, Bernadette Lockhart, a well-known entrepreneur in Lutselk'e who ran Bernadette's Bed and Breakfast. Raised by her grandparents, Bernadette maintained a traditional lifestyle throughout her life, going out on the land regularly with her husband, Joe. At public meetings, Bernadette always spoke up for the people of Lutselk'e and always talked about investing in the future. She was always willing to help others and always had a smile for everyone. Bernadette is survived by her husband, Joe, two daughters, a son, and many other relatives.

There was also Joe Michel of Lutselk'e, who was a father to Bernadette. He was born and raised at the Artillery Lake area on the Barren Lands. Joe hunted and trapped all his life. He was born in 1925. He and his late wife, Alice, had 17 children and raised 11 of them. Joe was working with various boards, for preserving the land for hunting and trapping, when he passed away. He was active in land and culture activities.

There was also Bruce Beaulieu of Fort Resolution, son of Lizzy Beaulieu and the late August Beaulieu. Bruce had six brothers, two sisters, and he was predeceased by two of his brothers and a sister. Bruce spent most of his life in the hospital and

passed away at age 40. That was actually quite a miracle, because Bruce was only expected to live for 15 years.

There was Holly Martin, daughter of Alex Rabesca and Therese Martin of Lutselk'e. Holly was only 14 years old and leaves behind four brothers and two sisters. She was the granddaughter of well-known elder J.B. Rabesca from Lutselk'e.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to recognize these individuals today. They will all be missed. My heartfelt condolences and prayers go out to the families and friends of Bernadette, Joe, Holly, and Bruce. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AGREEMENT ON INTERNAL TRADE (AIT)

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very concerned about this government's stance in federal/provincial/territorial discussions on the Agreement on Internal Trade, or the AIT, and the mandate our government has to make commitments at these negotiations. As a complex and developing agreement, dealing generally with the establishment of free trade between provinces and territories and the elimination of controls on that trade, our input is required. The AIT puts in place many commitments that limit the ability of this Territory to maximize the benefits of economic development for Northerners. For example, while it provides an exemption for the Business Incentive Policy, it forbids the ability to require the establishment of head offices in the NWT through socio-economic agreements. The consequences for a loss of corporate taxes are obvious. Many other measures now in place are of concern, such as the prohibition on procurement preference policies by municipalities created under the authority of provincial or territorial governments.

The Premier and Minister of ITI, responsible for trade, have continued discussions on expanding the AIT with several meetings last summer through to yesterday. Recent negotiations have included an energy chapter directly related to the NWT's resource revenue regime. This may be news to some Members, as it was to me. The basis of my concern is where does the government get its mandate to bind this Territory to sweeping and limiting measures without discussion or debate of negotiating positions through committee or here in the Assembly? From what I have seen, I do not find the positions taken by the government to be at all comforting. It boils down to governments making treaties among themselves that tie their own hands when it comes to regulating the economy of business to make cross-border decisions on matters vital to the health of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask, what are the benefits of these measures, where is the critical analysis and what mandate does Cabinet have to carry on negotiations without the knowledge and consent of Regular Members?

One of our principles of consensus government agreed to by Caucus says except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced in the Legislative Assembly. I suggest we put any decision on hold until my colleagues and I have been apprised and consulted on this fundamental economic policy and its acknowledgement of our unique northern conditions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NATURAL RESOURCES WEALTH OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend was Thanksgiving and we have now convened the House and I'd like to take the opportunity to draw to everyone's attention to the vast resources and wealth of the Northwest Territories that we should be extremely thankful for.

As we listen to the news every day, we hear of countries that are inundated with natural disasters, typhoons, mud slides, with horrendous results. When you look at a map of Canada or a map of the world, you see that we are subject to very little in the way of those kinds of disasters that could potentially affect us.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of the resources of our land, I can't help but think that there is more that we should be able to do to sustain ourselves from those resources. Yesterday I made mention of our vast non-renewable resources by way of oil and gas.

Today, and maybe for the rest of this session, I want to talk a little bit about some of the renewable resources that we have that we seem incapable of really benefitting from in any kind of significant way. In a time when the world contemplates things like the availability of fresh water, we have the Great Slave Lake and the Great Bear Lake, vast bodies of clean, fresh water on our doorstep. In those waters are fish resources. I know the Great Slave Lake better in that regard and I know what the sustainable harvest is available from the Great Slave Lake, and yet we do not seem to be able to harvest that in a meaningful way to even support and feed our own people this very healthy and

nutritious food source. Instead, we import things from far away.

When we look at the downturn in the caribou, but yet if you drive south of here, you know, you can see the bison standing on the highway, thousands and thousands of them. What a wonderful food source and yet we seem to, again, overlook that and think that we should import our food from some faraway place.

Our forests, our long summer days, the light, ideal for growing conditions and agriculture, the sustainable harvest of product for biomass.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a brief touching on some of these things, but over the next days of session here I want to zero in on some of these things and we need to ask ourselves why can we not benefit more greatly from these things on our doorstep. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON 911 AND CELL PHONE SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about the improvement of telecommunications in the Northwest Territories. I know there was a major debate yesterday in the House about 911 service for six communities. I think as a government we have to realize that we represent 33 communities in the Northwest Territories and we must improve the telecommunications, Internet service and uplinks to all our communities in the Northwest Territories. If this government is going to make any capital investment, it should be to the benefit of all Northerners. I think it's important that this government seriously weigh in on this decision.

There was a decision made by the Yukon government to provide cell phone services to all communities in the Yukon. They made a political decision, they made a capital investment and now any community you go to in the Yukon you can use your cell phone service. You can drive down any major road system in the Yukon between Dawson, Mayo, Whitehorse, and receive cell phone calls on the highway system. I think it's that type of communication that will benefit all Northerners in the Northwest Territories and not just 911 services for six communities. I think it's important to realize that as a government and as a territory we have to represent all of the Territory in any political decision that we make.

Mr. Speaker, I know it's important that this government reaches out to Research Canada in regard to finding the federal investment, but more importantly, to improve the telecommunications in

the Northwest Territories. Yes, we have some political challenges in regard to telecommunications in our smaller communities, but there are efforts out there such as Falcon Communications and SSI Micro. We have a lot of companies that have basically established themselves in regard to ICE Wireless. You can receive Bell service here in Yellowknife and other communities. I think the systems are there. We have to make that capital investment.

So, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister or the Premier if this government will seriously consider making a capital investment to benefit the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories in regard to improving our telecommunications and Internet systems throughout the Northwest Territories. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Monday is a very important day for a number of our NWT communities. This Monday, October 19th, is Election Day for the NWT's cities, towns and villages. In the communities of Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, Norman Wells and Yellowknife, voters will be electing mayors, councillors and in some cases school trustees.

Canadians have not always had the right to vote. Some segments of our population, women and indigenous peoples for instance, have had the right to vote for less time than others, but voting is a right for each and every one of us and it is a right that must not be taken for granted. I believe it's our duty to exercise our right to vote at every opportunity.

Municipalities and community councils make decisions that affect us, as residents of our communities, on a very personal level. It's said that municipal government is the government that's closest to the people, and I believe that. They make decisions about how we live, what services we can expect for our day-to-day activities and what our community will look like.

Mayors and councils can affect us for the better or for the worse if we choose poorly or if we don't choose at all. Monday is the chance we have to influence the future of our communities, a chance to shape our government, that only comes once every three years.

As well as being a right, voting is a privilege, and a privilege that should not be abused, in my mind. When we don't take advantage of a privilege that is offered to us, I feel we're abusing it and it cannot be said strongly enough: get out and vote on Monday if

you live in a city -- that would be Yellowknife -- a town -- Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik or Norman Wells -- or a village, and that would be Fort Simpson. We all know what we want in our community, we all have ideas and thoughts about whether things are well run or not and we like to communicate those thoughts and ideas and, yes, complaints to our community leaders. But if you have no hand in the selection of your mayor or your council, you have no right to complain.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MS. BISARO: If you don't vote, don't expect to be heard. I wish all candidates the best of luck in their run for office. I urge all residents to make voting on Monday a priority; priority one.

I am hopeful that the results of Monday's elections will show off high voter turnout and it will show that our residents know the importance of voting. I look forward to seeing the results from Monday's elections. I also look forward to working with the six new councils to continue to make NWT a great place to live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SAHTU

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent health facility studies conducted by the GNWT show a clear picture of the health facilities in the Northwest Territories. That picture shows that the Sahtu region urgently needs a Sahtu regional wellness centre such as other regions have today.

The Tlicho, Beaufort-Delta and Sahtu regions all have to fly patients to regional hospitals. Sahtu residents are flown to Inuvik or Yellowknife to receive much of their care. The dedicated staff at the nursing stations in the Sahtu provide primary care and services such as X-rays and blood tests. In our smaller communities, the nurse provides the primary care and often refers patients to out-of-town physicians on medevacs, but the physician schedule sometimes means that people have to wait a long time before they see a doctor.

Many Sahtu babies are born in Inuvik and Yellowknife. Many Sahtu people have to relocate to Yellowknife or Inuvik temporarily to receive specialized treatment. I urge this government to find ways to expand the service provided by the Sahtu Health and Social Services Authority. The Sahtu people need a Sahtu regional wellness centre that can provide acute care. There is a great demand for increased midwifery services across the Northwest Territories. The Sahtu regional wellness centre can be an ideal location for such a service in our region.

We need to be able to take care of our people while they are dying. It is very sad when our people have

to pass away far away from their homes at times, without their families with them. We need a health care professional based in the Sahtu, who can administrate the medication frequently required for the type of care. A specialized treatment that must be performed regularly, such as dialysis, if it were available in the Sahtu, would decrease the transportation costs and allow people to stay closer to home with their families, eliminating the struggle to find long-term accommodations in Yellowknife or Inuvik while they receive their treatment.

Our population is aging and that requires increased health care services. We need a Sahtu regional wellness centre that can provide a wide range of health care now. Let us show people that we care for them close to home and the loved ones that do support them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG-TERM CARE FOR ELDERS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all have experienced a loved one in need of care. We also know that in the coming years there will be more elders that will need to be looked after. Someone will be ill and someone will be frail. Their supports and needs can become very complicated and require training and specialized skills.

Hospital care is not what these elders need. Their needs are usually better looked after in the caring environment of their home communities. There they can have visits from their family, who also help them with their care. They can eat traditional foods and enjoy a familiar environment. The philosophy of our elders care home in Fort Simpson includes meeting the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the residents. This facility is a true community-based caring facility that encourages family and friends to visit and participate in the care of their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, the elders care home in Fort Simpson unfortunately has only 20 permanent beds. This is not enough for a population that serves over 3,000 that is spread out into many of the communities. Just recently a constituent of mine had to endure a lot of hardship over many months before her husband was finally returned home to the Fort Simpson long-term care facility. This family had to travel far to see their sick family member, only because there was no bed available in Fort Simpson.

I want to remind the Minister of Health and Social Services that it is important to my people in the communities that they can look after their elders close to home. For that reason, I encourage the Minister of Health and Social Services to come

forward with supports to increase the long-term care beds available. This is urgent and this is a priority for our smaller communities. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FOOD RESCUE PROGRAM AND
DONATION OF FOOD ACT

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about the Food Rescue Program and highlight some of what it's accomplished over the last 15 months.

The Donation of Food Act that was passed in 2008 ensures that those who donate food and distribute donated food are not liable for possible harm unless it was a result of intent to harm or reckless behaviour. This act has allowed the Food Rescue Program to increase, as it serves a pressing need within our community.

I would like to highlight the work of Ruby Trudel, a champion and facilitator of the program, and all of the volunteers who have helped her since the beginning of the program. They have done a lot of work and are a great resource for individuals in other communities who are interested in doing the same thing.

From the end of June 2008 until September 2009 the Food Rescue Program has rescued 125,000 pounds of food. Of that they have donated around 119,000 pounds of various food products. A breakdown of this includes some 7,000 pounds of meat, 16,000 litres of dairy product, 3,000 litres of juice, 876 dozen eggs, and over 1,700 sandwiches. Food banks across North America value each pound of food at around \$2. This means that within 15 months of operations, Food Rescue, along with those people and companies supporting it, has donated and delivered around \$238,000 worth of food to the community that would otherwise have been unavailable or ended up in a landfill.

---Applause

The Food Rescue Program is performing a valuable service to the community and is seeking to expand even further. The program is on the verge of moving into a larger but temporary facility on Old Airport Road. I would like to acknowledge the partners who have helped make this possible. First, Central Mechanical for providing the location and the power; Matrix Aviation for providing the shelter itself; Ryfan Electric for wiring and getting the facility operational. This is an important step for the longevity of food rescue in Yellowknife.

Ultimately, the Food Rescue Program's long-term goal is to establish itself somewhere on a permanent basis. This would allow easier access to clients the program serves. Over the long term,

being within walking distance around public transportation routes is an important advantage the program is working towards. Achieving this goal would allow Food Rescue to begin limited daily distribution to selected groups within the community on a weekly rotation, operating like a mini food bank. Due to this, the Food Rescue Program requires continued support from various levels of government and larger communities.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONDITION OF ULUKHAKTOK SCHOOL

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In small communities across the Territories, the schools are a focal point of the community. They are places where the community gathers for feasts, dances, and even weddings. More importantly, they are a place where our youth can learn and get their education. This is why I'm very concerned and the recent letter I received from Karen Kitekudlak, the chairperson of the district education authority of Ulukhaktok, regarding the worsening conditions of Helen Kalvak Elihakvik School.

This school is designed beautifully. The school is a large, self-sufficient facility all under one roof, joining classrooms, recreational section, and an industrial shop. In the letter, Karen describes a serious maintenance problem that should have been resolved years ago. This summer was a perfect time for the repairs and upgrades and projects; however, the staff returned this fall and no work has been done to the school.

The boiler system has not been monitored and set properly, resulting in insufficient boiler circulation in the system. The heater was supposed to be inspected and fixed over the summer, but nothing was done. Now the heater cannot be turned down and in some areas of the school the children are so hot they're starting to fall asleep, while in other areas of the school it's so cold that the kids are getting sick.

There are windows all over the school that have been broken for years, that the Department of Public Works and Services has been trying to fix. These windows allow air to come through the windows. At one point two workers from PWS travelled to Ulukhaktok for weeks for nothing, because the windows that are supposed to be replaced did not arrive.

The local contractors wait for months for parts and material, resulting in huge, unacceptable delays for the simplest repair jobs. There are many school authorities in the South that are now turning to other material for windows, such as unbreakable glass. The education of the students is not just providing teachers and books, it is also providing a

safe, comfortable environment for students and teachers and community members to enjoy going to.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. JACOBSON: One of this government's pledges was to provide good, equal education for all residents of the Northwest Territories, but when one of the smaller community's schools are far below large centres standards, such as Yellowknife and Inuvik, I wonder when this government will fulfill their commitments.

I demand this government develop and implement a strategy that provides equal resources to all communities for schools for quality education and maintenance. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about Stanton Territorial Hospital, the flagship of our health care system here in the Northwest Territories.

Stanton requires immediate attention. Since becoming a Member of this House in 2003, the hospital has been riddled with issues around finances, human resources, space utilization and technical systems.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has, on numerous occasions, stood up in this House and told Members how important the Stanton Master Development Plan was to the future of this hospital. This plan has been discussed since at least 2004.

The building constructed in 1988 is now over 20 years old and requires upgrades in many areas. In 2004 a local architect and engineering firm prepared a technical assessment indicating that several building systems at the hospital are not expected to last more than five years. Five years have now come and gone and where is the department on the Stanton Master Development Plan? What systems specifically were mentioned in this technical assessment done in 2004?

It has come to my attention that no fewer than three areas of that hospital where patients were being taken care of have been shut down to deal with issues of mould and mould removal. This is very alarming. Mould can be very dangerous to patients, staff and visitors to that hospital, especially those already in frail health or those with respiratory illness. Some forms of mould can even be toxic, and I'd like to know just how prevalent is the mould

problem at Stanton Hospital. What exactly is being done about it?

Can the Minister produce the 2004 technical assessment of Stanton so that we can see what has been addressed and what is being left out? This all points to the fact that the Stanton Master Development Plan needs to be concluded as soon as possible. All I've seen from the previous three Health Ministers is them telling us how important it is. Minor upgrades, space utilization issues being addressed in the absence of any master development plan is bad management. This piecemeal approach to managing the flagship of our health care system has got to stop. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CROSSWORKS DIAMOND CUTTING FACILITY AND THE NWT DIAMOND STRATEGY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight an issue that has been forwarded to me this morning. I won't be quoting from the Globe and Mail, but it was a story in the Globe and Mail on October 14th. The story headline reads, "Skilled Immigrants Staff Sudbury Gem Plant." It's a story about Crossworks Manufacturing that is now cutting diamonds in Sudbury. They have 27 workers in Ontario, and that would be Ontario's only diamond cutting facility, and they're certainly cutting DeBeers diamonds at Canada's Victor Diamond Mine near James Bay.

This story highlights about the fact that the Victor Mine is expected to produce \$25 million in diamonds this year. This diamond mine agreement has given Crossworks 10 percent of their annual production to cut diamonds.

Ontario has said they want to be the new international diamond pipeline. That is their position now for Canada, that diamonds run through there.

Crossworks expects to also train local students at the Sudbury local college to learn how to cut diamonds. Something's clearly going wrong.

Ontario appears to have rolled out the red carpet for both cutting works and industry, and I'm worried what's going to happen here. Clearly, the NWT diamonds are no longer the only game in town.

I question, what is the NWT's diamond strategy? Has it ever considered a plan B when the diamond market opens up somewhere else in Canada? I've said for years that Israel has no diamonds, Antwerp has no diamonds, yet they've always found a way to make sure that they are truly the world market player for diamonds. Why hasn't the Northwest Territories taken on the position of becoming the leader for North American diamonds? It's slowly falling out of our hands.

I will have questions for the Premier today, but this story in the Globe and Mail puts into question the viability of the NWT being able to cut diamonds and produce skilled workers to do this job. Are we losing our edge? Will the polar bear diamond be an endangered species? I don't know. But I'll have questions for the Premier today to make sure that our government is looking into this problem and asking ourselves clearly what is happening on this issue and what are we doing about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakut, Mr. Jacobson.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize Jamie Kimiksana; my Pages from Ulukhaktok, Bryan and Samantha; and also my escort, Kim Lucas from Sachs Harbour, and Issiaac Elanik and Kyle Wolki; and one of my good friends, Lucy Fabien.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: It gives me great pleasure to recognize some of the college students here from the second year social work class and also their instructor. First of all the instructor, Bruce Stewart, is with us here today. The students, Julia Naedzo from Behchoko, Jalessa Paulette of Fort Smith, Loreen Beaverho from Whati, Avis Vallis and Concilia Kahonde and Kadiatu Dumbuya from Yellowknife.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Today I'd like to recognize Myranda Calumet. She's with the Junior Rangers paging here today. Also from Fort Resolution is Lucy Fabien, who is with the Canadian Rangers travelling and working with the Junior Rangers.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I'd like to as well recognize Ms. Jalessa Paulette, one of the constituents from Thebacha. I welcome her to Yellowknife and to the gallery here today.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: I'd like to recognize also a Junior Ranger from Tulita, Ms. Allison Bernarde, and I'd like to thank the Tulita Rangers for having her come here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 6, acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Acknowledgements

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Tulita Fire Department has been awarded the 2009 NWT Fire Services Merit Community Award. I rise today to offer my congratulations to the Tulita Fire Department on this year's recent announcement on the NWT Fire Service Merit Award. This award recognizes the dedicated members and all firefighters in the North and the commitment to be of service to their community. This year the Tulita Fire Department was chosen to be the recipient of this award. On behalf of the Sahtu I say thank you to all the firefighters and to the Tulita Fire Department for being there when we need you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 11-16(4): CELL PHONE SERVICE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Premier. It's in light of my statement that we as government have to take the responsibility to ensure that we improve telecommunication services in the Northwest Territories, regardless of cell phone service throughout the Northwest Territories or uplink systems from high speed Internet and whatnot. I think it's just as important to have that infrastructure in place, like our highway systems, regardless if it's a pipeline. Any system that can improve the services in the Northwest Territories has to be considered.

I'd like to ask the Premier, in light of what happened in the Yukon where they made a political decision to ensure that they had cell phone services throughout the Yukon in every community so that they have improvement in regard to telecommunications in the Yukon, will this government seriously look at the proposal that was put forth, the success of the Yukon model, and implement it in the Northwest Territories?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have, in fact, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, looked at how we deliver programs and services across the North in trying to, in fact, look at ways we can improve those services and the level of services. That's why we've structured, along with Members, the Small and

Rural and Remote Communities committee. As the area of cell phone service and uplink and connections, connectivity across the Northwest Territories, there have been, quite some time ago, some very early discussions with NorthwesTel, but we have not had a formal proposal put before us as government. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I believe this government did put out a request for proposal. I believe it was in the last government. I'd like to ask the Premier if he'd consider putting out a similar proposal to ensure that we are able to improve our telecommunications through the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories and the importance of having that linkage to all our communities in the Northwest Territories to improve services, not only for cell phone services such as Internet and high speed Internet throughout the Territories. I'd like to ask the Premier, would he seriously consider putting out that proposal?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, if I understood the Member's question, the previous government did, in fact, go out through a request of expressions of interest in cell phone services across the Northwest Territories. It was not proceeded with or the information that was received, there were no further steps beyond that. As the department reviewed the information, they felt at that time that they had nothing they could go forward with that would be viable and affordable across the Territory.

I'm prepared to sit down with Members of this Assembly if we're to renew interest in some project or program out there that might be able to expand our services beyond what we've done through our what we call the previous government's Digital Communications Network that we have out there right now. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, it's fundamental that this government improves its communications with all communities in the Northwest Territories. One way that we can do that is through technology. I think it's important to realize the importance of telecommunications in the Northwest Territories and having that communication link to all our communities. I think it's important as the government that we do find ways to upgrade our systems. You know, there's capital layout. Yes, it's going to cost us a couple million dollars, but I realize that the return on that investment over the long term will save the government by improving that communication system.

I'd like to ask the Premier again, how soon can he possibly come back to this House with some ideas on exactly how we can move forward to improve the telecommunications throughout the Northwest Territories and consider cell phone service for all 33 communities?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, this process, number one, we should recognize that we do have communications availability and in every community, the 33 communities. That's the hard-line phone systems in place. We have Internet availability in our communities. The issue of cell phone service and probably a higher band width is an issue that we wrestle with across the Government of the Northwest Territories. We could come back with a discussion paper. It will be led by Minister Miltenberger, as that branch of communication falls under his portfolio assignments. We will come forward, if Members want, with a discussion paper to talk about what's been done, some of the information that we have received, and options that have been considered in the past and we can go from there. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, for one, feel that this government has to ensure that before we make any political capital investment, regardless if it's 911 services or improving their systems in the Northwest Territories, that we have to ensure the benefit is for all Northerners and all 33 communities, and we have to ensure that that capital investment will show a return in the long term. So I'd like to request from the Premier that whatever they do when they come back, that we look at the cost-benefit analysis and also ensure that we will see an improvement in those services throughout the Northwest Territories and in all 33 communities. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: As Minister Robert McLeod spoke on the issue yesterday about providing a basic level of services in all our communities, that is one of the things we wrestle with when we talk about expanding our services that we do have available across the Northwest Territories. But as I said, we will work on coming forward with a discussion paper for Members of the Assembly and see where we can go from that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 12-16(4):
AGREEMENT ON INTERNAL TRADE (AIT)

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, I've become very concerned about the Agreement on Internal Trade negotiations that are going on, the lack of information provided to Members and lack of opportunity for input. These are limiting decisions and deals that are being made behind closed doors. Our companies, our entrepreneurs have extra costs associated with low volume, dispersed communities, long distances and so on, and as fuel prices soar, imports will become increasingly

expensive. There will be a need for preferential support to local businesses to ensure northern production of things like energy, food and other basic needs. Will these negotiations limit our ability to provide local entrepreneurs the support they may require and will it limit other governments' abilities as well? I ask this to the Premier. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The area of the Agreement on Internal Trade is part of a large package that's been worked on for a number of successive governments across Canada. From the federal government it was initiated, provinces as well as the territories. What we bring to the table is those types of concerns. When those discussions are happening, it is to make sure that the things we have in place, for example, our Business Incentive Policy, remain in place and protect the things that we've established as the Government of the Northwest Territories. The exact considerations the Member has raised about remoteness and the cost of doing business in the North, and trying to make sure that that's recognized in any work that goes forward. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Yes, I appreciate those comments from the Premier. Will the decisions being made, for example, or already made, affect things like the Business Development Investment Corporation and impact benefit agreements? What are the decisions that have already been made that are going to impact these sorts of supports that we can provide to our public? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, as our Minister is at this time discussing with other Ministers across this country further pieces to the Agreement on Internal Trade, what I'll have him do, when he comes back, is prepare notes and possibly get together with Members to give the latest update on things. What we've tried to put in place and voice concerns around the North is the cost of doing business, exemptions for what we have in place, as well, raise the aboriginal rights issues at these tables. Many of those types of things had been addressed over the years and will continue to be addressed by our government as we go forward. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Obviously, a very complex issue. I'm not developing any confidence yet. Why are these important discussions not regularly and routinely reported to committee and opportunity provided for review, analysis and debate that these important decisions require? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure over the history of the Government of the Northwest Territories when these discussions first started and updates since then, information has been shared. We will commit to getting the latest information to

Members. The simple fact is if we're not at those tables, if we're not sharing our concern from a northern perspective, those decisions will get made. That's why, for example, we've been able to protect our things like the Business Incentive Policy process and some of our agreements that we have across the Northwest Territories. As I've committed to, I'll have the Minister provide and try to set something up with Members so that they're provided the information on what's been occurring here. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear that the BIP has been protected. I didn't hear any response in terms of the BDIC and the impact benefit agreements. I'm wondering if those are vulnerable. Will the Premier commit to a regular and routine update and the opportunity for input from Regular Members on this important policy work? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: We're prepared to provide all the information necessary for Members to feel comfortable. Whether they agree or not with the specific initiatives, we work on the basis of the majority of Members supporting the initiatives of government going forward. Some of the things we'll have minimal opportunity to put input because it's a national project. At times the Government of Canada comes forward with an agenda item saying what they intend to do and then it becomes, at the time, reaction from provinces and territories as to what's being proposed. We'll bring that information forward. I'll make a commitment, as I believe we have been showing and getting information to Members about when Ministers are travelling, and we can look at advancing that for some discussions, updates, when they're requested. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 13-16(4):
LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY FOR
ELDERS IN FORT SIMPSON

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement on the elders long-term care facility in Fort Simpson. I previously raised this issue in the House about increasing the amount of bed space. I would like to ask the Minister: is there a current strategy to look at the needs of the Fort Simpson long-term care facility and the amount of bed space? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Member that we need to look at and review the long-term care facility needs for our elderly. In the long run, we understand that the demographics are changing and the senior population is the fastest growing one in the Territories. Because of that, the Foundation for Change Action Plan of the Department of Health is looking at doing a comprehensive 20-year study, not study but plan, on how we get ready for that.

With respect to Fort Simpson, Mr. Speaker, I think the region is very well served in comparison to others. For example, the Sahtu doesn't have any long-term care that's there at the moment. I think the addition of the Territorial Dementia Centre and increasing 28 beds will lessen the pressure in the system as a whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I certainly agree that our current needs are taken care of, but I've listed the example that recently a family in Fort Simpson had to actually ship their loved one to another facility for about three or four months before that person was actually returned to the community of Fort Simpson. That's only one case. There are several that have occurred over the summer months and even the spring months, as well, there, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just asking the Minister, is there a current needs assessment that's going to happen at the long-term care facility at Fort Simpson? I know that there was a previous one about three or four years ago that said that the bed space was okay. Is there another current assessment that's occurring? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are working on the NWT-wide needs study and Fort Simpson would obviously be a part of that. I do want to recognize the process the Member's constituent had to go through. I am aware of the details of the situation and the person had the skills and the background to be able to provide care in the long term. I think it was a situation where by and large for the Fort Simpson facility we are able to accommodate most of the elders in the facility. But once in a while we run into a situation where there's a lot more people that need the space than space is available. There are times when there are beds available and not have anybody on the list. So it was a question of supply and demand that has come to the floor for that time. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'd just like to reiterate that currently all the beds are being filled to capacity. Last month they had two individuals here at the hospital in Yellowknife. They were elderly, they could not be returned to Fort Simpson because there was no bed space in the long-term care facility. It's just another example that our beds are being used and I would like to urge the Minister to work with the Deh Cho Health and Social Services to institute a needs assessment and I believe that needs assessment will show that we definitely need

an expansion of the facility. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister to work with Deh Cho Health and Services to begin a needs assessment, because I don't believe that our community and my region can wait 20 years. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I'd like to clarify that we're not going to take 20 years to do the plan. We're doing a 20-year plan that is quite current. Mr. Speaker, also I want to state that I will undertake to look at what the needs are at the moment in Simpson and I want to confirm again that we know already that we need extra spaces NWT-wide as we get ready for the next 10 or 20 years and that we will work closely with all the authorities to accomplish that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final supplementary, Mr. Menicoché.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just once again I'd like to see immediate action on this in starting a needs assessment for the facility. Will the Minister work with Deh Cho Health and Social Services in working towards that? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, I will undertake to get back to the Member as to what the situation is in his area. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 14-16(4):

MOULD AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got questions today for the Minister of Health and Social Services and it gets back to my Member's statement where I was talking about Stanton Territorial Hospital.

In my Member's statement I talked about a technical assessment that was done in 2004 on the building and I also mentioned the fact that here we are five years later and there's still no master development plan for that hospital. It has come to my attention that no less than three areas of that hospital, that patients are housed in, have been shut down due to mould and mould removal. I'd like to ask the Minister if she's aware of areas of that hospital that have been closed due to mould and the removal of mould in those areas. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member did come and speak to me about this situation, so I did look into it and I can assure the Member that there were no units closed at Stanton. There were beds being moved around to accommodate some of the renovations that had to take place.

In a facility like this that's 20 years old, there are times when the spaces have to be looked into and rectified when there are situations that occur. I can also assure the Member and the public that the air quality and such were looked at at Stanton and there are no safety issues or risks there.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to also say that the 2004 technical report that the Member is referring to is a master development plan that was initiated by Stanton in 2002. It took two years to complete and the report that they came out with had a cost implication upwards of \$250 million-plus, something that is not justifiable for a 20-year-old building that is relatively new in comparison to other areas. So I have been working hard to get the focus back into what is a priority in the department and at the hospital and we will continue to work on that in the capital process. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: That report from 2004 also identified areas of non-compliance with current codes and health care delivery standards. The report also stated that several building components must -- and I repeat, must -- be upgraded in order to ensure the asset life of that facility. I'd like to ask the Minister what exactly has been done from that report in 2004 to ensure the asset life of that facility is prolonged as much as it can be. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I do agree with the Member and it is well known that the hospital is not designed at optimum to deliver the kind of services that it is delivering. So it does need renovating. It's just that the 2004 report showed an expansion of the hospital in a way that was not in line with what I was looking for, and the Member is very well aware of the seven priority areas and space utilization that we talked about. We need to look at emergency ICU, diagnostic imaging, rehab, medical daycare and all those areas. That's what I wanted the management to focus on, and we have been working on that since 2006-07 and '08 and, as the Member knows, the new capital process is such that the planning study and the capital plan has to include a lot more detail in terms of what's planned to make it into the capital budget process and we are working on that. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I'd like to ask the Minister who informed her that there was no areas of that hospital shut down due to mould, the prevalence of mould and mould removal. I'm not talking about entire wards; I'm talking about a number of beds that were shut down in extended care, psychiatry and on OBS. Who informed the Minister that there was no mould problem at Stanton? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I just need to inform the Member that I did look into it when the Member came to see me and that there was some work that had to be done in units in the hospital, but we do not shut down units because the work needs to be done. The beds get moved around and the service

continues to be provided. Also, I took the Member's concern seriously about the air quality at the hospital and I've inquired about that and there is no safety concern with respect to that. I think those are two important points that the Member brought up that I followed up on. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Minister can stand up here today and say that there is no mould problem at that hospital and no beds have been shut down because of mould at Stanton Territorial Hospital. Is that what she's saying today? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Member should put words in my mouth. What I said is I have followed up on the Member's question that there were problem areas that were found at the hospital, which is not an unusual situation for a building of that age, and the use of showers and baths and other work that gets done in the hospital sometimes leads to maintenance issues. They were taken into account and we followed up on that and we did not close any of the units in order to do that. There have been lots of technical upgrades and renovations that have been done at the hospital and a building like that would accommodate providing the service while those renovations go on. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 15-16(4):

NWT PRODUCTION OF WOOD PELLETS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. We hear a lot and talk a lot about the issue of heat generation through biomass and one of those biomass opportunities is through the production of wood pellets. At the current time the wood pellets that are burned in boilers and pellet stoves in the Northwest Territories are all imported into the Territory. I would like to know what work the Minister's department is doing through Environment and Natural Resources in identifying potential areas of harvest of natural materials that would be suitable for the production and manufacturing of wood pellets. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We see the area when it comes to our Biomass Strategy of providing the product as a value-added secondary industry that is very important. We've been looking at making sure that

our inventories are going to be up to date around the communities, especially as we look at trying to come up with manageable forests around communities that will have a combined function. We've had some discussions with companies that are interested in one major plant. The communities that we've talked to, that I've met with, all are interested in having some type of portable capability when it comes to biomass.

So the Biomass Strategy will be sent to committee here in the next number of days for some feedback. That is one of the areas where we're looking to have some very serious discussion as we build this big move to transform our energy requirements. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: What areas of the Northwest Territories where there is vegetation would be considered suitable, sustainable supplies for a stationary or mobile pellet manufacturing plant? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We have the benefit of containing about 18 percent of the boreal forest in the country. The boreal forest runs, of course, on the 60th parallel all the way up to Inuvik. The treeline is moving north.

There are two things you need: you need access to the supply and you need the energy to be able to do the business. So the South Slave, the Deh Cho, up the valley, depending on what size of infrastructure we'd be putting in, is it going to be pellets, is it going to be wood chips, there's a number of variables, but there's varying types of potential throughout the boreal forest area. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: What research and data has the Department of ENR already established that would identify inventories and the sustainability of suitable and enough inventory to warrant this? Like, is the inventory and that kind of scientific work, has that already been conducted and concluded? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Our forest inventory is a work in progress. As we've looked at our Biomass Strategy and developed an approach, it's going to look at managed forests around communities. It's focussed down on some of the needs as we're going to work with regions and communities to see what kind of area of sustainability we need in communities if they were going to do bio or pellets and in a sustainable way around our communities, how big a forest area would they need.

We're also looking at the broader forest inventory as it comes to other management issues tied to forest products. So that work is underway and is going to have to be intensified as we move forward with biomass. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this is a land-based activity -- and of course we know that much of the land in the Northwest Territories is either in some form of agreement for First Nations -- what kind of work or groundwork has been laid to ensure that when the time comes, either through joint ventures or agreements or land set aside through land use plans, that they will actually have access to those areas where this product will be available? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Member raises a critical point. A lot of the key and major areas of opportunity for boreal forests lie in the unsettled claims area. As we move forward with these initiatives as we look at it on a regional basis or by community, we'll have to negotiate and have discussions and work in partnership with the aboriginal governments. Where the land claims are settled. It will be a little more straightforward in terms of how we resolve the issue of access of supply. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 16-16(4):

DIAMOND CUTTING INDUSTRY IN THE NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my Member's statement today, I talked about the issue of diamonds being now cut in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, every resident of the Northwest Territories knows that millions of dollars have been invested and at times rushed into the diamond producing industry and seeing it as the backstop of our economy going forward. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the diamond cutting industry, the ground has certainly shifted and it's starting to look more like a sinkhole than an investment.

Mr. Speaker, the issue, really, simply is this: I would like to know what this government is doing to protect our diamond cutting industry making sure that we still have a viable position in Canada knowing that we are not the only ones cutting diamonds in Canada. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The diamond cutting polishing industry in the Northwest Territories has definitely gone through its challenges. Without the support of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I would say in fact there would be no industry in the Northwest Territories. It has been through our determination and the programming and funding we have put in place to help this maintain and exist. I think we can say we still have an industry in the Northwest Territories. In fact, I think it has been the basis of what we have put in place. That has been used by Ontario to use their

Victor Mine to supply their cutting and polishing industry that is just starting out. One of the things that was done prior to this work is the Minister of ITI committed to reviewing our policy and coming back to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure on this policy. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, has the Government of the Northwest Territories ever contemplated its position as to where it would be in the sense of investment-wise if another area of Canada started producing diamonds? Have they looked into this issue and evaluated as to how we are going to position ourselves for the future to be relevant? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am not all up to speed on what the Minister of ITI is undertaking in this review, and he's going back to the standing committee this fall, but I would expect that that work will look at quite a number of options as how we deal with the Northwest Territories and our support for the industry. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer on that, because the Premier can only answer what he can answer. But the fact is the ground is moving on this issue. So the reality now goes to what are we going to do about it.

Mr. Speaker, the fear is those millions of dollars will be lost and it will all be gone. As I said in my statement, the fact is perhaps the polar bear diamond will now become the latest endangered species because the Ontario diamond may have a shine to it. It certainly will outpace our own. Mr. Speaker, is the Premier willing to look into this issue to find out what strategy we can put in place to make sure that our diamond cutting industry isn't lost to Ontario or elsewhere in Canada? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, just for the record, let's be clear here. We are not losing the industry. We have worked with the industry. We have put supports in place for the industry. We have put training and programs in place for the industry. We have worked with the diamond mines. Our socio-economic agreement has looked at this to make sure we could have a supply maintained in the Northwest Territories. I expect that the Department of Industry and the Minister responsible will be, as their department is doing the work, going forward to the standing committee on this policy. We will be able to answer and have a lot more information and Members of this Assembly can help us as we go forward on how we approach the next phase of that industry in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Your final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been gratefully corrected. Potentially the polar bear

diamond is a species of concern right now, maybe not on the endangered list but the reality is Ontario is now producing diamonds and their market is looking a heck of a lot more attractive when they can get deals on land to set up shops. They can get workers in there cheaper. Their power is cheaper. Everything is cheaper to do the business. I need to know from a constituent point of view, from a territorial point of view, what this government is doing as far as a strategy to make sure we continue to court these industries in a way that they are willing to invest and cut diamonds here in the Northwest Territories, to benefit the Northwest Territories, that produce taxes in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, it might be my opportunity to ask the Member what he is suggesting. We have already committed to a process. The Minister and the department are reviewing that policy. We will be meeting with the standing committee. We will be reviewing this process. We will await that work that has to be done.

Meanwhile, our diamond industry is spooling back up. Our factories are hiring more people again as there is more interest and more money available for diamonds again throughout the world. Let's be clear: the Northwest Territories diamonds, the polar bear diamonds, are prized throughout the world for their quality that we have here in the Northwest Territories. Let's not undersell ourselves on this. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 17-16(4):
MAINTENANCE ISSUES AT REMOTE
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From my Member's statement today regarding the Helen Kalvak School in Ulukhaktok and our small, remote communities, the delay of even simple repairs can be significant; parts can often take weeks, given the unique situation. Will the government devote resources to develop a system so parts and materials and skilled workers will be available to repair the schools faster? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member raises a very important point, something that has been raised by a number of communities in his riding. Of course, our government has been very concerned over some of the frontline services that we have been providing to some of the very isolated communities. This year in the community the Member represents, we were further challenged by the fact that some of the

materials got bumped and really compounded the issue even further. I recognize that there are some challenges that we have to overcome. We are planning to deal with the issue such as the availability of contractors and skilled workers in those communities. We plan to look at the possibility of hiring some of the retainers in some of the communities that the Member is referring to. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, there are many school authorities in the south of the Territory now turning to other materials such as non-breakable glass. Will the government look into all types of alternates to address our school's maintenance challenges and problems? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the issue of materials that can be utilized in communities that have durability to last for the long term is something that is ongoing. We continue to research that. We have to recognize the fact that we certainly have a vandalism problem in a lot of our communities. Last year, for example, we had in excess of over \$5 million worth of damages done to our facilities. We look at ways that we can use material that will help us alleviate some of those concerns. I continue to work on that. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, for years, this government has been promising all schools, students and teachers will be treated equally and that all resources will be devoted so that all communities will be able to have the same level of standards for larger centres such as Yellowknife. Will the government look into whether all of these commitments can be implemented immediately so our students no longer have to work in a substandard environment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have put together a fairly aggressive deferred maintenance plan for all the communities in the Territories. We expect to set a standard that everybody can appreciate. I will work with all the different departments to ensure that happens. We will continue to move forward on that plan. We certainly will be able to share it. I think we have already, with all the Members, on what we plan to do for the next few years. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite both the Minister of ECE and the Minister of DPW to come for a tour of the Nunakput communities to see this firsthand. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for the Minister of ECE, but I would certainly be very happy to visit the communities that the

Member represents. I will talk to the Minister of ECE to see if he will accompany us. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 18-16(4):
MINIMUM WAGE ADJUSTMENTS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to follow up with him on some concerns. I would like to talk to him about minimum wage.

The Minister and the House knows I have been pushing this issue for quite some time, I think probably since I first got here two years ago. My latest questions to the Minister in discussion on this subject were in June of this year. At that time, the Minister indicated, or the Hansard indicates that he said, "we are hoping to finalize our discussion with the various parties within a month or two and have a final decision by the fall." I would like to ask the Minister if he could give me an update, please, on the status of the discussions that he has been having with businesses and with the department and with the various stakeholders involved in minimum wage, the status of the discussions and consultations. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I appreciate the Member's question in this regard, because that is one of the topics that is before us. As a department, we have reviewed and consulted with businesses and stakeholders. We have compiled our information and we are just waiting to present to the Standing Committee on a going forward basis. We are looking forward to that. At that time, we will certainly address those issues. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Minister for the update. I await that briefing, I guess, with anticipation. I guess I would like to ask the Minister whether or not a decision has been made. Can he indicate whether or not there will be an increase to the minimum wage and whether or not there is a timeline for the implementation for such an increase? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make a decision at this point. I need to consult with the standing committee first, because their input is valuable to our decision. We need to go back to the Cabinet to move forward with whatever decision is made at that point. But I can certainly say that the Member will be satisfied. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I hope I am satisfied, Mr. Minister.

---Laughter

Thank you for that. I don't remember when, probably a year ago now at this time, I had an indication that there was going to be a Cabinet decision on this particular issue in December of 2008, and then in June it was, well it hadn't happened. We were carrying on forward. I appreciate that the Minister wants to discuss with the standing committee. Certainly standing committee wants to know what is going on before it gets to the public, so I really appreciate the fact that we are going to get a briefing. Once that briefing is done, when can the Minister advise that a decision will be made by Cabinet and this actually whatever is going to be implemented will take effect? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly it will be from the outcome of the committee's decision. Certainly we've been waiting for some time now to present to standing committee. We are just waiting, I guess, for a green light to proceed with that. At the same time, once a decision is made, we will certainly bring it back to Cabinet, because we are just waiting for that decision to happen and we will expedite the process. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Your final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I guess I need to ask the Minister to explain to me what "expediting the process" means. When, after a Cabinet decision is made, can something actually happen that will be felt in the realm of the public and our residents and our workers are going to be able to see the effect of? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Once a decision is made at the standing committee level and brought back to Cabinet, then we will roll out the program. Whether it be within a few months from now, then certainly within the new year we want to roll out the program once the decisions are made. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 19-16(4):

HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SAHTU

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement talked about the Sahtu regional wellness centre. That's the hope for the people in the region. I want to convey strong messages from my people. When the Minister and I had a tour in the Sahtu region there a couple of months ago, services that we see in other regions have this type of wellness centres or hospitals, as they call them. I would like to ask the Minister, can she identify a schedule when the needs assessment in terms of the services and the

facilities in the Sahtu can be identified and looked at?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did have the opportunity to travel to all the communities in the Sahtu with the Member in August and by the time we got to the last community, I thought it was interesting that everybody thought we were building a hospital in the Sahtu right away. That was a really good discussion that we had with the residents of Sahtu and, as I mentioned already, the department is engaged in doing a long-term capital needs study of all of the health facilities in all our regions.

We recognize that many of the buildings that we have in our inventory were handed down to us from the federal transfer and we need to take a really close look at the status of the existing buildings, as well as looking at needs for new ones going forward. I do recognize that the Sahtu, as a region, has a need for a wellness centre and we will have to work with the residents and the leadership to decide when and how, and we will begin that process.

MR. YAKELEYA: The Minister certainly has conveyed some of the desires and wishes of the people in the Sahtu in terms of hoping they would be very successful in terms of identifying future dollars to build a regional wellness centre for the people in the Sahtu.

Aside from that, can the Minister provide some more information in terms of what type of services can be devolved into the Sahtu region, such as midwifery, palliative care, a stronger diabetic program, that will start filling the gaps and start seeing some more devolution of programs and services from this government to the Sahtu government?

HON. SANDY LEE: The Foundation for Change Action Plan for the department, which has gone through the review of the Standing Committee on Social Programs and one that will be released later this month, speaks very much to the issue that the Member is raising. We believe going forward that we need to strengthen primary care services in our communities, and that includes chronic care management, such as for diabetes, working on prevention, working on strengthening the capacity in the communities at the front line so that our communities are equipped and able to address lots of these issues. I look forward to engaging with all the Members and stakeholders in discussing this further.

Sahtu is a relatively new authority that has been around for about five years. It has progressed very rapidly in terms of services it provides and we will continue to work with the authority to move forward.

MR. YAKELEYA: The interesting note I'm taking from the Minister's comments in terms of the plans or needs assessments for health facilities in the Northwest Territories, certainly the Sahtu would be, I hope in this government, high on the list of priorities for a regional wellness centre. I would ask the Minister if she could explain to me and the people of the Sahtu how this process is outlined so they can see where in the plans the government will build a regional wellness centre something like what other regions have, such as Inuvik, Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Hay River. We don't have one in the Sahtu and we want one. When can we see one?

HON. SANDY LEE: Beyond the comprehensive long-term plan on capital needs of the NWT that I spoke about and the Foundation for Change Action Plan, which is related, under the new GNWT capital planning process, planning study is required to be completed prior to putting forward a potential capital project for consideration for inclusion in the infrastructure plan. The planning study has to include a needs analysis, operational plan functioning program and schematic design. It's not just about saying we need this facility here, but really looking at what's to be delivered there, what other programming and what other services. Once that planning study is submitted by the department to the capital planning review process, then there is a peer review committee that will review the proposal and it will work its way up through the process. This wellness facility idea in Sahtu is at its beginning stage.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: That's good news for us in the Sahtu. We know it's in the beginning stage. We know now there's going to be an end stage. That's where I want to work with the Minister on this and her Cabinet colleagues in terms of the life of this government; something the Sahtu can expect. I think we want to plug in, in terms of partnerships and through this regional wellness centre, where can we plug in to see that we can one day have a regional wellness centre like other regions I have mentioned. We want to have that right to have our own regional wellness centre. So I ask again to the Minister in terms of her willingness to work with the Sahtu leadership in terms of seeing a regional wellness centre being built in the Sahtu region.

HON. SANDY LEE: As I've stated, I look forward to discussing this further and working on this. I think we should be cautious about the fact that all of this has to work through with a view to the capacity issues and not taking on everything at once. We need to have a continuous dialogue with the leadership of Sahtu and their authority there and move step by step to see that happen in the future.

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

QUESTION 20-16(4):

MOULD AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to follow up on questions from my colleague for Kam Lake. Between the questions asked by the Member for Kam Lake and the Minister of Health and Social Services, I have to admit that I'm a little confused. My one question to the Minister is: is there a mould problem at Stanton?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for narrowing the question. It's not helpful to discuss a multimillion dollar master development plan with a maintenance issue at Stanton. There were three units at the hospital that experienced flooding due to toilets in psychiatry and showers in OBS and they had to do maintenance work as a result of the flooding. Whenever there is flooding in a building like this, the mould is a possibility and the maintenance people discovered that and fixed that. They spent \$90,000 to fix that.

The question about whether any units were closed, that was not the case. Four beds had to be moved around while the maintenance people worked to remediate that. In any other house or building when there is some kind of flooding as a result of showers or toilets, it's a regular practice to fix that and make sure it's taken care of. That's what was done at Stanton.

MR. ABERNETHY: I'd like to thank the Minister for that. That helps put some clarity to my mind. Part of the Minister's response referred to units. So no units or wards were shut down for maintenance purposes, but were any individual rooms? Did any rooms have to be shut down to do the maintenance on these issues?

HON. SANDY LEE: Obviously when we have to fix the flooring or the painting or something because of flooding, you have to move beds around. So four beds in the hospital were put out of use. So I don't know if that's the bed or if there's four beds in the room or two beds in the room or four beds in four different rooms, but the beds had to be put out of service, a total of four, but no units were closed as a result of this maintenance work.

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

QUESTION 21-16(4):
MINIMUM WAGE ADJUSTMENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An issue was raised today by another Member and I'd like to follow up in a different direction. I believe the questions were to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment regarding the minimum wage adjustments. I had industry contact me and wanted to make sure that some of their concerns were articulated. One of their concerns is if you adjust minimum wage, has the Minister investigated the impact that would have on the potential younger workforce that they would generally hire. The reality is that many of these younger workers would probably be cut and lost if minimum wage is adjusted. Has the Minister investigated that type of perspective in this analysis?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly that is part of the discussion that we want to have with the committee. We've compiled all the information from the stakeholders and businesses throughout the North. Certainly that will be part of the discussion that we'd like to have the potential impacts and minor impacts and whatnot. Those are the discussions we're looking forward to having with the standing committee.

MR. HAWKINS: That was a good answer, because, of course, it clearly tells me that nothing has been decided yet without some good and thorough consultation. In one of the ideas, I was thinking about this problem and discussing it with local industry here, small business, and they talked about the impacts this would potentially have on their younger workforce. There was an idea that I had thrown out, saying how reflective would a two-tier minimum wage system work. In other words, if we adjust the present minimum wage right now, it means that a 14-year-old could be paid equally as a 23-year-old who shows up at a first-time job. The reality is, are we paying them comparably with no experience or whatnot. The concept being could a two-tier wage system be considered that, for example, if you're under 18, your minimum wage is this and if you're over 18, your minimum wage is another value. Would something like that be considered?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, those are the discussions that we need to have at that level with the standing committee. I can't stand here and say this is how it should look, because I'm a firm believer in consulting with standing committee to get their input and move forward with it.

MR. HAWKINS: I'll clearly say I'm not a lawyer and I can't tell you that's considered a reasonable practice, whether it could stand the test of judicial guidance. I can't tell you that would stand the test of

everyday thinking. But the fact is, it could be a reality to make sure that the younger force workers are protected so that they're not laid off and told, sorry, we're not going to invest in 14, 15, 16 year olds, because we get more value and experience out of older workers. There are those aspects. I just want to make sure, would the Minister make sure that's a component that they consider that reality and weigh the pros and cons of it? I'm not saying it has to be done, but I'd like to hear it evaluated.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, certainly a briefing's coming. Certainly those are the discussions I'm looking forward to discussing with the standing committee. By the sounds of it, there are some arguments that will come forward from the standing committee and I'm looking forward to hearing the arguments or support of the idea of moving forward. Again, the full document will be addressed at the standing committee and I'm looking forward to that.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Just to underscore the potential types of changes that can happen, small businesses have emphasized to me that this will have an impact on the younger workforce, which typically it's their first job and that could be a shame. It will affect training.

The last point I want to emphasize is will the Minister consult with industry, reach out to the potential territorial chambers, whether it's NWT chamber or Yellowknife chamber, to make sure they get input from these organizations? As wise as the standing committees are, they don't know everything. The fact is that small business will give a perspective that's probably very important to make sure that it's considered in the evaluation and development of any future policy.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, those are the information that will be shared with the standing committee. We've consulted with various groups, the small businesses, how many small businesses will be impacted, how many businesses are supporting this initiative. Those are the stats we want to share with the standing committee. We've been waiting for some time now and we want to proceed with this, so we'll gladly share that information with the standing committee.

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

QUESTION 22-16(4):
MINIMUM WAGE ADJUSTMENTS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I also want to weigh in on this issue of the minimum wage. I'll keep my question short. I'd like to ask the Minister of ECE,

where does the Northwest Territories rank in terms of the minimum wage in Canada? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Our minimum wage, the last time it was increased was 2003, and across the national globe we're not the last. There are different minimum wages across Canada and we're roughly around the tenth province or territory that has \$8.25 minimum wage. The highest, I guess you can say, would be around \$10 an hour. So there's a difference in those areas. Those are the types of discussions that we'll be having with the standing committee. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The time for oral questions has expired; however, I will allow the Member a supplementary question. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. I'll make this my final supplementary. Would the Minister avail himself of a recent article which I read which was in something put out by, I think, the Fraser Institute? It's called the Fraser Forum. What it did is compiled all of the impacts of raising minimum wage in jurisdictions across Canada and it equates it to the number of jobs that were lost in those particular sectors for young workers and, in some cases, also for foreign workers who are domestic help. Most of the domestic help that comes to this country works in families' homes caring for their children and they are paid the minimum wage in that jurisdiction. Then, of course, there are legislated deductions such as accommodation and so on. But those particular sectors, how they were impacted. I was very interested in this article and I would like to ask the Minister if he and his department would avail themselves of those statistics and that information that was compiled in considering the issue of the minimum wage. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are open to other considerations, whether it be the Fraser Institute, the northern businesses, nationally. So we would like to compare our stats with the other jurisdictions. So I welcome those comments and we'll certainly look into those matters before we meet with the standing committee. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Written Questions

QUESTION 1-16(4): HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. In 2008-2009, what trips were made to Tsiigehtchic by the various health and social professions from the Beaufort-Delta Regional Health and Social Services Authority? Please identify the professionals by title, the date of the visit and the number of hours spent with patients.
2. In 2008-2009, for each vacant position in the Beaufort-Delta Regional Health and Social Services Authority, how were the compensation and benefit funds allocated for those positions in the 2008-2009 budget spent?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to 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. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 3-16(4): 20TH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VICTIMS ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, PART 2, JUNE 2009

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document titled 20th Annual Report of the Victims Assistance Committee of the Northwest Territories, Part 2, June 2009. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 4-16(4): AURORA COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT, 2007-2008

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document titled Aurora College Annual Report, 2007-2008. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 5-16(4):
NOTICE OF NURSE VISIT TO TSIIGEHTCHIC
ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2009

TABLED DOCUMENT 6-16(4):
NOTICE OF SOCIAL WORKER VISIT
ON SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2009

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table notifications that were posted in the community of Tsiigehtchic notifying the community of services from Health and Social Services in the community of Tsiigehtchic.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. 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: Tabled Document 1-16(4), NWT Capital Estimates 2010-2011, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole
of Bills and Other Matters**

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. In Committee of the Whole we have Tabled Document 1-16(4), NWT Capital Estimates 2010-2011. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the wish of the committee today is to start with the NWT Capital Estimates 2010-2011 discussion, and we would like to start with the Department of ENR and then move on to the Department of Department of ITI.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we'll take a short break and begin with the Department of...

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole back to order. At this time I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he has any opening comments. Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present the 2010-2011 Capital Estimates of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The estimates outline appropriations for infrastructure investments of \$221.856 million in the 2010-2011 fiscal year. This amount includes \$40.140 million in infrastructure contributions to community governments.

In early 2008 the Ministerial Subcommittee for Infrastructure completed its review of our capital

planning process and presented its findings in April 2008. The subcommittee subsequently made recommendations to the Financial Management Board for improving how we plan for, acquire and deliver required infrastructure.

An important recommendation from the subcommittee was that our government take a more corporate approach to planning and delivering its infrastructure. The proposed plan before us today is consistent with this new approach.

Our revised approach, including the approval of the capital budget in the fall, allows for better planning for both the GNWT and contractors. This is because the tendering process can begin sooner, contractors can fit projects into their schedule, encouraging more bidders and, therefore, generating the greatest level of interest and competition possible before contractors have already filled their order books for next summer's construction season. Based on the results of implementing the 2009-2010 Capital Plan, our revised approach is working.

I would like to remind Members of the magnitude of our revised 2009-2010 Capital Estimates of \$426 million.

These revised estimates represent the largest planned investment in community government infrastructure in the history of the GNWT, at a time when our economy has experienced a slowdown due to the global economic recession and pullback in our Territory's mining and oil and gas sector. Combined with proposed estimates of \$222 million in 2010-2011, our government will inject a total of \$648 million into the NWT economy over two years, creating significant contract and employment opportunities and address infrastructure needs across the NWT -- for schools, health facilities, highways, airports and other transportation infrastructure. We will continue to provide a stable source of funding for community governments so that they can properly plan to address their infrastructure needs over the long term.

As Members are aware, the GNWT, like all other jurisdictions, is faced with a significant deferred maintenance deficit. Based upon our recent assessments, this deficit is estimated to be approximately \$470 million. Consistent with the objectives of our new capital planning process, the projects identified in the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 capital plans will address approximately \$119 million of this deferred maintenance once those projects are completed. It will be necessary to keep our focus on this issue to ensure we have the proper facilities from which to deliver required programs and services for our residents.

Major highlights in the 2010-2011 estimates include:

- \$63.9 million for highways and winter roads across the NWT;
- \$43.5 million school replacements and renovations;
- \$40.1 million to contribute to community infrastructure, which includes \$28 million to continue to base fund community governments for infrastructure investments;
- \$17.5 million for airport replacements and improvements;
- \$2.5 million for information technology projects to improve how the government manages and secures health records.

I am prepared to review the details of the 2010-2011 Capital Estimates documents. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your opening comments. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing in any witnesses. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that the Minister bring in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Mr. Minister, for the record, could you introduce your witnesses?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Ms. Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of Finance; Mr. Paul Guy, acting deputy minister of Public Works and Services. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. General comments in regards to opening comments. Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the Minister responsible for Finance for his opening comments. I am happy with the detail provided. I am also excited to actually get into the detail as we move forward, so I will keep my comments short.

The \$648 million over the two years, \$222 million this year, I think that's great. I think now, given the economic realities, is this time for this government to be investing in infrastructure to try to kick-start some work in the Territories. But \$648 million is a lot of money and, to be quite honest, I am a little worried about our capacity to actually get these projects done. I would like some reassurances from the Minister that we can actually get this amount of work done in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories. It is pretty ambitious.

Just as another note, I am quite happy to see the \$119 million going into deferred maintenance. I mean, for us to get so far behind on deferred maintenance is very unfortunate and I think this is a giant step on moving forward to address some of that \$470 million we have in deferred maintenance. Hopefully we will be able to get more and more over time.

So I look forward to getting into detail and if we could get some assurances on how we actually hope to accomplish the \$648 million over two years, that would be great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Finance.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his comments. By our estimate across government looking at all the different program areas that are doing capital, we got at least 75 percent of our projects out the door. Some departments like Public Works and Services are in the 90 percent range plus, so we have been working very, very hard to get these projects and money out the door so the projects can be built.

Yes, we are paying a price for having cut capital over the years as we constantly went back to cut the capital budget as a way to deal with some of our financial issues. There is a long-term price to that, which is what we are now paying today. I think we all agree that going forward we want to avoid such an approach to not put ourselves in a situation or our successors. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a few comments. I agree with Mr. Abernethy, that I am pleased to see that we are not reducing our expenditures at this time. I think, in the current economic situation, that we've chosen the correct way to go and to keep our investments and our spending on infrastructure at a high level, not as high as last year, because that was a bit much. I think where we are going is in the right direction.

I also like the fact that we are shifting, as the Minister put it, to a more corporate approach to planning and delivering of infrastructure. I think that we are headed in the right direction. I see some changes in some of the planning that has been done through PWS and through the Ministerial Committee for Infrastructure and I like what I see. I get a sense that we are thinking further ahead. We are trying to streamline things somewhat and we are not reacting. We are being proactive, and that, in my estimation, is a great way to go.

I am concerned about the size of the infrastructure budget. I agree with it, but I need to say I am a little bit concerned that we don't bite off more than we can chew. I think that the recognition was made in this budget that last year's budget, this current year,

the '09-10 infrastructure budget, was huge and the '10-11 is proposed to be large, but not huge. So again I think we are going in the right direction.

I am also a bit concerned about the carry-over amount. They will be added to the '10-11 budget whenever that is determined, but we will have carry-overs for the '09-10 budget year and the size of those carry-overs can have an impact on whether or not we are going to be able to accomplish all of the projects that we are proposing to do in our '10-11 budget. I think it has been reasonably well thought out and probably most projects will get done, but I am concerned that over the 10-year period or eight-year period, we've had significant carry-overs every year and I would just encourage the government to keep working on reducing that carry-over amount.

I also approve of the focus on deferred maintenance. I have mentioned that before and I am very glad to see that that is a focus of this particular capital plan.

Lastly, there is mention about providing funds to community governments. It is a stable source of funding. I think the proposal is to keep the level of funding from last year and carry it forward for a number of years, but I think we have to be careful even in this era of gas tax money for communities for various and sundry infrastructure, that as our communities take over more and more buildings as the government devolves buildings and various other infrastructure to communities, we have to make sure that they have the funds available to look after those buildings to do the maintenance required on those buildings and also to replace those buildings if that is necessary, because many of the buildings that the GNWT has given to communities are definitely not new.

So I would encourage the Minister to consider in future years maybe doing a cost of living increase on the infrastructure money that goes to communities, but to at least consider evaluating the amount that they currently get, evaluate how their circumstances are changing, and change the amount, hopefully upward if it's considered to be necessary. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Once again, I appreciate the feedback from the Minister...from the Member. We agree that we want to try to reduce the carry-overs. A lot of the work we are doing in terms of process is to make ourselves, as a collective, more efficient, which we think we are doing.

We also recognize that with capital comes O and M costs, and MACA works with communities. That's one of the considerations that has to be considered. I would point out in last year's budget, while

everybody else, our average increase was about 3 percent funding to committees; communities was increased about 9 percent for their O and M. So we are very cognizant of our need to support communities and we will continue to work collectively on how we best make sure we maintain that service. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Last on my list, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that this is a pretty major undertaking to lay out this type of investment, but more importantly to stimulate our economy at this time. I think it's important, especially for the region I represent, with the downturn of what we are seeing in the oil and gas sector and no real outlook on where we are going with the pipeline, I think we have to realize the importance of this type of funding. In that comment, I would like to make mention that we not lose sight of initiatives that other communities have had and the challenges communities are facing to just deal with the infrastructure capacity that they have, but more important the capacity they are going to need to offset the high costs going forward regarding community infrastructure. I think we have to focus on trying to find ways to work with those communities, help them with their capacity challenges regardless of if it's project management, technical support, more importantly finding ways to reduce the cost of O and M for those communities and especially using those infrastructure dollars to look at ways that we can reduce those costs by way of biomass, residual heat, ways of reducing the operational costs of all outdated facilities, especially capital transfers that took place to communities. A lot of these facilities are well up there in age, 25 to 35 years old, and they will have to be replaced or major retrofits done to improve the operational costs of those facilities. For example, water treatment plants and public facilities such as garages, warehouses that communities manage under the transfer arrangements with this government.

Again, I think it's important that we continue these type of investments, but not lose sight that there are communities out there that haven't concluded their assessments by way of their infrastructure needs and looking at the energy. Those are studies that have to be completed under the access to the gas tax.

Again, I think it's important also for this government to realize that there have been motions passed in this Legislature for such things as community access roads to gravel sources, the challenges we face in small communities of not having access to gravel and the effect it has on community development.

I think it's important that we as a government and a Legislature look to find ways to work with those

communities, but more importantly to take advantage of these capital investments and ensure those capital investments are there for the communities that have challenges to their community infrastructure and having access to a gravel source that can provide them with the building materials they're going to need to shore up a lot of these buildings. In light of climate change and the effects we're seeing of coastal erosion, permafrost melting, and the effects it has on public infrastructure, whether it's building infrastructure, highway infrastructure, or airports, I think it's something that we cannot lose sight of. We're not immune. If anything, we're the most impacted by what's happening in our environment.

I think it's important that we do whatever we can to fulfill those commitments we made in the 16th Assembly to connect communities, to improving community infrastructure, and to commitments we've made by motions in this House and carry out those commitments through capital investment.

I'll just make reference to the Aklavik road access project. The community is working on that and trying to get some movement on it. They've done a plan in regard to looking at ways of taking it to the second phase, which will look at the engineering design and geotechnical work that has been done, not realizing that if this federal infrastructure runs out in the next two years they may not have access to these resources. I want to get some assurances from this government that there will be dollars available to communities to complete these projects and, more importantly, for those communities that still haven't come forward with their capital infrastructure needs because of lack of resources or lack of capacity in our communities to take it on. Communities are struggling dealing with just the basics of programs and services dealing with infrastructure challenges from personnel, whether it's SAOs, financial officers, and now we're asking them to take on the technical responsibility of developing plans to bring forward and identify the infrastructure that they're going to need. I believe that challenge still has to be with the Department of Public Works and Services, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, and with communities to ensure we assist all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to ask the Minister regarding this budget if he can give me some assurances that those communities will not lose out on this type of activity going forward and that they are not left behind because they have to do more planning or require more technical information to come up with their capital investment.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are, as we all talked about over last year and this year, engaged with the federal government whose contribution we have to

acknowledge in compressing funding programs into two years to get as many projects on the ground as we can during the time of this recession. We've also come to agreements with communities where they are given money now in a block funding arrangement for capital that doesn't have to be spent on a yearly basis but can be accrued as they finalize their own community plans and capital infrastructure needs.

Our intent here is to work with communities, not to disadvantage communities so that as we move forward, when we look at requirements and assistance needed, be it for community energy plans or community infrastructure plans, the intention of the government is to work with communities to get that work done. For example, we recently met with the community members from Aklavik and they laid out some of the work that they've been doing and some of their requirements for further ongoing assistance with myself and the Minister of ITI. Those are the kind of discussions that are fruitful in assisting the community to have some certainty as they figure out how they move forward with some of their own particular initiatives.

MR. KRUTKO: Since I have over two minutes left I want to make sure I use up every minute I can here. I just want to make reference that one of the things that we've been talking about when we look at our public infrastructure and highway infrastructure, but I think at some point we realistically have to consider permanent bridges where we have a ferry operation. In light of what we see in Fort Providence, I know it's not a perfect project but at least it's getting us to have permanent access to the South and, more importantly, that we have to consider all our highway infrastructure and consider that option for other crossings besides the crossing at Fort Providence. Look at the Liard crossing, look at the Peel crossing, look at the other crossings with regard to the Bear River and other infrastructure that's going to be needed. I think this government has to seriously put money into that research while we have the federal access to I think it's \$500,000 a year for research. Use the federal infrastructure money to do that work so that when we have those studies completed, we know exactly what the actual costs of replacing these crucial infrastructure by way of bridges on our highway systems to improve the year-round access to southern areas, whether it's through the Yukon or Alberta. We have to do a better job of ensuring we improve that infrastructure in the Northwest Territories.

I'd just like to ask the Minister if he could seriously consider looking at the \$500,000 that we are receiving by way of the Building Canada funds for research and use those dollars to consider such requirements by way of more studies, more research, and looking at where the best potential crossings for those bridges will be. More

importantly, do that research. The last time this research was done was back in the '60s. I think a lot has happened since the '60s and this government now has a responsibility for that by way of taking on the Deh Cho Bridge. Don't just focus on that bridge, look at other bridges in the Northwest Territories.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The government recognizes, as does the Member, the importance of bridges as we talk about the Mackenzie Valley Highway and our Roads to Resources and all these initiatives. When you calculate in all the money including the Deh Cho Bridge and all the dozens of other bridges we've put in up the valley over the last number of years, we're going to be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on bridges. We recognize there's going to be a need for more major crossings. A lot of the bridges are of a smaller nature. We recognize the Member's concern about bridges up in his area. We agree we want to make use of the resources that are there to do the planning so that as we move north we are as prepared as possible and don't want to lose time to do research that could be done ahead of time.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe this is the second year that we've handled our capital budgets during the fall and I was encouraged to see the Minister's statement that based on the results of implementing the 2009-2010 Capital Plan our revised approach is working. I wouldn't mind a little more evidence than was provided in that statement. I'm wondering specifically, as well, whether or not we have a prescribed evaluation process in place for actually documenting and determining how well the process is actually working.

I have to say we are putting a lot into deferred maintenance. I think our support from other sources allows this to happen. I'm very happy to see that and I'm hoping that a good part of that also addresses some of the need for energy efficiency so that we can enjoy longer-term benefits as well as the immediate benefits of getting some of that maintenance done.

I am concerned about the information technology cost. Just looking at our estimates for 2009-2010 I think were at \$13 million. The revised estimate is at \$26 million. This is an incredible expense. I see less is listed in the mains this year. Who knows what the revised will be? There are very few jobs involved in these expenditures. There is, as far as I can tell, an unproven record of efficiency from these investments. We know on the basis of problems elsewhere in Canada, I believe the Auditor General has commented on Ontario's situation and I believe it was called a fiasco there. I'm not sure if it was the medical health records management system that

they put in place. The public is aghast at what was being spent there for what we're getting from it. I'm hoping the Minister of Finance will actually do some evaluation on these very large and significant expenditures.

The Minister listed a number of major highlights, but I was disappointed not to see a couple of things. One is -- and perhaps this has been mentioned -- the need to get on top of the environmental liabilities that are represented by the several hundred facilities this government owns throughout the Territories that are now aging; a large proportion being over 30 and 40 years of age. We have not done any assessment on those other than a few, literally a few. These are huge liabilities, we know. We've spent considerable resources in upgrading our fossil fuel storage tanks across the Northwest Territories, because the federal government is, probably correctly, always ratcheting up the requirements for safe storage of fuel and so on. We can be assured, based on our experience and this trend of ever higher standards, that the environmental liabilities and the cost to deal with them will be huge and will impact all our other programs.

A second thing that I didn't see was the opportunities again for dealing with renewable energy infrastructure, getting that in place, and building renovations that we really should be taking advantage of with the economic stimulus federal dollars that we're receiving. I've been disappointed. We are doing some through the Housing Corporation. We're doing 80 or 100 renovations there and so on. But there are major needs in both government buildings and public programs that are needed and will pay immediate dividends. Those things are job intensive and they will lead to ongoing recoveries and reductions of cost in the future.

That's all I have for now. I'm looking forward to getting into the page by page. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the energy money, renewable energy, the majority of the \$60 million that we've spread over the three or four years is going to be accounted for through O and M, through contributions to things like Arctic Energy Alliance, to communities, or to the funds we've put out there to help businesses and communities improve their energy efficiency. We've also instituted standards for housing, our EnerGuide 80. All our new buildings and retrofits for government buildings have to exceed the National Building Code by 25 percent in terms of energy efficiencies. Some of that money is captured.

The money to upgrade our own buildings to biomass or other forms of alternate energy is

included in this budget. The other ones won't be captured here. When it comes to IT infrastructure, I'll just point out that one of the big ticket items in the budget is the rollout of our new financial information system, affectionately known as SAM, which has been rolled out this year with a minimum of disruption, I'd like to add, and I commend all the people who worked hard to do that. We don't want to be tarred with the same brush as the folks in Ontario. In fact, we've gone to great lengths to avoid anything that would cause us problems. If we work with Health on electronic health records, we're going to be very cognizant of the need for full transparency and accountability of how we do things, following our contractual processes so that we in fact don't become painted with that brush that the Member has mentioned here.

The issue of environmental liabilities is one that more work has to be done. We, at this point, tend not to do environmental assessments until a building is going to be surplus off. At that point, that work is done. There is, if there are ways to do that, as we look at our condition reports on buildings and as we do our continued assessment on deferred maintenance, identify those areas which could be identified as having environmental liabilities that will require expenditures at this House. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate the Minister's remarks there. I am still interested in whether or not we have a described evaluation process in place for this new approach, this new fall approach to capital planning to make sure it is doing what we wanted it to do.

I have to mention in terms of our beloved SAM program, my local housing organization is struggling to meet their payroll today. There are a lot of people that are keenly aware of what some of the limitations of SAM might be. Hopefully that is being resolved as we speak, but I still think a good evaluation of our expenditures on information technology might be something worth consideration by the House. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Member for Weledeh has raised the issue of problems which, by our determination, are related more to not collecting rents, not submitting invoices and not getting the proper paperwork done and is not, by my understanding, from what I have been told, an issue related to the new system but more basic issues related to those areas that I have just touched on. We have been working and following up on that as soon as we got that information to make sure we got it sorted out.

I agree with the Member that we should be able to pull together a package once the 2009-2010 year, the first cycle through our new process is complete to do some kind of debrief and year-end review to see how well it worked. We know that we have

gotten a lot of projects out the door. We can look at indicators like the number of carry-overs, how fast we got contracts out on a comparative basis and those types of things. We have also increased the requirements from Class D so that we need greater certainty and tighter figures going forward to avoid drawing out a process or being so off the mark in our estimates. We will look to work with committee on providing that type of feedback.

As well, we are prepared to appear before a committee to look at the information technology requirements of the government. We have committees that deal with that. It is a very big complex issue with a very great number of systems. They are requiring a heavy investment. That Knowledge Management Plan that we are coming forward with is going to pull all those pieces together. We hope for the first times we can lay it out in its entirety and work with committee on the best way to move forward. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list, actually are there any other...Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just in regards to the infrastructure that the communities that I represent that are I wouldn't say being properly...Like with my Member's statement today with the upkeep of the buildings that the government we do own of the schools, and the fire department and all the other buildings that we do have, that the upkeep is not being done. I know the monies that we are getting...Due to the short shipping season per year into the communities, this year we were really late due to the barges leaving from the port of Tuk late this year. A lot of stuff didn't make it. One of the colleagues said today that stuff was being bumped. The cost of living in the communities is high. During these times that we are going through with the economy, we have to try to flow through the contracts quicker into the communities. It could be little things. It could be changing windows for local contractors which we need in Ulukhaktok, by the way. The black mould issues in the communities are really bad. People are getting sick, asthma, elders, it is not healthy. People are just trying to be able to make their way with what we have been given with ECE. There are no contracts in the small communities. It makes it tough to live there.

Under the New Deal that was from the government with all the infrastructure in O and M to the communities, it has to be topped off, because, like you said, buildings are aging and the cost to run is greater. Some communities are paying \$20,000 a month in fuel to heat some buildings, which is not right. We could be utilizing that money somewhere else.

In the housing units that are needed in the small communities, we get housing units being built in the

Territory. That small community is in need. We have young families growing up with nowhere to go. We have overcrowding. That is where everything escalates, the black mould and everything.

For Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour, within the next two years, I am really hoping that our government sees the need for a four-plex in each community, if not more, just because of the shortage of housing. Elders facilities in Tuk which we have and are grateful for. We just need a front door. So we have to send one of our elders out of the community -- he was in a wheelchair -- because he couldn't open the door. It is a safety issue. We wanted electric doors so he could go out of the building on his own. So he is back in Aklavik now under long-term care.

Elders facility in Ulukhaktok which I have been pushing for, I brought this up. We had a motion in the House to try to push it forward. People in the communities just want to take care of our own. These are small things I am bringing up right now, but they are big to us.

Back to our schools, we need an extension in Tuk because of the students there, and we had a motion in the House last year that I have been trying to work with. I am hoping to get the Minister to come up to deal with it and just the proper upkeep.

One thing we all have to realize, people are struggling outside this building, in the communities and in Yellowknife. We have people on the streets. We have to try to help them a little bit more in regards to what we have been doing, which is flow through the government. Right now we are doing a good job with all the money that is being spent in the communities which we are really thankful for, but we need just a little bit more to make our ends meet and to help our people. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regards to the issue of the cost of living, it is one that is of concern to all of us. As we look at all the energy efficiencies, the money of \$60 million that we have allocated over four years, the wind power initiatives, all these types of things all appear to make those various investments in communities as well. We will soon be all looking at the recommendations on the electrical rate review, which has substantive recommendations that I think will assist, as well, in downward pressure in the cost of living. We look to that.

In regards to the tens of millions of dollars of assets we have on the ground in communities, be it housing or government, there is a recognition that we have to look at how we structure ourselves so that we have adequate maintenance. Right now, we have a clear difference between the housing support staff that are there who only deal with

housing issues -- and in many cases are the only folks on the ground -- and all the very many government buildings that are there that there are ways we can possibly work better with housing to have more of a settlement maintainer approach. Public Works as well is looking at options like settlement maintainers to try to get some folks on the ground to help us deal with this deferred maintenance issue. It is one I think where there is room for us to be more creative and effective. We look forward to working with committee on how we can structure that in the coming months. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: I would just like to thank the Minister for bringing up power rates. There is a couple in the community of Tuk who sent me a fax last week in regards to a power bill. From \$400 in one month, October came around and it was \$1,000. They are teachers in the community. For \$1,000 a month, they looked at it and compared every month of utilization of the kilowatts per hour. It is all the same. Why would it jump up \$600 almost?

In the communities, if you are not trying to pay your rent, you pay your power and you have to try to feed your family. I have nine kids. I go through the same thing every month. How are the people supposed to...substandard housing in regards to some of the units. The rental rates should be readjusted. The power rates...I can't wait until the Power Commission comes in and talks to us in regards to rate zones, because I am going to be pushing for one. What we have to do is try to help our people. We can't just keep giving and taking from them all the time. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I thank the Member for his comments, Mr. Chairman, and look forward to that discussion as we look at electrical rate review and how we move forward collectively to address some of those enormous pressures. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The opening remarks from the Minister certainly is somewhat good news for us in our communities in terms of the large infrastructure dollars to be going into our communities, and the work that his staff and the Minister and subcommittee for infrastructure has done in terms of making some significant changes in terms of how we are going to do this due process of capital planning. I would like to say to the Minister and to the Minister of the subcommittee in terms of the infrastructure, it was a really good move for them in changing this system. It meets some of my communities in terms of the barging system, the winter road system. It has more planning and makes more sense in terms of how to get projects in our communities getting going. I want to

thank the Minister and his staff and the subcommittee for working on this and putting it through here.

I want to ask the Minister in terms of the largest plan investments in the communities, on page 2 of his opening remarks of largest plan investments in communities and government infrastructures. I know we have the largest plan now. The trick would be, Mr. Chairman, in terms of having this plan implemented and being successful, because you see the amount of carry-overs that we had some discussions in terms of carry-overs from project to project. I am somewhat asking the Minister in terms of his confidence in terms of having this large plan of investments in the community be successful as there are time deadlines on these investments here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated earlier, it is our assessment that overall, on the average, we have hit about 75 percent of the projects out the door. Some departments like Public Works and Services have exceeded, they say, 90 percent of their projects out the door. That is the big figure that we have that I have been able to share here. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Overall, possibly these figures are very accurate. However, I experienced in my region where there are some projects that have taken two to three years and now I am not even sure if some of these projects are even completed this year. I could be very specific with the Minister, however, I'm going to ask if from some of these regions that are very challenging in terms of transportation, of material and supplies, and sometimes these supplies are not on spec or they're not there, and there are some of these projects that seem to, they're minor maybe for the government but major for the communities that seem to have a two or three-year delay. So I guess that's what I'm asking in terms of regions like the Sahtu that is a little more challenging than the all-weather highway communities.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We can, if it would help the Member, we could ask...Public Works had indicated that they could pull together for the Sahtu an assessment of where the projects are, the government projects. We'd have to ask other departments as well, though, like the Housing Corp, where they were for the projects for the last year and provide that information to the Member. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I would certainly appreciate the additional information, if the Minister can get it from the various Ministers in terms of the projects that are on schedule and the ones that are delayed or

haven't yet been completed. I certainly appreciate that information from the Minister here.

I want to ask in terms of these projects here, I certainly appreciate, again, the amount that's going into the Northwest Territories economy. Can the Minister tell me if he has any figures in terms of the amount of percentage that's going directly to the northern or the aboriginal companies and communities that are going to be benefiting from that region in that these dollars would be staying? I take it the majority will be staying in the Northwest Territories, even in the region itself. You have outside contractors coming into regions, that they had shown some benefits but not as much as some that our people would like to see. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, the information that we've committed to provide to the Member will include a column that indicates, since it's public information, who, in fact, got the contracts for the various projects. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I look forward to that information. Mr. Chair, I would like to look at the issue of the deferred maintenance deficit. The Minister had indicated that approximately \$470 million was estimated within the GNWT. In this new capital planning process they identified approximately \$119 million to this deferred maintenance in the government here. Can the Minister indicate to me that of the \$470 million, they're going to look at \$119 million? What does it say about the rest of the funding that's been going for deferred maintenance? So that's coming to a new capital planning process?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The other capital money will be going to new projects and not to maintenance that has been identified on the books for a number of years but never carried out because of lack of funding. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, certainly, I look forward to having some more discussions and debate with the Minister as we go through the whole department. I want to say to the Minister we certainly appreciate some of the initiatives and leadership in terms of changing the capital plan process and hope that this will fit in with our communities and we want to see and how...I guess I'm really anxious to see how this would roll out and see how it will have an impact in my communities that I represent and then see the benefits of this whole new process. I just wanted to end with these comments, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I didn't hear a question. Next on my list is Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to start off with, again, like I said yesterday, I think the government has to be given a certain amount of credit for getting the substantial capital

dollars that we see here before us. Like I said yesterday, it's unprecedented. I know the Minister spoke of it in his opening comments as well. It's good for a number of reasons. Obviously, the downturn in the economy is taking its toll on all areas of the country and the world, for that matter, and the Northwest Territories is no different. So the importance of this money getting out and getting onto the ground, into the communities, into contractors' hands and into the local economy can't be underestimated. I think even if we're at a 75 percent clip, that the thing that I think we really need to keep our eye on, especially right now, is getting this money out the door and getting these projects started, constructed and concluded in the fastest way that we possibly can. I think that money will work for us even more if we can do that, get the money out the door. I believe the Minister said 75 percent. I think the carry-over, if 75 percent is the number we're using on \$470 million, that's about \$112 million or thereabouts, but that's still too much.

I think, looking back over past budgets, we've hired a number of individuals in various departments to try to get these carry-overs addressed and get the projects started, constructed and concluded. I guess I just want some more assurance, and I haven't seen a great improvement -- I know this is only the second year and I think it is certainly a step in the right direction -- but this is something I think we need to keep our eye on and we need to have some indicators as to whether or not it's actually getting any better and improving. Because we've hired a number of people and we've got the money, but let's make sure we're spending it and getting it out there.

I guess that's a question I'd have to the Minister, is what indicators are there going forward that the carry-overs are going to be addressed in a meaningful way and they're not going to be... You know, if it's 75 percent this year that we're spending, I want to make sure it's 85 or 90 percent next year government-wide, not just the Department of Public Works and Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to point out that we're still in the midst of the season, there's still work being done. That 75 percent is our estimate, at this point, of the year. By year end we anticipate that 75 percent number to be higher. So it's not to be assumed that it's a 25 percent carry-over at this point. There are still projects underway, still work being done that are going to be completed, hopefully. So we agree with the Member that we want to make all the continued efforts to minimize the amount of carry-overs, to try to get the projects done in the year that the money is voted and we'll

be tracking that, as I indicated to Mr. Bromley, that as we conclude the first full cycle we can pull together the numbers so we can jointly assess what has worked and what might need to be tweaked or if there are adjustments that need to be made with an eye towards hitting some of those targets. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I'd like to thank the Minister for that. Obviously there's buy-in from this side of the House too, because we have approved budgets where there are new positions specifically for addressing projects and trying to get them started and finished. So I will be watching that closely. I do applaud the government's efforts in that regard so far. It's still early on, so we'll see where that takes us.

Another item that I'd like to just mention, you know, the government has also done a fairly good job at trying to get infrastructure money from the federal government, but I don't know if we're doing enough. I think there's more of an effort that should be made with the federal government in trying to secure especially large-scale infrastructure projects and money for them here in the Northwest Territories. I mentioned in the Yukon the Carmacks expansion on the hydro facility there. That's about \$71 million. The fact that we should be aggressively pursuing the federal government for any infrastructure money that's out there and we should be doing that to the best of our ability each and every day. That's why I had questions for the Premier yesterday about federal engagement. I think more so now than ever before it's so important that any dollars that are out there that we can secure for infrastructure, we get out there and get at it. I know the government's doing a good job at trying to do that, but I really think that we need to put a concerted effort forward; a comprehensive and coordinated approach would be best and I'd like to see that happen.

I think that was about all I had. I agreed with some of the other comments that I won't go over, some of the ground that other Members have touched on. I appreciated their comments as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the Member's encouragement when it comes to infrastructure dollars. Some of that discussion was touched on in the House yesterday with the Premier. We as well raise it at every opportunity. I know I've raised it with every Minister on Cabinet when they're talking to Minister Baird or any of the federal Ministers raises the issue. Taltson is there as one of the pressing ones we'd like to see get done and that we think might qualify for either the Green Fund or P3. We also want to have further discussions about other alternative ways to help fund that project. The

discussions on how we proceed with the Mackenzie Highway, those are all things that are on everybody's to-do list.

In terms of the general accessing of infrastructure dollars, I would like to point out, as well, to our credit, the feedback that we've gotten from the federal government is that we're one of the most organized jurisdictions when it comes to taking full advantage, having the matching dollars, having the projects, having the planning done in accessing and making this infrastructure program work as well as it has.

MR. RAMSAY: Just a couple other comments, if I could. I'm glad to hear what the Minister had to say. That's good news and I look forward to their continued concerted effort with the federal government on securing infrastructure dollars for the Territory.

The other thing I just wanted to mention while I have the floor is there are some things, from my perspective, that aren't included in the plan. I think those are vitally important too. That's why I was asking questions about it yesterday, about how do we get more money. I think we really need to focus in on things that aren't in here that we need to address, such as the extension of the Ingraham Trail in Yellowknife specifically. This is a riding that I represent. Sisson's School isn't in here. The Master Development Plan for Stanton Territorial Hospital isn't in here. Things like that need to be addressed. If we have technical reports going back five years that suggest that if we want to extend the life of that hospital, we'd better get on some of these building upgrades and we haven't done that and it's not in the capital plan, then we're going to have some problems going forward. I think there are so many demands out there across the Territory that we need as much money as we can possibly get so that we can address all of these concerns. That's where I'm coming at with this.

The Minister and other Ministers will hear me talk about things that aren't in here as we go through the capital plan as well, because I think with two years left I certainly would like to see those projects that I mentioned. There's others as well that I'd like to see in the capital plan as we move forward.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: More money would always be put to use. We all know we have far more needs than we have resources. The capital plan is before us. We'll have one more cycle to go where we can look at what's possible in the 18 months of decision-making time or so that we have left. I agree with the Member; the more money that we can find, cost shared or not, the more projects we'll be able to do for the people of the North.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Next on my list, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the information that I was interested in seeking is as well being covered by other MLAs today. I guess specific questions on the Building Canada Plan money. I'm curious if this government actually has a strategy to approach the government as opposed to maybe bringing it up with federal Ministers or discussing these things when opportunities arise. An actual plan on how they intend to bring more money or how to utilize and another strategy on how to utilize the money that's actually in place now. I guess I'll start with that, then I'd like to talk about some of the stuff that's not in the plan for now. If there's a strategy in place to engage the federal government, number one, and if there's better strategy in place for capital carry-overs and utilization of the money that's not being used are my first two questions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there is a strategy. There has been a strategy. There has been an enormous amount of work done over the last couple years as we started moving into the recession, as the decisions were made to try to compress the Building Canada Fund and look at adding more money for housing. It required a lot of work, how the process was going to work nationally, how we were going to get organized identifying our own share of the money. We've done it for the current year. The year that's now before us is the second year of that program. There's going to be work continuing on, working with the federal government on a number of other fronts when it comes to the health funding and further assistance on some of the major projects that have been discussed around this table.

I make the point that carry-overs mean the project is still on the books, it's just that it didn't get built. It's not money that now can be pulled away and identified. The challenge, as we've indicated, is to make sure that we try to conclude as many projects as is humanly possible in the year that the money is voted. That's an issue I know we share in common with the Members.

MR. BEAULIEU: I am not sure really that I heard the key words as to what the strategy with the federal government is, but I'll let that go.

My issue with the capital carry-overs is basically that money is not being used from year to year. Although they're committed and on the books, it isn't being used. My assumption is, then, that half of that is borrowed money that's not real debt, because the money is not actually being spent. I just have some sort of issue with half the money comes from surplus and half the money comes from the debt wall, but the money is not being spent so it's in fact not a real debt. My solution for that, I

believe, is to reduce all capital projects that are not being done -- they're being carried over by 10 percent -- and reuse that money for projects that are ready to go.

With that, I'd like to ask the government if this government has an actual strategy on how they approach barge communities or winter road communities. The timing on the delivery of those materials is very essential and it feels like to me, in the one barge community that I have of Lutselk'e, that the barge came and went and a bunch of things that I've been asking for, people that have wanted work done on houses and so on, nothing happened, no materials arrived. Those people are told, by virtue of not having any materials arrive in the community, that nothing will happen this year. I'd like to know if this government has an actual strategy that works on communities that are using barges and communities that are using winter roads. But winter roads are not really my issue. I'm more concerned about barging communities.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Over the decades there's been practice and policy and tradition, I suppose, on how we've come to source communities that are on a barge system or winter road. The planning is all done around the seasons. What time the windows are going to be available, ordering time, be it fuel, be it the dry goods, be it building materials, and we have that approach in all the communities that are off-road. We're struggling first with things that we don't control, like weather, some shipping delays that may occur, there's other issues happening outside our jurisdiction be it strikes or other things that could impact us, but the intent is to plan for those, which is one of the benefits of this new process. It gives us more lead time to get ready for the upcoming spring. So there is -- and if you want to look at any area -- all those approaches that have been developed over the years. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It doesn't seem to be working, the system. That's exactly what I thought, too, with the movement in the capital. I thought things would actually arrive in time. I've actually witnessed a project in another region where it was delayed almost two years because the government couldn't get the winter road thing organized and couldn't get the materials into that community. We skidooed into that community one year and this project was already a year behind and it ended up...I think that place actually got opened this year, and we're two years into this term and that thing started before I was an MLA. So I think that the government actually can't just say they have a strategy on how they're going to do winter road and barging, they actually have to have one, and I don't think they do.

Things that are clearly missing from Tu Nedhe that I've been asking about and that don't appear in the capital plan, as I see it, is a little bit of work on the great elders facility in Fort Resolution where the people want to keep elders in the community, especially elders that are passing away and they're being shipped out of the community and they're being held in other facilities in their last days. One of the things I asked for, they said well there's no nursing available to do that. That's a separate topic. The other topic was that it would be very expensive to get the building ready, which I don't agree with, but at the same time there's no plan whatsoever to do anything in that building.

I think that there's enough being said here about the youth and how if we're going to cure the social ills of our society up here, we need to start by making sure that we have productive youth. I don't think there's enough attention paid to that at this point. I'm not talking about doubling programs or putting more money into programs, I'm talking about putting capital into the communities to build centres for the youth, somewhere for the youth to go, something for the youth to do. I'd like to see some sort of things in the capital plan for all the communities that don't have youth centres. You know, put youth centres in and address the issue.

I think that right now what's happening in these communities is we're not producing productive kids and not a high enough percentage of productive citizens, because we're not addressing issues of the youth in the community because we're not paying attention to them. I mean, that is an issue. I really don't know how else to make this government understand that if we address the issue and we help the youth, then at the end of the day we're going to have huge savings in this government. Even the social envelope will shrink, there's no question about it if we start producing citizens out of the community that are productive. I believe that that has long-term benefits by putting a little bit of money in here instead of putting it elsewhere. I mean, the government seems more concerned about making sure that the computers are properly housed in Yellowknife than they are concerned about housing youth in the small communities. I've, unfortunately, run out of time here, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be happy to donate some of my response time to allow the Member to finish his comments if he'd like.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I have nobody else on my list. Are there any more general comments on opening remarks? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I seem to be getting really frustrated with talking about stuff

that I think that the communities need and then, as MLAs, we seem to, I feel that as MLAs, as the Ministers are also MLAs too, know what's needed in their communities and that's what we want this government to pay attention to: what's needed in the communities.

We're hearing directly from our communities. I mean, it's frustrating, because I have so many housing issues and I want the government to start repairing houses instead of building houses. People think I work for the Housing Corporation. I used to work for the Housing Corporation for a long time, but people still think I do. I'm an MLA, but basically I'm like a program officer for the Housing Corporation and I need the government to respond. This government has to respond to this. I mean, it's frustrating as hell when you're trying to do work for the people and you have to visit the same individual several times and to explain to them that nothing has happened, not because I haven't taken the issue up with this government but because the government has not responded, and it's very frustrating.

I have probably the most important project right now in both communities is some sort of dust control and I recognize that that's a community issue, but the community doesn't seem to be 100 percent engaged in the issue. I'm not sure if they're not fully aware that they have the control of their funding yet or anything. Bottom line is, I'm saying, MACA, go into those communities, sit down with those guys, finance, do a finance thing with them and get the roads done. That's an important issue.

A very important issue in Lutselk'e is a road to Austin Lake. To them that is what they really need. That opens up a whole gamut of things for them, positive things, tourism. There are all kinds of positive implications, but this government doesn't have a program. I mean, we can build roads, but there's no program to build a road that's not connected to other roads. I'm not quite understanding how that works. I mean, there's 20 kilometres of road that people can drive on all year long. I'm assuming that when they build a mini-hydro in Snowdrift River that there will be a road built to that. So the rest of it would be 20 more kilometres and, I mean, the benefits are tremendous. We know, the community knows, that those benefits are there. That's not in the plan. We have to get things in the plan that the communities want. Somehow we're going to have to make a connection with the communities. I don't think we're making a connection with the communities. We have a huge budget that's, like, \$300 million, but from my perspective, from Tu Nedhe people, they're not getting a positive impact out of that.

In all fairness, yes, there are some things that are being done that are positive, and I don't want to be unfair. That's true; there's been some positive stuff

that's been done. A youth centre will be built in Fort Res and the highway is getting chipsealed. I mean, those are positive things, but we have two communities here, and people seem to really concentrate on their own personal issues. Housing is a very personal issue. The fact of the condition of their community is a very personal issue and those are the things that this government hasn't responded to. I'm done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. More of a comment. Does the Minister want to respond?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Member is frustrated after two years, wait until he's been here 14.

---Laughter

Sometimes the wheels of government grind slow and fine, and one of the top criteria for a good MLA is persistence and I suppose an unrelenting focus on pushing the issues, no matter how slow it sometimes gets.

I appreciate some of the concerns the Member has raised. There are things that I believe are already underway in terms of with the Minister of Housing on some of the alternatives that are there in terms of addressing some of these irritants. Some of them are structural, some of them process, some of them are policy issues that can be done that I think we can do in the very near future.

The issue of roads is an important one. I would point out, though, that one of the things that's not in this capital plan, of course, is the mini-hydro in Lutselk'e, which will form a critical mass and will allow other things to happen, as the Member has indicated. But if we get that multi-million dollar project going, we drop the costs. The construction of that particular facility will then make it easier for other things to happen. Over two years there are a lot of pieces coming into place that the Member has had his hands on. So once again the issue is we have far more needs than we have resources, and that's the challenge every time we gather around the table. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With respect to the honourable Minister's opening remarks, I'm in general agreement, because we all worked together towards the capital budget that's before us at Cabinet and the committees, and we reviewed what's before us and tried to fit in our priorities and try to use the best leverage we can of our budget and some of the stimulus dollars that are out there.

I do have to share my concern with Mr. Ramsay. Did we capitalize as much of the federal stimulus dollars that are out there that we could have? I

don't know. We got some of it, but I'm not entirely convinced that our government worked as hard as they could in lobbying Ottawa. There are many other pots of funds out there. There was assignment funds, there was the community adjustment funds. I don't know if we took the opportunity to leverage those funds.

In terms of our highway infrastructure too, I think we've told ourselves, as a Caucus, that if there's anything this 16th Legislature is going to leave behind as a legacy project, it would be to improve our roads, and our capital budget does speak to that. We've got a significant amount of money earmarked for improving our roads. My vision is to see the chipsealing of the Deh Cho Trail as one, and chipsealing as many of our other highways in our other regions as well. We can leave that behind, that's something significant that our constituents see and the people of the Northwest Territories can see. So I'd like to work towards that in the years to come.

The opening remarks also speak about having the ability to bid out or tender our projects earlier. Because just during my recent constituency tour, that continues to be a frustration. We've had projects awarded by September, that's like rainy season. In fact, I went to Nahanni Butte and Granny from Nahanni tells me, she says, look, July and August was perfect building weather for the access road and when they start working, it starts raining and now we have to wait another year to complete our access road. That's the kind of frustration people are feeling. They don't understand. It's the same with the construction of our housing. They're saying, well, look at them, they're starting to build our houses now, must be September, right? So that kind of stuff.

I see that we're going to have the ability to hopefully get out of the gate early come the new construction season. In fact, I'm going to have several Member's statements to that effect in the next couple weeks, because I've got priority projects that have been delayed a year. As Mr. Beaulieu had indicated, in some places it has been two years. I certainly would like to see us getting out of the gate earlier, use the months of June, July and August to complete these projects and give us lots of room to meet the challenges of such a huge capital budget.

I see, as well, that in the next couple of years, we are going to be completing a few of our large projects like the \$100 million school in Inuvik, big schools in Tulita, Good Hope, et cetera. I am glad that their needs are being met, but now we have this time to turn our attention to our smaller communities. They have educational or school replacement needs as well, as well as improvement of our health centres and facilities. I believe we have to start leaning towards that. We are taking care of our larger communities. Now we should,

and we must, start taking care of our infrastructure in our smaller communities.

If anything, Mr. Chairman, I am in general agreement of our plan here. There is always more that could be done. I will certainly point that out as we review each department. I think the single most important thing is that we stick to our plan, we get our construction projects, our capital projects out of the gate early in the new year and show our constituencies and our communities that we are trying to be as efficient and effective as possible and build during a reasonable time and build on a reasonable time. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. It is more of a comment, but I will go to the Minister for a response.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every infrastructure dollar that we have been eligible for, we have matched or we have helped the communities match the money to get the projects out of the door. There are a number of funds that are application-based -- the Green Fund, the P3 projects fund -- that we have put application in. On those we have to wait and see, but we have left literally no stone unturned. When we find out, for example, that we get a contact from Ottawa that there is another \$300,000 or \$600,000 available, we start looking right away to see how we can access that money, how do we find out our cost-shared dollars.

I appreciate the concern of the Member, of course. As we move forward with our planning and how we control our costs as a government, not just capital but all our other costs and still provide that supporting role as we work through the recession, capital is going to play a key role in that. As we have our discussions on the budget, that will be fleshed out in more detail with committee. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, like others, am happy to see the kind of money that we are expending on capital in this year's budget. I was listening to my colleague Mr. Beaulieu express his concern about the seeming disconnect between the wishes, desires or aspirations of the people at the community and what our government is able to deliver. I don't know how we address that, but it reminded me of the days when a Commissioner like Stuart Hodgson would fly around in an airplane and go community to community with one staff person and talk to the community leaders, write a cheque and fly away. I tell you, there was something to be said for that kind of directness that did exist previously.

Now we have, of course, a huge bureaucratic process that goes behind our capital planning process and it does seem frustrating. It doesn't seem like it is a lack of resources that is the holdback, but it does seem like things have to go through such a rigorous screening. By the time the stuff gets delivered, it costs so much money.

I had expressed this before and I will say it again: I am all for good quality capital infrastructure. I don't think we should build stuff that is second rate, but I also don't think we should build stuff thinking it is only going to last for 40 years. Midterm retrofit and refurbishing most of our capital buildings is every 20 years. I don't know what it would cost to build stuff that would last longer, but I am not really sure why that is.

I am also always very concerned about the amount of what we call soft costs that go into these projects; the architectural, the engineering and for things that you wouldn't really think you need a lot of that kind of creative approach brought to them. I have used this as an example before, but I will say it again: if you are building fire halls in communities, I don't think we need to design a new template for every single one. Where there is opportunity for a cookie cutter application of capital, then let's do that. Certainly on other things like schools and hospitals and other more high-end kind of expense of capital infrastructure, there is a need to do a lot of consultation and assess the needs of the community and put more care into the planning.

You look at the Master Development Plan for Stanton or you look at the Master Development Plan for Hay River for the replacement of the hospital, it does seem like there is an extraordinary amount of money that is spent in the planning process. It is millions per capital project, truth be known. I guess it is something I don't quite fully understand and don't fully support, with all due respect to all those architects and engineers out there.

I also think that, when looking at capital in general, I have mentioned the life expectancy, we should have an eye on that and, of course, on the operating costs. I may be repeating what somebody else has already said here, but when we are building new infrastructure, we have an opportunity to really think seriously about how that construction will reflect on the cost of operating that facility for years to come, because I think sometimes the cost of operating accumulatively overtakes the cost of putting it on the ground in the first place. There are certainly lots of technology and ideas out there of doing that more efficiently. I think that this will be a boost to the economy.

I hope the capacity is there for Northerners to take advantage of most of these capital dollars. The competitive process will ensure the government's interests are protected, but if we can make sure

with as much as within our capacity to ensure that the Northerners benefit from these capital dollars, of course that makes it even more beneficial. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the challenges we face working with communities is that we often get conflicting signals. MLAs will lay out their priorities. In many cases, the signals we are getting from the community governments are not quite the same. The issue is how do you reconcile those two and get all the parties in the room so that if it is going to be dust control or if it is going to be fire hall or some other structure, that there is a way we can come to an agreement or how do we move forward, plus we have also given a considerable amount of authority to the community governments with block funding and with capital planning. It is a challenge that we haven't fully resolved yet as we listen to the frustration of some of the Members about issues that they consider a priority and how do we move forward on that. It is something we want to keep working on.

We are moving towards things like standard design across the board wherever possible. Schools, health centres, housing, park design, all the things where it makes sense, as the Member indicated, not to keep coming up with all these extra soft costs because we want to be creative or waste those dollars on something that could be better spent somewhere else.

The issue of life expectancy, I agree with the Member. There are things we could learn from the Europeans or some of the other countries where their midlife retrofit would probably be like 150 years old and our standards are much different. That is a challenge that we have to continue to look at, but we are spending enormous amounts of money changing our standards to ensure that we hit the energy efficiency standards to cut our O and M costs, because it is creeping up. The price of oil this morning, I believe, was almost back to \$78 a barrel. The pressure doesn't relent in that area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I have nobody on my list. Does committee agree that we have concluded? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would like to move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I will now rise and report progress. I would like to thank the witnesses and if we could get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort them out.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 1-16(4), NWT Capital Estimates 2010-2011, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Orders of the day for Monday, October 19th, 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

19. Second Reading of Bills

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 1-16(4), NWT Capital Estimates 2010-2011

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 19th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 13:53.

