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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 1, 2010****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:36 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, the Hon. Robert McLeod.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 47-16(4):
TRANSFER OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING
RENTAL SUBSIDY**

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide some context on this government's decision to transfer the administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy back to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. This decision restores full responsibility for all aspects of the Public Housing Program to the Housing Corporation and its community partners, the local housing organizations.

The Public Housing Program plays a critical role in meeting the housing needs in our communities. With the ever increasing need for housing in the Northwest Territories comes an increasing reliance on our programs, and an increasing demand to ensure that tenants in communities receive the highest level of service possible through programs designed to suit the needs of Northerners.

During the 15th Legislative Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories approved the Income Security Policy Framework for Personal Self-Reliance. This framework was designed to create a one-stop shop for income security programs and for greater consistency in the administration of those programs. However, in subsequent years, concerns have been raised by tenants, MLAs, and other stakeholders about the administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy.

Since the responsibility of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy was transferred to ECE, the Housing Corporation and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have been working closely in an effort to better align the

program with the Income Security Policy Framework. Providing timely assessments and having tenants become accustomed to the new process has been a continuing challenge that resulted in duplication of effort on the part of many clients who were accessing one service, increased rental arrears and lack of financial stability at LHOs.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, I have given direction to my officials that the focus of the corporation will continue to be on our tenants. I believe that in order for the Public Housing Program to respond to the needs of the Northwest Territories and its residents, it is essential to have partnerships with tenants that can better inform our decisions as they relate to housing programs, policies and needs. It is clear that the process of assessing rents has been less convenient for most tenants in recent years. We have heard tenants' concerns in this area and are addressing them. It is important that the future delivery model for public housing be designed to provide not only fair and equitable treatment to all tenants, but to do so in a respectful, locally driven and dignified way.

Residents of the NWT expect and deserve efficient service from government departments and agencies. In our effort to provide improvements to programs and initiatives, we must also be willing to learn from our tenants, leaders and citizens, respect their needs and consider their guidance in program design and delivery. As Minister responsible for the NWTHC, one of my primary goals is the provision of improved client service and ongoing improvements to our Public Housing Program and its delivery. I am also committed to identifying and taking advantage of improved efficiencies that can result from coordination between departments and agencies.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the transfer of responsibility for public housing subsidies back to the NWTHC is not simply a turning back of the clock to the old way of doing business. Our focus going forward will be on correcting the problems that have arisen over the past five years and building on the improvements that were made during that time. Most importantly, we recognize that in order for housing programs to be effective, they must be developed and improved in partnership with stakeholders. As Minister

responsible for Housing, I believe it is critical that local solutions for housing are developed that reflect northern need while recognizing the significant challenges we face. We will now turn our focus to working more directly with our tenants, LHOs, NWT HC and ECE staff, MLAs and other stakeholders to make necessary changes to the delivery of public housing.

Effective communications are vital in our future approach. We intend to continually improve our communications not only to provide better information to our clients but to be more responsive to their concerns. Ultimately, the housing challenges being faced by the NWT can only be addressed through the provision of northern programs that address northern needs and a clear partnership between tenants and government. These partnerships will guide us in our efforts to provide adequate, affordable and suitable housing to residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION TO MOVE MINISTER'S STATEMENT
47-16(4) INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Minister's Statement 47-16(4) be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is in order.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Minister's Statement 47-16(4) will be moved into Committee of the Whole.

The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 48-16(4):
REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING
RENTAL SUBSIDY

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment assumed responsibility for administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy on April 1, 2006. Leading into the transfer, some specific goals were put in place for improvements to the program in the overall context of the income security framework.

A lot of hard work has been undertaken and we have met with some success. We are pleased to report that Education, Culture and Employment has strengthened the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program over the past four years and have

developed new tools including a policy and procedures manual, forms, training material, an electronic information system, and overall monitoring and reporting procedures. The department has also implemented an appeal process for clients who do not agree with the outcomes of their assessments. These new and improved policies and processes make the program more effective and efficient from an accountability perspective and also ensure that clients are treated fairly and equitably across the Northwest Territories.

During this time, much emphasis was put on maintaining the dignity of income security clients and increasing support for people to make productive choices to enable them to have a better quality of life. Mr. Speaker, at all times, we deliver income security programs with a client-focused perspective and it was with this vision that the PHRS was merged into the basket of programs available to help our residents. The one-stop shop for subsidies also meant a number of clients could access information on benefits other than the Public Housing Rental Subsidy in one location.

While the goals we set were achieved, in undertaking this work we also discovered ramifications that were not immediately apparent.

Mr. Speaker, for instance, although we much improved service to our income security clients, those clients who only required the Public Housing Rental Subsidy became disconnected from the local housing organizations. Over time, it emerged that this disconnect was not helpful to those clients and concerns have been expressed that their dignity was compromised.

Since the transfer occurred, Education, Culture and Employment and the Housing Corporation, including local housing organizations, have worked diligently and cooperatively in a strong effort to resolve issues and make improvements around the service of providing subsidies to public housing tenants through the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program. In addition, the government undertook a review of the administration of the program. The findings of the review are being examined by an interdepartmental steering committee.

Mr. Speaker, we have all but concluded this work and we have reached a decision regarding the future administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program. The responsibility of the program will return to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to be delivered by local housing organizations.

We all agree that the good work that Education, Culture and Employment has accomplished over the past years will be built upon by the NWT Housing Corporation and the local housing organizations to produce an even greater process, still with a strong client focus, that will better serve

the people of the Northwest Territories. We must continue our work together to help people move ahead in their lives and support those with the greatest need.

Education, Culture and Employment and the NWT Housing Corporation will work closely together over the coming months to provide for a seamless transition. We will be sharing an ongoing rollout and communications plan with Members over the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank Members for their advice and guidance during this time. It is only through honest collaboration, such as this, that we can continue to make system improvements to the benefit of our people in the North. Mahsi.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 49-16(4):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY PROJECT
DESCRIPTION REPORTS

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to provide Members and the public with information related to the future Mackenzie Valley Highway to Tuktoyaktuk.

On Friday, January 29th, the Government of Canada announced it has agreed to commit \$3 million over two years toward a \$7 million project description report on the construction of an all-weather highway from Wrigley to the Dempster Highway. This report will work in combination with a previously announced \$1 million commitment to a project description report for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk portion.

With this announcement, the Government of Canada has partnered with the Government of Northwest Territories to take a necessary next step leading to the construction of an all-weather highway connecting the national highway system through the Mackenzie Valley to Tuktoyaktuk.

The project description report will provide baseline environmental and engineering information required for the consultation and regulatory process of the proposed route of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. It identifies the scope of work, predicted impacts and mitigation measures that will be required when the project proceeds. It will provide an opportunity for communities that will be affected by the highway to identify concerns and requirements to better inform the planning process for the design and development of the highway. It is an important next step for this project, which has been identified by the 16th Assembly as a significant priority.

In combination with the work that has already been done in building 34 of the 40 required bridges for the Mackenzie Valley winter road, this funding announcement is an indication that our

government's efforts to put the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway on the agenda of federal decision-makers has been at least partially successful. Members have my assurance that this government will continue to make the case for federal funding and support for the construction of a Mackenzie Valley Highway that will lower the cost of living and improve economic opportunities for the valley, and that will connect Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 50-16(4):
FUR AUCTION RESULTS

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, trapping has long been a way of life for the people of the Northwest Territories. It's a fundamental part of our culture. It is part of who we are.

Trapping is also an important economic activity, especially in many of our smaller communities. Trapping is not easy work, but it is rewarding work and it allows our people to get out on the land -- just as their ancestors have done for centuries -- and make a few dollars while they are at it.

Mr. Speaker, results from a recent fur auction show just how important that activity is to the Northwest Territories. At the Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. Wild Fur Sale held in North Bay, Ontario, in early January, \$100,000 worth of genuine Mackenzie Valley furs were sold.

Worth noting from that sale is that all of our muskrats pelts were sold -- over 12,600 in all -- and 95 percent of our beaver and red fox fur pelts were also sold. Prices for muskrat, beaver and fox increased as much as 20 percent compared to last year's prices, a strong indication that the market for furs is improving. Most of the demand at the North Bay auction came from Chinese and Greek buyers.

The next auction where genuine Mackenzie Valley furs will be sold is in Seattle, Washington, on February 19, and we look forward to more positive results from that event.

Mr. Speaker, to further illustrate the economic impact the trapping industry has on the Territory, I must mention our 2008-2009 sales results from Northwest Territories wild furs. From October 2008 to June 2009, \$1.1 million worth of genuine Mackenzie Valley furs were sold.

These are outstanding results, given that demand for furs dropped substantially over the past couple of years due to the global recession. It is also a testament to the work done by this government to promote the traditional fur economy through the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program.

Since the program was created in 2002, our government has worked with Northwest Territories fur harvesters and the fur industry to support and promote the trapping industry. Thanks in large part to those efforts and the hard work of our trappers, genuine Mackenzie Valley furs are now recognized as some of the finest wild furs in the world.

Through initiatives like our guaranteed advances, the Prime Fur Bonus Program and the Grubstake Program, our government provides Northwest Territories trappers with the proper support and incentives to keep them harvesting wild fur and to keep this traditional way of life alive.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is evidence our work is paying off in more than just fur sales. It is paying off in the increased number of Northwest Territories residents who are going out on the land and actively trapping.

Last season the number of active trappers in the Northwest Territories was 809. That is up from 627 trappers in 2007-2008 -- a 30 percent increase -- and it is the highest number of active trappers we've had since the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program began. That growth in trappers is especially evident in the South Slave and Sahtu regions.

Mr. Speaker, the health of our trapping industry in the Northwest Territories is a good news story. Mega projects like the Mackenzie Gas Project tend to grab all of the attention and headlines, but it's community-based sectors like the trapping industry that truly help diversify our economy, which is one of the goals of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

As the recent results from the North Bay auction and our 2008-2009 sales of genuine Mackenzie Valley furs prove, trapping is one of those opportunities, and I look forward to even better results in 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONSULTATION ON CARIBOU CONSERVATION MEASURES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to continue to talk about the caribou issue today in terms of trust and relationship. Today I don't want to talk about whether the decision was good or bad, right or wrong; I want to talk about it in the context of consultation as more than a fly-by, a coffee, a hey, how you doing? That is a southern mentality that has been brought up here for years when they speak to true Northerners and it does not work. Anyone here even for a short time can tell you that is not how decisions need to be made.

Last week I heard a wise man say, what good is a right if you can't exercise it? He was true to his point. Because no one wants to hear the last rifle shot to take down the last of the caribou. The GNWT must realize that the caribou harvest is more than a right. It is an essence of spiritual being of the aboriginal people of our North. There needs to be some decision with context that works with them. It's not about our lawyers are smarter than their lawyers and the Constitution tells us what we can tell you. It's about working together. It's about the moral obligation to ensure that the aboriginal people are sharing in their treaty rights, their destiny as how we work together.

It's turning into more of a school-ground argument where my dad is tougher than your dad. But I'll tell you, their lawyers are just going to waste more money on our lawyers and we're going to lose in our relationship of trust.

There is more here than the law at stake, it's politics; the politics of what we can do with our friends and their friends. I think there's an equal relationship that needs to be constantly fostered between the Northwest Territories government and the aboriginal leadership.

The decision of the caribou needs to be a decision with the aboriginal people. A political decision like this is not just about the caribou, it is rather about the Dene culture. I think it's time for this Minister and this government to immediately call upon a caribou summit that invites the Dene leadership to discuss this issue. Leave the special interests at home. Leave the bureaucrats, those Mandarins, at home. Have a face-to-face, eye-to-eye conversation with the leadership of the Dene and our government leader on this issue, Mr. Miltenberger, and we'll find an immediate solution by calling a summit and together we'll find a path to work together.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SAFE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT FOR FORT LIARD

MR. MENICOCHÉ: [English translation not provided.]

Today I want to speak about the need for safe playground equipment in Fort Liard. We are well aware of the importance of physical activity for children's health. Recently the media has reported that exercise is linked with a greater ability for children to concentrate in classrooms. This is important for us to ensure that our children have opportunities to play games and have fun. I'm not talking about sedentary activities like computer games and indoor activities.

When the weather's a bit warmer than today, if you go by a school playground at recess you'll hear a swirl of voices as children move around and talk and yell. We pretty well take playgrounds for granted, but they are very important.

The Acho Dene School's, in Fort Liard, existing equipment is beyond repair and the pressure treatment used on the wood does not meet current national standards for safety. The equipment is currently frozen in place and attempting to remove it before spring is almost impossible as the site also needs to be backfilled and re-levelled. It's too bad the playground couldn't have been upgraded earlier.

However, the Dehcho Division Board of Education is working with Education, Culture and Employment regarding funding for the replacement to the equipment and the Public Works and Services facility planning division has also been in contact with ECE regarding replacement. Education, Culture and Employment is working to identify the funding in next year's budget, if possible. That's in 2011. I believe that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment should ensure that funding is provided to remove and replace this playground in this fiscal year. I also believe that safety to our school children is a priority that we cannot wait until next year for.

I will ask the Minister questions at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GROWING NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many reasons why students in Nunakput drop out of school, but my major concern is that they do so because we are not supporting them. If we're asking kids to stay in school, we need to step up and meet them half way. We need to provide them with resources, moral support, a good school environment, and a safe and reliable place for them to stay and live. So far we're not providing many of these services and that is a shame.

Currently I have eight students in the Nunakput community of Sachs Harbour who, for various reasons, have left high school in Inuvik and moved back to Sachs Harbour; reasons such as nowhere to live, not enough resources, and no moral support.

This government must get serious about providing an equal standard of schooling all across the Territory, not just in larger centres. The government should provide a teacher immediately so these students can continue their education and earn at least some high school credits this year. Eight

students would warrant and justify resources of a teacher in the larger centres or Aurora College. Why are these eight students in Sachs Harbour any different?

I cannot fathom how the government does not have any program initiatives to assist in addressing the high school dropout situation all across the North, especially with so many jobs and careers that now require more and more education. Many students have to leave strong family support networks to larger centres such as Inuvik. Unfortunately, that seems to be a growing trend in many regional centres, that students are finding it harder and harder due to limited resources and changing high school environments.

This is a different time that students are facing. It's not like when we were in high school. These kids are facing a lot more intense situations these days. A growing number of students are dropping out of high school because of the problems and serious concerns. The inadequacies are the perfect example of discrepancies between the communities and lack of government initiatives and efforts to resolve them. As I expressed in my previous Member's statements, recent closure of homes in regional centres across the Northwest Territories has emphasized these problems.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. JACOBSON: Many of us have lived in the North all our lives, or a length of time, and have all heard the challenges, problems and statistics related to students in small, isolated communities. Hearing situations like these makes me wonder if these are some of the causes. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADE EXTENSIONS TO SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, have similar concerns in regard to the students in Tsiigehtchic who now are having to go off to get their high school education in Inuvik by way of home boarding.

Mr. Speaker, there was a decision made by the government, I believe in the 12th Assembly, to implement high schools in all communities in the Northwest Territories from K to 12. Yet, Mr. Speaker, almost 20 years later we still haven't been able to implement that decision made by previous governments. Mr. Speaker, when we have the dropout rates that we're seeing in regard to home

boarding or regional hostels, it's a wonder why this government is not implementing that policy fully by ensuring that students, regardless of where they are -- Sachs Harbour, Tsiigehtchic -- can receive a high school diploma in their home community.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it's critical that this government find a unique solution to this problem and if that means bringing in extra teachers, two or three teachers into Sachs Harbour and two or three teachers into Tsiigehtchic, so those students do not have to leave their home communities to receive their high school diploma somewhere else, and realizing in the last two years since this has been tried, the dropout rates in both communities have been grave.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's time that this government found solutions around the decision to offer high school programs in all communities and not continue to use the scenario student/pupil ratio, because it does not fit in small communities. I think, Mr. Speaker, that this government has to make a capital investment to either find more teachers for those communities or find a way around the problems we're seeing with home boarding and students having to leave their home community and simply dropping out and going back home before the school year is out. Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll leave that for the Minister of Education. I will be asking him some questions later on this matter. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to weigh in on the caribou issue here today. It is something that has certainly caught the attention of the many, many people in the North who depend on this valuable resource as a way of life. Although I'm not one of those people, I am observing the situation and I have some comments that I would like to make on it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity, through the Minister of ENR and his staff, to see some of the science around the declining and virtually threatened numbers and the populations of the different caribou herds. Some of the impacts are fairly obvious. Some are not so obvious. There are many potential impacts and not all of them are the traditional harvest of the caribou by people. There are many other things that seem to be affecting this and, like I said, not all of them are absolutely quantifiable.

However, Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Department of ENR that they have gone out and they have done their best to consult with

stakeholders and those who are impacted by any actions this government may take to protect this resource. I do not doubt, to some extent and as documented, that that kind of consultation has taken place. But, Mr. Speaker, there's probably a subtle difference when we share the responsibility for the management and conservation of this resource with other governments. There is probably a subtle difference between consultation where you go and just tell the information to people and the type of consultation where you receive the feedback.

I think that the consultation should have taken on the format of inquiring of those people who probably value the resource as much or more than we do as legislators in asking the question: if this scientific data and if this population census is correct, what are we going to do? What's the solution? What is the collective solution? What are the answers to these questions?

So, Mr. Speaker, although I know that this does call for decisions and it does call for a response to the problem, I believe that we all have a duty to be a part of that and if there is a way of extending our hand to our other stakeholders in a way of asking the question about what the solution is as opposed to telling them, I think it would go a long ways. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FRUSTRATIONS REGARDING INTERACTIONS WITH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will use my statement today to air some frustrations; frustrations with our Executive Council and the behemoth of a bureaucracy that is our government. I find myself believing that even though we're just over half way through our four-year term, I sense that our Executive Council, our leaders, those presumably taking charge and showing the way, that they're placing less and less emphasis on working. I already see the downward slide or slowdown that I'm told sets in and immobilizes government in the last year of any Assembly's life. This is certainly not my preferred course of action.

If this Assembly can manage to work hard, continue to pass legislation, develop new ideas and put plans in place right up to dissolution, then I would be one very happy MLA. But I already see us slowing down both mentally and physically. It may be a perception that only pertains to me, but perception is nine-tenths of the law and it should be heeded.

Why do I feel this way? Well, here are a few examples: There's a distinct lack of visible progress from the Strategic Initiatives committees. What are they accomplishing? We've heard nothing from several of these committees for many months -- the Cost of Living Committee, the Managing this Land Committee, the Maximizing Opportunities Committee, the Building This Land Committee. I can't remember when we last had an update on the work of these committees. The only one which seems to be productive is the Refocusing Government Committee.

A second indicator is the abnormally long list of outstanding requests for information from standing committees, the Economic Development and Infrastructure committee especially. There have been opportunities for Ministers to meet with Regular Members but the briefings have not been forthcoming. Is it because the Strategic Initiatives committees have no work to report? It seems that way to me. It may be due to a delay in reports coming from the department, but a Minister should at least advise Members of a known delay. All we want is to be kept informed. Believe it not, Mr. Speaker, some of us over here do keep track of due dates and monitor the progress, or lack of it, in regard to reports.

I'm dismayed at my lack of access to Ministers in the last several months. Ministers seem to have been out of the office more than in it. For weeks before and after the Christmas break one could almost roll a bowling ball down the Executive offices hallway without encountering any resistance. Perhaps I exaggerate, Mr. Speaker, but it's a concern for me when I have to struggle to find a Minister and get their attention to discuss an issue of importance to my constituents.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. BISARO: I hope these impressions of mine are overstated, but even if they are, the Executive Council must take note and do some soul searching. At this point in our term we all need to stop and check our pulse, make sure the heart is still active and beating strongly. Both sides of this House should be working full tilt for the next 20 months. There's lots we can do if we keep our nose to the wheel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GNWT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
PROVIDED TO BUSINESSES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about the services and funding provided to businesses here in the Northwest

Territories. During the business plan review of the draft main estimates in the fall, the Department of ITI stated that they were working toward a one-window system being in place for business-related services in every region.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting statement for the department to make, considering the fact that the last government and this one to date have done nothing to move toward a one-window delivery model that numerous studies and reports have recommended. Is ITI going to be the authority in all of this? And what about the BDIC? I've asked many questions previously about the role, mandate and future of the BDIC. This becomes even more murky now that it looks as though ITI is moving toward a one-window approach without the BDIC.

Given current economic conditions, we need to be doing everything in our power to ensure what little support we have for businesses is getting into the right hands. Mr. Speaker, let me be frank: most departmental funding is not going into business creation or expansion. What little infrastructure that is in rural communities is old and outdated. There really has been little to no diversification of our economy in the past six years. Overall, business growth is negative. Manufacturing is in decline. Tourism products and sales are in serious decline.

Mr. Speaker, last year 15 clients received more than \$100,000 in contribution financing from ITI. This accounted for two-thirds of the value of all ITI contributions. How many of these clients were private businesses? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is none. Mr. Speaker, not a single, solitary one. Then, Mr. Speaker, there's the SEED program, ITI's main business development program where less than one-third of all funding actually found its way into businesses. We need to be very, very concerned over these trends, Mr. Speaker.

In the backdrop to all of this is the BDIC. Eighteen months ago I called on the government to have a meaningful, comprehensive and coordinated suite of services for economic and business development in our Territory. We have not made any headway, Mr. Speaker. In fact, statistics do not lie. We continue to regress.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. RAMSAY: I recently read a quote from an American legislator, Jim Collin, that I would like to leave you with: The signature of mediocrity is not an unwillingness to change. The signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SMART ENERGY SOLUTIONS
FOR NWT RESIDENTS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need a complete rethink of how we meet the energy needs of our residents and businesses. Messing about trying to tweak electricity rates to redistribute costs, reviewing yet again our Power Corporation with no creative guidance and ignoring community partnerships goes nowhere towards addressing our real problems and opportunities. A smart approach to meeting today's energy needs can serve a range of important government priorities.

The unfortunate circumstances of depressed local economies, rising energy costs and impacts of environmental issues dictate the need for energy services that meet these issues head on. We need utility structures and energy strategies that reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, provide local economic and skill development and reduce our environmental impacts. Fostering partnerships with our communities and regional corporations to provide clean energy to meet total energy needs can achieve these goals while increasing affordability of energy, revenues to utilities and ability of the public to pay.

Times are changing and real leadership for progressive responses is required. We have studied small hydro development for years, but where is it? Small hydro, biomass and solar power will eventually meet many of our energy needs while serving broad government goals, but where is this reflected in any of our thinking on utility restructuring and capacity? We have made a few initial steps within government infrastructure, but where is any implementation on a community level? And where is the recognition and integration of these realities in any of the costly reviews we have underway?

The huge opportunities for increased energy efficiency are glossed over in our reviews. Where is the energy efficiency strategy, particularly electrical efficiency? The Arctic Energy Alliance has demonstrated that investment in converting electric hot water heaters to oil fired in thermal communities could save the NWT taxpayers and ratepayers hundreds of thousands of dollars, and this is just one example. Moving to clean energy, electricity for heating and to power vehicles are increasingly strong global responses to climate change and fuel prices, but it takes foresight and planning to reap the benefits. Where is the recognition of these trends? Where is the time of day pricing policies commonly employed elsewhere to bring new system efficiencies, increased affordability and improved revenues to utilities?

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, NTPC is a government-owned provider directed by GNWT and we have not provided written guidance to them since 2005. A close look at our review work to date is not inspiring. It is my fervent hope that rather than getting stuck in the same mould approaches, we will clearly see the need for energy services that reflect our values, recognize our scales and serve our priorities within the realities of today's challenges. Mr. Speaker, I will be asking questions of the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONSULTATION ON CARIBOU
CONSERVATION MEASURES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, before lunch I had caribou stew.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oooh.

MR. YAKELEYA: Before I ate my caribou stew, my wife mentioned to me, she said, you know, this issue about the caribou, the specific area that there is a ban on hunting, this is what we are fighting about. You know, to have caribou in our life. This specific issue here is about this whole thing about our way of life, our food, and when I talked to several people over the weekend about caribou and asked how does it seem like on the radio in terms of this whole issue from this government, from this Legislative Assembly, most of the replies were that it's not very good. It seems like the government is telling us what to do. It seems like they are telling us we have money and we should go to the store only and buy pork chops or steak or bacon. It seems like they don't want us to eat our food; for what reasons, I don't know.

So I want to talk about the issue of consultation in terms of coming to an agreement of what this government has done in terms of coming to an agreement to put this ban on. Certainly the Minister has some weight in terms of the conservation issue. It is in the agreements. I am not sure if the timing is right, because right now there seems to be a lot of resistance to this. I think it was bad timing. I think we should have had more consultation. As Mr. Hawkins has said, we should come to an emergency summit with the people of the Northwest Territories and have a real good discussion on it, look at all the factors. It should be something like that with the people of the Northwest Territories.

This issue is a very big issue in our communities. As one elder has told me, I wish I could come down to the government and speak to them right face to face on this issue; I'm so mad. So I think that if this

government could come to an emergency discussion on this issue with the people of the Northwest Territories, I think we'll have a win/win. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I have the great pleasure of having youth from Ulukhaktok who are in the territorial trials here and all over the Territory in badminton, soccer and hockey.

I have Zakkery Kudlak -- and if you could stand up and say hi to home -- Zakkery Kudlak, Nathan Pogotak, Frances Himiak, Cynthia Oliktoak, Gayle Ogina, Ronald Oliktoak, Adrian Kagyut, Johnathan Kuneyuna, Bradly Olifie, Troy Akoaksion, Brian Kimiksana, Patrick Joss, my good friend Patrick Joss, and everybody knows Pat. Welcome Patrick. Kirstin Ekpakonak, Brandon Okheena, Elliot Malgukak, Kassandra Ekpakonak, Rose Inuktalik, Erica Alanak, Chelsey Olifie and Adele Okheena. If I messed up a bit, I'm sorry on your names. I apologize. I'd like to also recognize my wife who was with me for this weekend and it's always good to have my support, and she'll be home tomorrow, Kids. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Welcome everyone in the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always good to have an audience in here.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 223-16(4): CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ENR. You know, many would applaud the decisive measures that the Minister took to protect the caribou and this was not an easy decision, I am sure of that. However, some people out there are unhappy with the decision and feel that people were not properly consulted and that, in fact, this is an infringement on treaty hunting rights. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister today if he, looking back at the situation, can see any opportunity where things could have been done differently that would not have us at this level of acrimony here today over this very valued resource, valued by everyone. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to point out that since 2005, and even earlier, since the signing of the land claims up and down the valley, the co-management boards have been working very successfully with the government to look after and make the right decisions with wildlife, including caribou, and even investing significant monies since 2005. We're now dealing with the issue of rapid decline with the Bathurst herd in the North Slave. Ideally if the Wekeezhii process could have been able to meet its initial targets in October/November prior to this hunting season, we would not be in this situation given the precipitous drop in numbers to look at interim emergency measures. We are fully committed, of course, to the process going forward to look at the long-term Bathurst management plan that's going to involve, Tlichio, Akaitcho, Northwest Territories Metis. It's going to spill over and look at the Ahiak, the Bluenose-East, which involves the Sahtu as well as the Inuvialuit. That's going to be a fairly complex undertaking. The key now is to get through this hunting season without putting any further pressure on this herd which is in a dire state. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'd like to thank the Minister for putting this into a context and a perspective that it is in terms of the specific herd and the management board responsible for that herd. The Minister also indicates that this is an interim emergency measure, which would indicate that this is temporary. Can the Minister offer any explanation as to why these other management boards have been able to be so involved in the wildlife management and what is the holdup and the delay and the deferring of the Wekeezhii board's work on the Bathurst caribou issue? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There are a number of factors here. The Wekeezhii board is part of the Tlichio Government and it's new. It's getting up and running. This is going to be its first full test. The other co-management boards have been successfully in place now, in many cases, for decades and have worked out the bugs. They have a good working relationship. As well, the North Slave circumstance is very politically complex where you have not only the Tlichio but the Akaitcho, Northwest Territories Metis, two unsettled claim areas and requires that extra work. So there are all these factors that have been playing together, as well as the fact that the Wekeezhii process didn't quite meet its targets requiring these interim emergency measures to protect the herd. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'd like to ask the Minister what steps is our government taking now to ensure that this board, this management board, does get up to the same level of capacity and ability to address the caribou in this region. I understand perhaps that the makeup of it is complex and the politics of it are a little bit different, but what can our government do to facilitate this board getting up to the same level of expertise, knowledge and capacity that the other management boards are?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The board, I believe, is working as fast and as fully applying themselves to this issue as they can. They are now looking at being able to be finished their work consultation and such and recommendations that can be considered both by the Tlicho and territorial government by I believe it's now April or May. In the meantime, the support we're giving is to do what they asked us to do back in July when they themselves identified the state of the Bathurst herd and the precipitous drop from 2006, 120,000 animals, to around 30,000 in 2009. The need to have these interim emergency measures to protect the herd to allow this process to go through its cycle and looking at being able to then make in a more measured, careful way the longer term decisions that are going to be required to be done through that consultative process all the Members have been talking about.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one more point of clarification then. This temporary ban that is in place on this particular herd in this specific area, how long does the Minister anticipate that will be in place before the Wekeezhii Management Board will then put measures in place to protect this herd? Just so we put that in context as well, not saying that someone else being responsible for the management at this regional level is going to solve all the problems facing the caribou and the impacts that are causing them to decline, but just as far as this government's role in having to step up and put this kind of a ban in place. How long will that be in effect?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Of course, our choice would be the shortest time possible, but we have tied the ban to come off as soon as we can get the report from the Wekeezhii board and be able to respond and engage as well, then, with the Tlicho Government, the Akaitcho and the Northwest Territories Metis to come up with a longer term plan. The targets for that report, their recommendations to be done are April or May, at this point.

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

QUESTION 224-16(4):
CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow along with my Member's statement today, which is my concern about the caribou issue in context of the relationship with the aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories.

In my Member's statement I called for the Minister to show some immediate leadership to this issue, such as working together in a partnership context by calling a caribou summit. This would well be under the authority of the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources to call upon the Dene leadership, as well as the Wekeezhii board chair to get them there, and anyone else who would have a definite interest in this issue.

Would the Minister be willing to take that under advisement and perhaps maybe even some serious consideration that we can do something in a timely way, recognizing that the Wekeezhii board is not going to make some type of decision on this issue for at least three, four, possibly even five months from now?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I'd like to point out that the government and the co-management boards and the aboriginal governments across the Northwest Territories have been showing leadership in this issue of declining caribou herds for quite a few years now. We were just in the Yukon, meeting with the various principals to look at the Porcupine herd, for example. They have been hard at work on a quota through co-management process and it's been working with the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Sahtu. The Tlicho is not putting themselves into position to do that as well.

The Caribou Summit, as the Member has pointed out, was held in Inuvik and was very successful, but expensive. It was about a half million dollar exercise. What we recognize first is there's a need. We have committed already to start working to bring the co-management chairs in with some delegates to look at the very many overlapping issues that are now before us in almost every herd that is now in the Northwest Territories in a state of decline.

MR. HAWKINS: The issue at hand here is that an emergency caribou summit should take place not just with the co-management but also with the affected Dene leadership and groups. That is the issue at hand. I'm not suggesting making the Caribou Summit, which I had the good fortune of attending three years ago, but ultimately the issue is let's get people here immediately working together on a common solution or path. Would the

Minister show some guidance to this issue of saying, I'll do that right away and we'll get on that right away and we'll work together with these groups?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There are two distinct issues. There's the issue of the longer term plan for the Bathurst herd as well as the related Ahiak and Bluenose-East herds. It's going to take time and it's going to require a considerable amount of work with the affected aboriginal governments and the territorial government and other stakeholders.

The other big most immediate issue is right now, at present, there are no conditions that would allow protection of the Bathurst herd, whose numbers have gone precipitously down from 120,000 to 30,000 animals. Without action that has been taken, there is a very significant, real chance that within a year or two with the hunting remaining unchanged, that the herd would disappear. We're committed in the longer term to pull together the appropriate folks and appropriate venue to do that longer term planning. In the meantime we have to offer the herd protection until the Wekeezhii process is finished.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate being schooled in the long-term vision, but the reality is the short-term vision seems to be very nearsighted. The issue here is partnership trust. It's a relationship that needs to be fostered continually. Therefore, I continue to ask the Minister quite clearly, could we pull a small group of the aboriginal leadership together? Could we work together with the chair of the management board and out of that could follow perhaps a positive direction on the short term, as we all know that the decision is going to be at least three, four, or five months away? How much more destruction on the relationships are we going to continue?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The issue is, when the Member speaks of destruction, making sure that we avoid the destruction of the Bathurst herd, we have, I believe, a very strong working relationship with the aboriginal governments and co-management boards across the land. We've successfully done a Water Strategy, we've collaboratively drafted and put in legislation the Species at Risk Act, and we're doing the same with the Wildlife Act; very progressive and unique processes fully engaging the aboriginal governments. The Premier is engaged in a process with the regional leaders on a regular basis to bring them to the table. This issue in the North Slave, there is support from a whole host of areas. The Tlicho Government has supported us in our efforts, the Northwest Territories Metis has, most of the other folks have as well, the Northwest Territories North Slave Metis up here. So we have some issues to work out with the Yellowknives and we're

intent on doing that, but let's keep this thing in perspective. We want to avoid the destruction of the Bathurst herd by making the right decisions.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The long-term vision won't change with anyone. Everyone wants the caribou herd to survive. Everyone wants the caribou to be around forever. The decision may not change, but the fact is they would be party to the decision. They would be involved into the discussion of the decision and they would also feel responsible because they would be part of the outcome. That's the type of discussion I'm talking about. I'm talking about getting rid of southern style of consultation by making sure that everyone's involved in the outcome. That's why I'm asking for an immediate caribou summit with the leadership. Would the Minister reconsider this?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I seriously consider everything the Member says. I know his heart is in the right place, his intentions are honourable and pure. Sometimes we have to look at the process, though, and how do we get to where we want to be, which is to protect the herd until these other longer term processes kick into gear. We are, I would suggest to you, probably one of the most consultative governments in this Dominion of Canada.

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

QUESTION 225-16(4):
SAFE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
FOR FORT LIARD

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions on the playground in Fort Liard. The National Playground Code about six to eight years ago came into place. We assessed our schools and replaced what we could. In Fort Liard that remained undone. I'd like to ask the Minister why that one school playground equipment was not replaced.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. That particular school was brought to our attention just in December that their playground needs to possibly be replaced within a few months or a couple years. So those are the discussions that we continue to have with the Dehcho Board of Education, specifically with the superintendent, that has brought this to our attention. The focus is that we're going through our budget planning process

this period, but part of the planning process will be to put this into next year's budget. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: The parents and the teachers are very concerned in Fort Liard. They raised it with me in my December visit. They're actually so concerned that they're looking for ways to fundraise to replace the school ground equipment, but it's our responsibility, Mr. Speaker. The need is immediate. I'd like to ask the Minister what can be done in this coming fiscal year. Can we release some resources so that we can begin the preliminary work or even remove some of this dangerous pressure-treated wood equipment? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, part of the planning process will be to work closely with PWS. It is the responsibility of that department to look at the infrastructure itself, if it needs to be taken out of the ground when it's thawed out. Those are discussions that we need to continue having along with the Dehcho Education Council, with the superintendent, and keeping the board members informed of the progress being made and also the Member in that respective riding. So we'll continue to make that progress as we go along. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'm just trying to get a handle on will the playground equipment be removed this year. Probably the planning process to replace the playground in 2011 sounds good, but am I correct in understanding that they're looking at removing the playground equipment this fiscal year? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, safety is our first priority so we will definitely look at the playground this summer. Whether to remove that due to safety precautions, we certainly need to discuss that further with PWS. Mahsi.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. When will the discussions take place and how soon can I know, or even the school in Fort Liard know, about the plans for that playground? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the issue was brought to our attention in December and the discussion is ongoing. We can't really do anything until it's thawed. Definitely, we'll keep the Member informed of our progress to date. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 226-16(4):
ADDITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS
FOR SACHS HARBOUR

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From my Member's statement today: Mr. Speaker, given that currently there are eight students in the

Nunakput community of Sachs Harbour that have, for various reasons, left high school and moved back to Sachs Harbour -- reasons such as nowhere to live, not enough moral support or resources -- will this government immediately commit the funds and resources available for one high school teacher in Sachs Harbour for the term of about two and a half months left in the school year so they can at least earn some credits for their high school diploma? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, regarding the high school students, as I stated in the House on numerous occasions, we want every student to succeed. We do provide funding to district education councils and the DEA that falls under them that deals with these matters. I have to respect their decision, as well as the boarding homes' and so forth. But it would be under the direction of the Beaufort-Delta to make those decisions based on the funding that we provide to them. We'll continue to work with the Beaufort-Delta Education Council as we move forward. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Since the Minister is the Minister of Education, can the Minister direct the Beaufort-Delta education board and give them the \$70,000 or whatever amount is required? Can he give them the money and the funding to get a teacher in the community for the next two and a half months?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: As I've indicated, we've already allocated funds for the operation this school year. I can't, as a Minister, stand up and say, hire a teacher in the community. I have to respect their decision. We have empowered the board of education to make those types of important decisions, because they are the experts at the community level. They're currently, I believe, dealing with this matter. I believe MLA Jacobson has already met with the board or will be meeting with the board. So this discussion is ongoing and we will continue to monitor that. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: I met with one of the representatives from the education board in Inuvik. They told me that they would get back to me. I didn't meet with the board, but they already got back to me via phone and said they cannot support this position because of the funding and the community of Sachs Harbour has the student/teacher ratio already and are not required to provide a teacher. But, Mr. Speaker, there are eight students here in a community that needs a teacher for two and a half months. Will this government commit spending the money to service these eight students? They'd do it for the South

Slave. Why can't they do it for Nunakput? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gets very complicated where we've allocated funds based on where the students are enrolled. So we do provide the funding. We do provide the service to those eight students the Member is referring to. It's just a matter of choice that the students are back in the community. Again, the decision lies with the Beaufort-Delta Education Council to make that decision, and the district education authority. If they are exploring options of extending high schools, those are discussions that need to take place as well. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I need the Minister to commit the money I need for the eight students in the community of Sachs Harbour. Like I said earlier, he is the Minister. He could try to find the funding to make this possible. You have eight students here who are not getting an education. That's not right. If he's not going to do it today, I am going to come back for the next 20 days of sitting and I'll ask him in his office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We continue to work with each district education council on the enrolment issues and also having those students enrolled and also being successful in their programs. We continue to strive there. We continue to provide funding to them to make that a successful program in the communities. So, Mr. Speaker, I can commit today to continue to work with the Beaufort-Delta Education Council, what the status is of those eight students who have been identified here and what the board of education is going to do as we go forward. We can continue monitoring that and we can get back to the Member on that particular item. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 227-16(4):
ADDITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS
FOR TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Education with regard to my Member's statement, similar along the lines of Mr. Jacobson. We have a similar problem in Tsiigehtchic and I believe in all small communities with populations under 200. Using the student/teacher ratio does not work to get another teacher in the community. To be fair to those students who are having to go up to Inuvik and elsewhere to get their high school education, the reason they are going there is because the

teachers are in those larger schools which provide the ability to provide that curriculum. Because of that situation we have in the small communities where you only have two teachers in Tsiigehtchic to provide an education program for the communities, you need extra teachers on the ground in order to make those programs work.

Mr. Speaker, when they had the home boarding in Inuvik, they were spending almost \$500,000 for 20 students out of Inuvik; \$500,000. You could have taken that \$500,000 and given \$250,000 to Sachs Harbour, \$250,000 to Tsiigehtchic, offered them two teachers apiece, you would have solved your problem. Will the Minister consider looking at an option of putting more money into those communities over and above the exact formula that is there now to offer high school education in those communities?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at various options on how we can enhance our services in small, isolated communities such as Tsiigehtchic or Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok and other communities. Part of the ongoing discussion we're having with the education council is identifying those resources. There is also the enrolment issue. We're dealing with an enrolment that is going down, and that doesn't help in small communities. So, certainly, those are the strategic thinking that we are having with our departments and with the community organizations. We need to find a solution. One solution is to increase funding. How can we do that? Where can we find the funds? Those are options we are currently exploring.

MR. KRUTKO: If the Minister would be seriously considering the cost right now that is being borne by the divisional board of education in Inuvik for home boarding or for a hostel, which is already part of their budget, take those dollars and give it to those communities so the community students don't have to leave their home communities and put it into those communities so they can hire more teachers.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: This particular discussion can be undertaken by my department with the education council in the Beaufort-Delta. I definitely wouldn't want to dictate on where the money should be going. It was their decision. Like I stated earlier, those are the experts around the table. We need to get the advice from them. We can certainly meet with them to identify where we should extend it, whether it be home boarding or other areas. Those are the types of discussions that can certainly be undertaken.

MR. KRUTKO: So what happens to the students who have dropped out? Are they basically going to

lose their whole education because of having to go back to their home communities and having no high school education or programs there to assist them? Like Mr. Jacobson, I'd like to know if there is a support mechanism in the Department of Education to assist those students who have gone back to their home communities, by way of funds for tutoring, funds to work with them to make sure they don't lose their whole school year. Are there ways we can salvage the school year so they can move forward with their education?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, that type of discussion needs to happen at the district education council with our department, identifying funding or resources within our department and also within the board department. We've already allocated funds for this school year operation, and those eight students or other students that Mr. Krutko is alluding to, we need to look at their status. The funding that's been allocated to Inuvik, certainly they will lose that if the students are back in Tsiigehtchic. We need to adjust in those areas as well. The board needs to make those decisions as well. I have to respect those decisions. Certainly we can discuss that at the board level as we move forward.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Presently they're spending about \$180,000 in regard to the home boarders. I'm just wondering if that money could be given to the community so they can maybe hire a few extra teachers in those communities to assist these students to keep them in school and get them into the classroom and keep them there to try to salvage the year end. There is money still in the budget no longer being expended. It was for the purpose of home boarding. Can those dollars be reallocated to those communities and get those kids back into school?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That is the type of discussion that we will certainly be having. I would advise Members to try to meet up with board members on the educational factor, because it's the board of education that is telling us where they are going to expend their money a year in advance. Sometimes we hear complaints or issues or opportunities that we move forward with, but those are discussions that we need to have with the board of education.

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

QUESTION 228-16(4):
GNWT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
PROVIDED TO BUSINESSES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry,

Tourism and Investment. It goes back to my Member's statement where I talked about the future of the delivery and provision of business services here in the Northwest Territories.

Since I became a Member in 2003 this has been an issue. During the business plan review last fall the Department of ITI commented in their business plan that they were interested in a one-window service delivery model, something that's been talked about for a number of years. I'd like to ask the Minister when exactly the department will have a presentation in front of committee to have a look at this service delivery model.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first indication I've heard from the Member that he wanted a presentation to the standing committee, but we're quite prepared to present at the committee's convenience.

MR. RAMSAY: For obvious reasons that I cited in my Member's statement -- the lack of business start-ups, creation, the lack of any real economic diversification in our economy -- I think that time is of the essence that the department and the government move on this. I'd like to ask the Minister what the future is of the Business Development Investment Corporation in the rollout of this new plan.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I guess I'm a bit surprised at the Member's line of questioning since he was involved with developing legislation for BDIC and also the standing committee was consulted extensively in setting up the SEED program, which I think is working very well.

MR. RAMSAY: I guess whether it's working really well or not, if less than a third of the overall funding of the SEED program is actually going into businesses, then it's debatable whether or not that's actually working. I'd like to ask the Minister -- and I know I was around when BDIC was created and everything -- how it is that we allow the BDIC to have a board in place and do the work on behalf of that corporation when it appears that they're under direct and immediate control of the Department of ITI?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I think if you look at the legislation establishing BDIC you would see that they are an independent board. There is no opportunity for political interference with approval of loans and the only avenue is for me to provide general direction to the board, and that is according to the legislation.

With regard to the SEED program, which is Support for Entrepreneurs in Economic Development policy, in the consultation we were, with committee it was very clear that the focus should be on what we call

level two communities. I'm pleased to report that since its inception, the SEED program has been oversubscribed. Last year we gave out \$2.9 million. This year we will be giving out \$3.3 million. To date we've allocated approximately \$2.9 million. I think the SEED program is working very well for what it's intended. The money is going out to the smaller communities and it's allowing the people at the small community level to get involved with business.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have to make sure the money is getting into real businesses and diversifying our economy. Again, I think if only one-third of that funding is actually going to businesses, that is debatable.

The Minister talked about political interference and I know the BDIC was before standing committee late last year. The presentation they gave committee that day was quite vague and void of any real numbers. I'm just wondering, was that presentation vetted through the Department of ITI before it was given to standing committee?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was provided with a copy of the presentation. I don't believe it was vetted by myself. But basically when we make a presentation to committee, we tried to respond to what the committee wishes to be briefed on, and unless they give us some very specific direction, generally we would give a very broad presentation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 229-16(4):

CABINET STRATEGIC INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are addressed to the Premier in relation to a number of the Strategic Initiatives committees. I spoke in my Member's statement about my concern for the lack of accomplishments of a number of these committees and the lack of reporting from those committees back to Regular Members. So my first question to the Premier is to try to get some information about one of the Strategic Initiatives committees which is near and dear to the Regular Members' hearts and where we haven't seen any accomplishments that I'm aware of. So I'd like to ask the Premier if he could outline the accomplishments of the Cost of Living Strategic Initiatives committee and what they've done over the last year. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Strategic Initiatives committees have been continuing to do their work. Just the other day the

Member asked about the program review office. That's that office feeding the work, for example, the Refocusing Government Initiative. Some of the work that we had ongoing feeds into that. For example, the electricity rate review one could have an impact on the work within the Cost of Living committee, for example. I can provide the Members an update, a sheet of the work that's been undertaken and is ready for presentation to committees and the work that is ongoing. So I'll get that prepared for Members. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess if there's that much work that is ongoing and there's a sheet that's available, I'm curious why the Premier can't provide that information to Regular Members on an ongoing basis. I guess I also want to say that if the information that we're getting is the same information that's already in the budget and in the business plans, I'm aware of that. I want to know specific actions, specific plans, specific programs that are being undertaken relative to these committees. So I'll ask the Premier again: are there any specific accomplishments that the Cost of Living Strategic Initiatives committee has managed to complete in this past year? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, much of the work that we do feeds the system that we operate under and that's a budget system. So, as the Member stated, she's aware of the budget process and has that information. Ongoing work in the Strategic Initiatives committees, there's some of the program review areas that are still needing to be completed and done. So as I stated, I will get that information to the Member.

As well, the Member, in her Member's statement, talked about it seems like we've slowed down, there's nobody in the offices to do the work. Well, simply, the fact is that not all work gets done behind a desk in Yellowknife; Ministers travel to their constituencies, work out of their offices there, as well as travel with Members to their own constituencies at the request of Members or take part in F/P/T. We have to be careful what we say here and the language we use in the sense of describing what's happening, because I could talk about the mornings I've been here when I go down the hall and who do I have a chance to speak to or bounce ideas off of, but we won't go there. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: That's an interesting challenge. I guess I would like to know from the Premier what time of day he's coming up and down the halls, because I tend to be there most mornings. I have another question for the Premier. I'd like to know, relative to all this information, or all these accomplishments, all the work that's going on that the Premier has referenced, how is that our public and our residents can become aware and be

informed about the work of our Strategic Initiatives committees? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of processes that we would inform the public for a change in direction that we would do. For example, we would incorporate many of our initiatives into the budget process. Members are aware that budget items that are brought forward feed that system. Our energy work that's been done is fed through that system. The work that we have then approved as an Assembly gets put onto our website, either policy changes, program changes and updated in that manner as well. So we can look at how to expand that. But simply and first, those Strategic Initiatives committees are looking at how we do business and will feed the budget process, the policy process and the program process we have available. As we as an Assembly decide that it is time and there's enough information to make a decision for further changes, then we would go out either for, as committees take bills out that are changed or, when we need to, an initiative where we take a process out and go with committees or a department goes out with initiatives to get feedback from people across the Territories. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to... Well, I won't. The information from the Premier is pretty vague. It's nice that that information is there. It's nice that the information is in the budget, but our public does not have access to the business plans as we do. What is in the budget really doesn't reference the activities of the Strategic Initiatives committees, so there really isn't any way for our public to become aware. The Premier also didn't indicate where on the government's huge number of websites this information is located. So I would ask the Premier if he could be a little more specific. Where is information posted relative to the accomplishments of Strategic Initiatives committees that our general public can access? Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: I'll get the information for the Member to follow the chart of how we work with Strategic Initiatives committees, how that feeds our existing system, how that works into our planning process, that builds the budget that Members will be taking the months to look at and pass, hopefully, as we get through this. But I will provide that type of information for the Member as we get into our budget process as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 230-16(4):
CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I've been listening, with interest, to the responses from the Minister of

ENR. I want to ask the Minister of ENR in regard to the Bathurst Inlet caribou population, which was 120,000 in 2006. The Minister indicated that in 2009 the population dropped to 30,000, so 90,000 caribou disappeared somewhere. I want to ask the Minister regarding his consultation on the ban in this specific area. Is the Minister willing to look at possibly the ban in terms of giving the aboriginal hunters a percentage of caribou in that area, maybe a half percent or 1 percent in terms of providing that to the aboriginal hunters?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They say at night when it's dark and cold outside and the stars are glittering like diamonds in the sky and you're away from the communities, if you listen closely to the wind and the whispers of the wind you'll hear the caribou asking us for our help, reminding us for centuries that they have helped provide life and subsistence to the people of the North. Now they are in a time of need and they're asking us not to forget all that they have done for us over those very many centuries. Our job is to now come to the aid of the caribou in this, their time of need, to avoid the destruction of this particular herd because of various, very many causes. The numbers are so low, Mr. Speaker, that right now biologists and all the folks that do this indicate that any further taking of this herd or diminishment of this herd could imperil its very existence. We have to be there for the caribou. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the lifting of a small percentage of the caribou, I believe that because the issue here is it's so large and so huge to the people in the Mackenzie Valley here, it would divert a political volcano, I guess, in terms of the issue of aboriginal rights, conservation, who's right, who's going to win. It's going to impact long-term relationships with the aboriginal people. I want to again ask the Minister if he would consider a small percentage of the total amount of herd, as we've done in the Sahtu, at least look at this issue in terms of the bigger picture, in terms of relationship building with aboriginal people and having some consideration to look at this.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, who has to survive is the caribou. The big picture is the caribou. That has to be the big picture. When you talk to every co-management board and every aboriginal government, the issue is the caribou. Back in 2007, even the Dene Nation said the Dene Nation leadership has identified the decline in caribou stocks as a crisis situation, a top priority to be addressed by all the nations within Denendeh to preserve caribou for future generations. That is the big picture. That is the issue. We are working hard

to do that. We are very willing to come up with ways to accommodate the impact on hunting rights. There are other options, but we have to focus on why we are doing this. It's to protect this Bathurst herd whose numbers have dwindled very, very precariously. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: In my discussions with the elders -- and I've had a few discussions with them, Mr. Speaker -- the elders say the animals on this land are there for us to survive as human beings. I believe if the Minister wants to quote more traditional knowledge, I think it needs to go to the people, to the real hunters, the real people who use caribou, people like Colville Lake, people in Deline who say this is not right. Why are our calves being born two weeks late? Something is wrong. Again, people who know this, it's not the government. So I'll ask the Minister again, in terms of the ban here, the people know what's right. I believe that this government is going to be in a lot of trouble if they continue on with the attitude of ignoring what the people are saying. Will the Minister again consider lifting the ban to the aboriginal hunters, a small percentage, not everything, the aboriginal hunters so they can practice their hunting and their way of life as they were given by the Creator of this land?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We are very aware of our priorities and what is important. It's the caribou. We know very clearly what the numbers tell us. The Member knows that. We have done a full documentation. We've laid out all the work we have. We've worked collaboratively with all the co-management boards across the land including in this part of the country. We've involved communities and hunters when we've done our counts and census. The issues tell us that the caribou here are in trouble. This Bathurst herd is rocketing its way to extinction unless we take some interim emergency measures to get us through this hunting season to allow that broader process to engage fully the Wekeezhii board, the Metis and all the other appropriate stakeholders to help with a longer term management plan. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If that's the case, the aboriginal people would have agreed. Why is it that when I call my leadership in the Sahtu, they say this is not right, this is wrong. The Wekeezhii board has to make a decision and it has not yet made a decision. The government, in its wisdom, jumped the gun. Mr. Speaker, was there an agreement to say, yes, we'll come back? Is that part of the consultation? Sometimes I hear consultation in terms of this is what you shall do and that is it. Was there an agreement in terms of putting a ban here and waiting for people? You should really come to the communities and talk to the elders. Why are the elders saying I would like to

come and talk to the government as to what they are doing with this issue?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Let me restate the two separate issues: the broader issue of the long-term management plan for the Bathurst that's going to flow the Wekeezhii process tied in with working with the Akaitcho, the Yellowknives and the Northwest Territories Metis.

The process was supposed to flow to certain deadlines. Those deadlines slipped. We had a situation where it was clearly identified that this herd is in very dire straits. Because that process had slipped, there was a gap. There was going to be full hunting going to happen this winter when the herd cannot survive further hunting at this point requiring interim emergency measures tied to the completion of the Wekeezhii process. We are committed to that. We have to remember the caribou are asking for our help. The numbers tell us they are in trouble. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 231-16(4):
GNWT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
PROVIDED TO BUSINESSES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up where I left off with some questions on the future of business-related support here in the Northwest Territories. I want to just pick up where I left off again. We talked a little bit earlier about SEED. The average SEED contribution, Mr. Speaker, is only \$6,000. You wonder how can we expect much in the way of business and employment creation when the average is \$6,000 and the majority of that SEED funding, Mr. Speaker, appears to be for community events and ongoing subsidies like tools and snow machines and things like that. So I want to ask the Minister what are we doing in thinking larger picture on real job creation and business start-ups here in the Northwest Territories. What support is there for that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a tool kit of programs that can be accessed for a number of different programs. Through our loans programs, we can make business loans up to \$2 million and we do have some grants and contribution programs. On an ad hoc basis, we can go approach FMB to see if there is funding that falls outside the different programs that can be used to promote development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: The Minister talks about the departmental contributions. Like I said in my statement earlier today, just last year 15 of these

clients received more than \$100,000 in contribution financing. That's two-thirds of the entire value of ITI's contributions and not one of them, zero, was a private business. I would like to ask the Minister how do we get more funding in the hands of private business so we can create jobs and diversify our economy here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I think it was two years ago when we went to establish the SEED program. We consulted with various committees and at that time, everyone agreed that we needed to get more funding into the level II communities and I think we've been very successful in doing that. The larger businesses can approach the banks or they can approach the BDIC for loans. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: That last question, that was about departmental contributions, it wasn't about SEED, but I'll take the answer for what it's worth.

I want to talk about manufacturing and I talked about that as well being in serious decline. We're losing value-added opportunities such as Fortune Minerals. We've got other opportunities on the horizon and I would like to ask the Minister why doesn't the government of the Northwest Territories have an industrial development strategy. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Perhaps if the federal government would devolve the responsibility for mining and oil and gas to the Government of the Northwest Territories, we would have an industrial strategy. Right now, all of the royalties go to the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is an excuse, I guess, but we could use it as an excuse or we could use it as an opportunity. We have opportunities, Mr. Speaker, especially in the value-added side of things. I would like to ask the Minister again where is the department and the government when it comes to an industrial strategy so we can attract value-added opportunities here in the Northwest Territories to diversify our economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I guess in the fact that the federal government has responsibility for oil and gas and mining and they collect all the royalties, we have been able to get through the back door through the environmental assessment process to promote value-added. I am pleased that the Member is supportive of value-added, because in Yellowknife when we set up the secondary diamond industry, we put a lot of money into it and we had a lot of pushback on it. To this date, we are reviewing our Diamond Policy and it's something that's tentative out there. I think everybody here wants to

see value added. To date that's the best way we've found to take advantage of development and certainly it's something that's probably, until such time as devolution and resource revenue sharing occurs, one of the only ways where we can get benefit from development.

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

QUESTION 232-16(4):
SMART ENERGY SOLUTIONS
FOR NWT RESIDENTS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement earlier. My questions are for the lead Minister for energy or any other appropriate Minister. We all await the formal release of the internal NTPC review and we've seen the reports on the rate review. We're interested in what the contribution is to providing to our energy future. Can the Minister confirm that a major intent of these reviews is to improve the affordability of power for all users through reduced costs?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for energy initiatives, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we started this process where we undertook the electricity review, it was understood that initially it was a three-part process. The first part was the electricity review, an NTPC review, and an ATCO proposal. We are working very closely with all Members of this Legislative Assembly and certainly our basic tenant is affordability.

MR. BROMLEY: I think we'll all be keenly watching for improved affordability there. Obviously we can't afford to endlessly review our energy providers. We've had other energy reviews of NTPC in the past and so on, and how we supply power. The public clearly wants action on this. The rates are going through the roof. Cheaper power, improved local opportunities and environmental sustainability must be key pillars in the results of these reviews. How is the Minister intending to ensure that these three needs will be advanced through the final decisions that result from the reviews?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I guess, first and foremost, I'll be working very closely with my Legislative Assembly colleagues. We have also received input from almost all the sectors or interveners who have intervened in the process and also we've heard from a number of different associations and a number of municipalities that have given us their views on the direction we should go with the electricity rate review. What we are proposing to do is to put in front of the Members a number of different costs of modelling and to see the direction we're heading in, to see if everybody is supportive.

Hopefully when we do that it will cover the three basic principles that you outlined.

MR. BROMLEY: I think the last comment the Minister provided, I appreciate that information. The last comment is the source of my concern; that we're waiting to see if these things are covered. I'm very concerned that those three pillars have not been sufficiently provided in the guidance to the reviews. Can the Minister assure us that they indeed were and we're just not waiting to see if they happen to be covered in the results?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The terms of reference have been out there since last year sometime. Certainly our expectation is we will come up with rates that would cover all those pillars.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that response. On the question of energy efficiency, which I again raised in my statement, the government has been providing rebates, which do help some of our public but certainly not those, and there are many, who cannot afford the other 80 to 90 percent of the cost of energy-efficient appliances and so on. We know that there are big expenditures within government, but I'm concerned that we're not doing nearly enough in the outreach. I don't really see in the review information I've seen so far that it's addressed there. I'm wondering where the focus is on helping our citizens directly through energy efficiency and the huge gains we know are out there so that their cost of living can be reduced. Is there an opportunity for the Minister to make sure that gets addressed in there?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: With regard to energy efficiency, I think the largest part of areas where you can make efficiencies would be the benefit from conservation. I think if we change the way costs are allocated with regard to the generation of electricity, I think that there is an avenue there. Certainly with the \$60 million Alternative Energy Initiative that this government has instituted to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, I think we would benefit significantly from that. As well, through our Green Government Initiative I think there are certainly opportunities for government to reduce their consumption of energy. I think the biggest area in the scenario, where I'd be looking to my colleagues for some feedback and direction, I think is to change the way costs are allocated so that when you do practise conservation and become more energy efficient, then you benefit from those practices.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 14-16(4): COST OF PHYSICIAN AND REGISTERED NURSE VISITS TO TSIIGEHTCHIC

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

1. What are the total costs associated with physician visits to Tsiigehtchic for the period between October 2008 and September 2009 and the cost per hour of physician services?
2. What are the total costs associated with registered nurse visits to Tsiigehtchic for the period between October 2008 and September 2009 and the cost per hour of nursing services?

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

WRITTEN QUESTION 15-16(4): CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

1. Can the Minister provide to me the GNWT or Environment and Natural Resources definition of "consultation"?
2. Can the Minister outline the process that supported his decision to implement a ban on hunting caribou in the area in question?
3. Will the Minister provide an explanation as to why the caribou are calving two weeks later than the normal period for calving?
4. Can the Minister provide what types of interim agreements were signed with the Tlicho or Yellowknives Dene communities to implement the ban on hunting caribou?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 10: EXEMPTION ACT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday,

February 3, 2010, I will move that Bill 10, Exemption Act, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act; Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act; and Tabled Document 62-16(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2010-2011, with Mr. Bromley in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Greetings, committee. We're all set to go here. We have before us today for consideration Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act; Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act; Tabled Document 62-16(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2010-2011. What is the wish of committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee would like to continue with general comments on the budget legislation and proceed, if we get through general comments, with the first department for consideration, the Department of Health and Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. So we will start. That was general comments on the budget and, if we get to it, the beginning of the review of Health and Social Services. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. Short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Welcome back, committee. I'd like to call us to order. We are entertaining general comments on the budget. We'll start with Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, with regard to the overall budget, there's a lot of good things in it, but I think we're losing sight of the reason why governments exist and operate is to provide services to its residents. For myself, that's one area that I feel that is lacking with regard to this budget. We've done a lot of focus around infrastructure, we've done a lot of focus around building capacity for governments, government departments, large-scale projects, whether it's the Deh Cho Bridge or looking at the Taltson project.

Again, I think that fundamentals for government and government responsibilities to providing services

and something this government should seriously look at is what were the programs being provided prior to division to what programs and services are being provided today. I think it will definitely show that we have seen a decline in programs and services, especially in the smaller communities and an increase in programs and services in the larger communities. I think it's pretty clear to see that from the allocations to the communities based on the distribution of services based on per capita has declined in those smaller communities compared to 1998-99 to where we are today.

I think, if anything, myself, I see that without having healthy, vibrant communities that are socially and economically viable to sustain themselves and also providing programs and services so that people do feel safe, secure and have assurances that their health and well-being is being taken into consideration and that those services are being provided, we will see a decrease of student attendance, a decrease in regards to health and social statistic with regard to diabetes, cancers, those ailments which could be preventable if the government focussed on sustainable communities.

I think it's also important to relay that this government has to quit passing the buck with regard to saying it's not up to us, it's up to a health board, up to an education board. The Ministers of those departments have sole responsibility to ensure programs and services are being delivered and if they're not being delivered, that you take steps to remedy the situation or take those dollars back from those particular agencies and ensure that those programs are administered through a different mechanism. I know there were discussions earlier on with regard to board reform and the more I think about it, that's probably the way we should go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yay!

MR. KRUTKO: It's important to realize that by doing that, it's not simply a way of centralizing everything in one place, but ensuring that those dollars that should be expended in the area of education, the area of health care is actually being spent on education and actually being spent on health care and not being expended on administration.

I'm glad to see that the Department of ECE and the Housing Corporation saw the light in regards to dealing with public housing and income support. I think, if anything, there is also an area that Housing has to take a closer look at and consider exactly how do they calculate rents by way of using a formula used now, which I believe is unfair in regards to using gross income versus net.

I think, also, the other issue has to be dealt with around the area of affordability for housing. I think in most cases that we have to realize that we do have aging infrastructure. We do have people that

are having some challenges with housing. We continue to put rents up and kick them out of housing but we still continue to pay to put them somewhere else. It is something that we have to grapple with. I think we have to look at housing in light of people that are homeless, people that are hard to house and the aging population of the people in the Northwest Territories. I think we do have to get back in some means, because the Department of Health and Social Services and Housing are finding a way to put more seniors housing or seniors facilities in the communities where basically the numbers allow it to be delivered by way of keeping the elders in the home communities, keeping them close to their families, but more importantly allow them to live out their days in comfort.

Again, like I stated, the overall budget is something that I think goes a long way to dealing with the infrastructure challenges that we face, but, again, we do have to find ways of ensuring the public that we are not spending public funds for basically government or non-government agencies regardless if it is the mining companies or the oil and gas companies or where we don't receive any royalties or any real benefit by way of resource benefits in which all that flows to Ottawa. I think, at the end of the day, the federal government has to pay for those infrastructures regardless if it is a road to a mine, hydro development to a mine, and through those power purchase agreements that they should be able to stand on their own without any public funds being expended on it. Until there is some heritage fund of some sort established, and I think on the heritage fund idea, I think it is a great idea. I think what we should do is be requiring that the federal government take some of the Norman Wells resources that it presently receives today and put it into the heritage fund immediately. The federal government owns one-third of the Norman Wells field. They own it. It is a Crown corporation or the federal government has one-third ownership of the Norman Wells oilfield. If anything, that is what we should be asking for, is that we take a portion of one-third ownership, take those revenues that they receive, which I believe is somewhere in the range of \$200 million a year, and put it into a heritage fund regardless if that fund is going to be used to build the Mackenzie Highway or used to ensure that we have dollars there to develop the infrastructure that is going to be needed to extract other resources regardless if it is oil and gas or minerals or even for tourism.

Again, on the Deh Cho Bridge, I think that it is long overdue. It is on its way. I do support the concept of the Deh Cho Bridge of how we can develop infrastructure in the Northwest Territories. I think the government has to think outside the box and realize the Deh Cho Bridge is the first of many bridges we need in the Northwest Territories and

start focusing on those other crossings regardless if it is the Liard, the Peel, the Mackenzie up around Tsiigehtchic or in regards to the Mackenzie Valley. The Mackenzie Valley, we have invested some \$30 million on bridges. I think, by doing that, we now have a better case for the Mackenzie Highway to finding ways of actually connecting those bridges and building the Mackenzie Highway up the valley and, more importantly, working with the private sector, working with the aboriginal organizations to get there.

Before I close, I don't want to lose sight of the issue that is still on top of my agenda, is the access road from Aklavik to the gravel source. Again, there is nothing even mentioned in this agreement or this package. It was mentioned previously. Again, this government has an obligation to ensure communities have access to the gravel sources and not to find a way that, sorry, now it is the federal government's responsibility. It is the Government of the Northwest Territories to find a way to strike gravel from public infrastructure in communities such as the gravel source in Aklavik which, again, I see very little by way of this import of this government. I don't know why, but for some reason they are totally reluctant to step up to the plate.

There was a motion passed in this Legislative Assembly supporting two projects. One was Tuktoyaktuk to the gravel source. The other was to Aklavik gravel source. Again, this government, for some reason or another, and I don't know if it is a feel good capital item or not, but again I will be stressing that I was hoping that we could see something added in this budget. Again, there is nothing there mentioning that. I think also realizing that the community of Aklavik is very frustrated with the way they have been treated on this matter and not being fair to that community. With that, Mr. Chair, I will leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. We are open for general comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, my comments would be brief in terms of the budget. I do want to thank the staff members and the Ministers for putting together this budget. I know that the budget process is quite contentious and that the needs are always greater than what we could afford and that priorities have to be considered and sometimes when I have issues that want to be brought forward to see if they can get any attention, sometimes they go in with the mix of other things and sometimes they don't come out on top or it has to be considered at another time.

Mr. Chairman, the budget here shows an increase of 7.6 percent from 2009-2010. This shows for me a huge increase in terms of our operations. Mr. Chairman, the budget also shows that there are some changes to the sunset within the government.

There are some decisions that need to be made, if we are going to continue funding some of these sunset programs that are not yet being secured through this government in terms of if the federal government would fund these certain programs. They have been funded in the past. That is quite a concern to me in terms of some really good programs that did come out from the sunset programs such as the HELP program. That is a concern to me. How do we continue in this type of funding?

Mr. Chairman, the funding for the TSC, for example, seems to be a department that always seems to be increasing their funding each year. It doesn't seem that we have any type of control. I would like to see in the future the government can have some discussions as to polling the TSC in line in terms of increasing funding. They have been asking for a few dollars every year that seems to increase to a point where it questions what the increases really are for. I want to say to the Minister in terms of putting this budget together not knowing the certainties of the federal government, I think in the future in terms of revenue that it's going to be quite challenging for the next couple of years. The programs in the communities are desperately needed and should be continued. Looking at some of the programs, I don't quite believe that it should be there in terms of some of the funding. There are other basic needs that really need to be looked at, such as health care in our communities, education programs in our communities.

Even the energy initiative programs, Mr. Chair, that seems to be a priority for other communities. However, in the Sahtu region it seems that the energy initiative programs are not given a priority in our region. Just looking at the energy initiatives in areas where there's lower prices per kilowatt, just on the Energy Initiative, for example, there seems to be a lot of programs or support for communities with very low costs to their energy, the power. It seems like communities such as Good Hope, Deline, Tulita or Colville Lake, even the Wells, they're not getting that much attention as opposed to other communities like Fort Smith that has a huge number of projects going there to look at the energy efficiency of certain operations there. So I'm not too sure of the consultation or the qualifications for having other communities being considered for these types of projects, because in our communities there's a high cost of fuel through the barge system, transportation of the fuel, the isolation.

We, as you know, are not on the all-weather road system. I'm very happy with the Ministers who are looking at the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway in the Sahtu. We certainly want to look at continued support of the bridging program, which is a lot of money, and we want to look at other infrastructure that would support our communities.

The health program services we see certainly need to be stabilized and we certainly need to look at programs such as the Diabetes Program, programs that need to be run in the communities where support is there for people. There's certainly an increase in terms of diabetes. The communities are looking forward to seeing how we could have more programs like that in our communities. When you look at operations and maintenance for health services, for example, in Yellowknife you'll see we have allocated some \$2 million for a dementia facility and when you look into the communities where you want to see some basic programs such as health care, dental care, doctor care, we seem to be told that the money is not there and that we have to look elsewhere or we'll do some other creative solutions to take care of the health of our people.

Mr. Chair, it's quite disheartening. It's almost to a point of is the government really concerned about the health of our people in our communities where other regions have, compared to the Sahtu, really good health care in their communities.

So I've got some points that I want to point out in the budget with each department and, overall, I want to say that I welcome this budget and hope that there are some changes that could see some benefits to the people in my region that I represent. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next on the list I have Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really happy with the budget that's been provided to us, especially seeing the enhancement to early childhood programming in the rural remote communities. That is really going to be a big help for the communities that I represent up and down the Valley in Tuk, Sachs, Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, especially with the monies that we're getting for support with...(inaudible)...support for regional sporting events. That's going to be able to bring the youth in from the outlying communities. I think this year, Mr. Chairman, they're heading into Fort McPherson for a soccer tournament or a basketball tournament. They're flying in from all over the region. So I look forward to going over and supporting our youth in sporting events like that.

The \$450,000 regional youth officer positions to support youth and programming also in rural and remote communities was really good to see, because this year we had a little bit of problems in Ulukhaktok for the settlement maintainers. So it was really good to see in the budget that Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour settlement maintainers, so it could properly maintain the schools and all the government buildings. So that's good to see. The overall school replacements I'd like to see for next year so I could get the addition for Mangialuk School put in and I'll be pushing that this year.

Our formula funding for the communities was really good to see so our communities or our hamlets' community infrastructure funding is getting a good \$28 million in the budget once passed. I think that's a really good opportunity for us as a government to help our local community governments succeed in what they're trying to do and cover the shortfalls.

The airport infrastructure improvements, this year we're getting the two airports in my riding. So I'm looking forward to the grand opening of that with the Minister. I look forward to that, Mr. Minister. Good job.

One thing that we do have to worry about is with the health care in our communities where our doctors and the dental teams coming into the communities that are such a short time frame. I asked this last year, just making sure utilization is to the max in regards to that, because we're having to send kids out to Inuvik now for dental and it's not maintained, it's probably taken out. So we have to really start working with the local health centres to see if we could help them with that.

Another one is housing. We still have a real shortage of housing units in the community. So what we have to do is... Especially in Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk and Ulukhaktok, those communities are short units. So I hope we could put somewhere in the budget for this coming year if we could get one or two units extra in the communities.

Like Mr. Yakeleya said earlier, our power costs in the community and the cost of living is 80 percent to 300 percent cost difference in regard to just general items to try to feed your family. It's pretty tough. You know, I have a family of nine, so it's "Kids, chew your food slowly." The cost of living is really great. If you're not a two-income family, it makes it tough. Not only that, not everybody has jobs in our communities. The biggest thing is ECE has to come on side in regards to maximizing and giving and they've got to really see if we could work on the allocation of the funding that they're getting.

Other than that, right through the whole budget I'm happy, and I look forward to going through the page by page with my colleagues on a go-forward basis of this and getting this job done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There certainly are some good things in this budget, and I appreciate those. I think, at the same time, though, that we are missing opportunities. Here we are on our third budget. Things should be very clear to us now and, like I say, I see some missed opportunities.

I'd like to start, though, with concerns about capacity and implementation. We have a lot of what I think are very good strategies either developed or under development: the Water Strategy, the Hydro

Strategy, Energy Strategy and so on. The biomass strategy, I hope to hear about soon, but I really have serious concerns about capacity there. We can have all the strategies we want, but if we don't have the capacity to implement, then that's not going to get us anywhere. I don't see that aspect of it reflected in the budget. The devil is in the details and perhaps there are details on that to come out. But that's an area where if we do not nail down the expertise required for some of these things -- some of them do require very specific expertise -- all other jurisdictions are dealing with these same issues and will be nailing down that expertise.

So again, I say this is a missed opportunity if we're not moving on building that into our system and that means, of course, that we need to, to stay within our means, drop some things.

There again, I'd rather see a more productive program review office. I think they made some good achievements with the general purpose office space review, but there's so much more that they could and should be doing and it's very difficult to find out information about that. One of the things on that is a cross-departmental thing, basically the role of integration and coordination; connecting the dots, basically. So many of our programs, so many of our issues and needs are cross-departmental, and yet we have these isolated, independent... I'm starting to sound like I must have sounded -- many of us did -- during our first budget review. So these things keep popping up and I don't see us being effective at this yet.

On the policy development side, I haven't seen much on that and compared to the need, I'm very happy to see the heritage fund highlighted in the Minister's remarks. Let's get that designed and in place ASAP. I think that's been clear, both from the public and from my colleagues.

On the revenue side, I think we are again missing opportunities on the resource tax and the capital tax side of things. We heard that the pipeline, the Mackenzie Gas Project is moving forward and yet so many things... We've known about this for years and contemplating this and other sorts of non-renewable resource projects and haven't moved on these things. These are missed opportunities, and the rates that we establish can be sensitive to economic situations, so that when we do have a kerfuffle like in 2008-09, they can respond automatically to that. But to keep postponing them, these are very unlikely to happen now in the life of this government. We were certainly talking about them when I joined, so presumably they were talked about before. We don't even have the basic policy done to implement those if and when we decide to.

Mackenzie Gas Project, again, JRP report, what are the financial implications? These things are huge that are called for in the recommendations.

Again, I don't see that well addressed. The policy side, the point of sale, as I understand it, the pipeline is being built 100 or 10 metres into Alberta, so the point of sale is down there and that removes an incredible opportunity for income for us. Where is our policy work on that and making sure NEB requires a point of sale to be Northwest Territories?

In a similar vein, the Petroleum Products Tax Act. We do not tax natural gas right now, and they're talking about generating a lot of power with natural gas. Again, we've talked about that ever since I've been here, and presumably people talked about that before. That gets into the whole need to review that act and realign taxes on petroleum products to reflect the carbon content of our fuels, of those fuels, and thus also provide a foundation to any carbon pricing we might contemplate in the future and, again, a huge policy area that should have been highlighted.

There was a positive thing I wanted to mention there. I see on the property tax side... Sorry, I've got to seek those out. The property tax side, we did get some work done last year, and I think there are more opportunities there. The pipeline would certainly be a huge piece of infrastructure. How are we taking advantage of that given our limitations?

The public housing review subsidy -- thank goodness. Really good stuff there. Stanton Territorial Hospital; again, where are the plans for that? Those of us in Social Programs had a tour of the hospital. It's been talked about ad nauseam in the House. Well, perhaps it's in there in the details and I didn't see it, but all of the Northwest Territories knows serious work is needed there. Let's get it going.

Nutritious foods studies, and yet more, and nutritious food education programs, we have so much going. I think we can do better than that. We've talked about a milk subsidy. I think some real opportunity lies there.

Sole-source contracting work, I hope that we're going to do a review and get... It should not be just used so much. It should be... And it shouldn't be internal. We should really be putting that work out competitively much more than we are.

Cost of living, it's so tied to our energy costs and energy initiatives, so I think there's much more, again, opportunities to achieve more with the dollars that we're spending in that. As per my statements and discussion earlier today, we need to ensure that whatever we do in these energy initiatives, they address the cost of living, the affordability of energy, and contribute to the development of the local economies by ensuring development of renewable, local energy, which would also, of course, build the ability to pay.

Aboriginal languages; I see we have some support there, but I don't see enough support in that area.

Goyatiko, for example -- the local Yellowknife standing program based in Dettah -- offers courses for the ALSIP program, but they're isolated courses, they're not a program. We've moved, I understand, to a community-based delivery of that, and yet where is the support so that a full program can actually be provided rather than just isolated programs that don't deliver the certificates that are needed.

Child care; you've heard me talk about child care before and you will again, I'm sure. Early childhood; very happy to see the \$600,000 for rural and remote programs and I think there are further opportunities there. I wonder if we should start thinking about full child care services for the people of the Northwest Territories. That's provided in Quebec and possibly other jurisdictions in Canada and has yielded a lot of benefits. So that's something I think we should be thinking about.

Finally, the arts industry support has again increased a little bit. I am very happy to see that. I think that is giving us good returns. One area that needs additional work is the area of the film industry. Really big opportunities there. We have incredible talent that is not able to be put to work. Our support there is kind of Mickey Mouse. Of course there are some caribou issues that we are hearing about and could use a little additional spending to try and get at what the real reasons are for the exceptional declines we have seen.

Mr. Chairman, my time is up. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General Comments. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said on Friday, I would have a few more comments to go through the opening address and highlight. Mr. Chairman, as I said on Friday, I am very supportive of working towards making our communities more sustainable through environmental investment, but one of the things that I find to date, we still have to realize that we need to find real savings for our cost of living issue. We continue to invest in cost of living initiatives but, as I said on Friday, several businesses all in the end say costs keep increasing. You go to anyone's power bill, the power bill keeps increasing. The oil bill keeps increasing. Of course, the cost of living makes it very unbearable to live here. I suspect that that is going to be one of the most significant emerging issues going into the next election for this Legislature which is, what has this government done to lower the cost of living? Although there continues to be good investment stewardship and, if anything, as I have said before, I think that may end up being one of the incidental hallmarks of this Legislature where it will be known for is a very green Legislature. It has taken on very positive initiatives to recognize its responsibility and role in the future. But setting that aside, what have we

done to address the cost of living? I think ultimately what we keep coming back to is nothing has changed. We just keep shuffling costs around and the cost of living here continues to grow.

Mr. Chairman, although I was listening very closely to the last speaker, I am glad to see we had no tax increases coming forward in this budget. I think that our economy has taken enough of a beating in the last year and I have said before that our corporate taxes will have a difficult time keeping up with our government's need for spending. I have often said that, and I really do believe this, that we don't necessarily have a revenue problem, we just have a spending problem. I would often look with high hopes to the program review office that it would find ways to tackle some of our larger spending. If I could take that further, I wish the program review office is more engaging with Members specific to where would we believe an initiative should be targeted and focused in on saving money. I think it is a real policy question on how we fund our programs and see our future. I think there needs to be more value put into that.

There are a couple of other areas that I would like to highlight. Certainly investments in children, youth and families is one. Something that I have heard this summer when I was doing some door knocking is that different people in the constituency talked about junior kindergarten and pre-kindergarten and noticing that it seems to be an emergence on some of the latest trends of what people are having as an expectation of where should education go and how should it be reflected. Long has passed the day where people sort of drop their kids off to someone who provides a day home and probably a very loving day home that is safe and secure, but the parents are starting to demand things such as a little earlier child education than what is being offered out there in an organized sense. I think their expectations are growing. The modern parent these days does not believe that parking your small child in front of the TV calling that day home child care management. A number of constituents have told me that they would like to see some organization evolve into that sort of area. It is not a simple answer. It is just to say now we are going to add junior kindergarten to all schools throughout the Territory. It is not an easy thing. With those things come costs as well as priorities, but it is an emerging issue that I think our government should start examining about what fruits of our labour will deliver positive results.

It is nice that we spend money on tons of programs. We can be here all day talking about them, but ultimately I hear it constantly everywhere I go. Education is the best employment program we have. We should start investing in it as soon as possible. A number of parents have talked to me about on the horizon they would like to see our government start addressing these issues as a

future initiative. I don't think that there is a case where people would assume that it would be there... They ask for it today and it would be there for the next education season for the school year that is, but yet I think it is an emerging issue. People would like to see that the government is focusing in on that direction.

Under stabilizing the health care system, I would like to congratulate the government on moving forward on the downtown clinic in Yellowknife here. I think it will have a significant benefit in a few areas. The first is obviously cost. Rather than having multiple leases throughout other buildings, the government will be able to help focus some of its financial resources into a particular area and, furthermore, doctors will be able to provide more walk-in services for patients. The coordination of those services would probably be a major factor. It would bring the administration of those separate offices together and we augment that with the new benefits of being able to do X-rays there and tests. I think it will be a huge step forward for health services here in this community. I think, in the long term, it will provide excellent value for what we are getting.

I think that is a bold step forward in the way the government has been doing business in the past. I certainly hope this will sort of drive out a model that should be expanded upon for other types of thinking. How can we consolidate services in a manner that makes sense in a particular community? When I emphasize consolidate, I don't necessarily mean for the community community. I mean within a community to make sure that we are getting good value for money. As I was complaining the other day about my concerns about local housing and moving the housing program back to the housing LHOs, what we have done is stepped away from a service centre or one-stop shop. I think initiatives like that shouldn't be frowned upon. We should be finding ways to do better business from a service centre of excellence point of view.

To continue under the health file per se, although it is not related to health directly, it is the housing for disabled people. In our community under the LHOs, we don't have stock of housing or an available stock for people when it comes to families. I know one particular family had been trying to get into housing for some time now and because of the disability, it is easy to find... Their response to me was it is easy for the housing authority to find a place for them to stay, but then it gets into a problem about is it a place that is of quality whereas it is safe. It is built with a person who has a disability in mind. With the aging population wanting to grow a little older and still be a little bit more dependent on their own rather than being put into a sort of centralized institution type service. People want to be able to be independent as long as possible.

But when it comes to family services out there, they are very few and far between. In one particular case now, I think we are paying well in excess of what can be considered a normal market rate in order to house somebody properly. Our housing program by itself, compartmentalizing that point and pushing it aside for a second, is not focused in on enough about trying to get people out onto their own feet, sort of the old helping hand approach. That is one of the big focuses, I think, that is now being hurt by separating the housing component out of the income support, as service centres continue to strive to get people to work harder and to stand up on their own and take advantage of the opportunities before them. Mr. Chairman, I think moving housing back to the local housing authorities was a step backwards.

Mr. Chairman, the big thing that as we all came into this Assembly, we talked about was the big thing that is coming forward on everyone's mind at the time were things like environment. I want to emphasize that I think the territorial government's focus is in the right direction, but we always have to keep cost of living in mind. Although we are going to spend a fair bit of money to continue expanding projects, I just want to end on the point that we still have to always keep the fact that the bottom line is always going to matter more than anything else.

We don't have to look too far than our southern states, that is the United States of course, and see that when people have a choice, they certainly like to do the good stewardship process, but when people's backs are against the wall, when it comes to being able to put food on the table, they tend to choose the economy over the environment, which, you know, up front is a mistake and over the long term it will be a mistake, but people are forced to do what they need to do. So I would exercise caution to this government by saying the more competitive we can be, the easier it is for people to live here under the conditions that we do survive under, whether it is heating your home or putting food on your table. I mean, those are very important issues and although we would like to do things constantly better, those are primary issues on people's minds. So, Mr. Chairman, for my opening comments, I will leave it there and, of course, with anything else, I will have questions during page-by-page review. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Comments. General comments. With that, we are hearing more general comments as we read, we are going to begin with the Department of Health and Social Services. So at this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services if she has any opening comments. Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the Department of Health and

Social Services main estimates for fiscal year 2010-2011.

At the outset, I want to identify that our system and the whole of the Canadian health care system is stressed to capacity due to a number of evolving challenges. These include changing demographics of both patients and care providers, rising health care costs especially in pharmaceuticals and technological advances in health care, recruitment and retention challenges, and the increasing prevalence of chronic disease nation-wide.

The current spending rate of our health and social services system is not sustainable. If left unchanged, our ability to provide access to quality, timely and safe services in a way that is affordable for this government will be impacted.

The department's initiatives under A Foundation for Change are a blueprint for action that faces this challenge head on. Sustainability, as well as wellness and accessibility to health and social services are three pillars of the Foundation for Change. This plan is based on the principle that while sustainability and bending the trend of the health and social services future cost trajectory is our primary focus, system change to reach this must be managed well to ensure service delivery and quality of care are also sustained.

We launched A Foundation for Change with the support of the Members of this House through the Standing Committee on Social Programs and I am committed to continuing to work with the Members as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring sustainability and addressing the changes in our health and social services system will not be easy and requires the full support of this Assembly and our stakeholders. It will require support for a planned, managed, multi-year approach to change and a committed focus on long-term sustainability envisioned in the plan.

Under this budget, the department is requesting just over \$326 million. This reflects an increase of approximately \$13 million or 4.2 percent over last year.

Twenty million of this \$326 million is forced growth which includes ratification of the physician contracts for \$4.3 million and ratification of the Collective Agreement for approximately \$10 million.

I would also like to note federal funding initiative sunsets of \$7 million, which includes \$5 million for the Territorial Health Access Fund (THAF) and \$1.8 million for the Patient Wait Times Guarantee. The Patient Wait Times Guarantee was a federal government initiative and will not be re-established. The department and relevant authorities are looking at options for wait times monitoring and assessment to be provided within existing resources.

We, as a government, are continuing our discussions and lobbying of the federal government to continue THAF funding. It will, however, be some time after the federal budget in early March that we will learn if any THAF funding will continue and under what parameters and time limits. In the meantime, the department and authorities are developing plans for how we can manage without THAF funding or with a reduced amount. I need to be clear this is not something the system can absorb, so we are looking at what we may continue under new models with existing resources and what will end.

This concludes my opening remarks and I would be happy to answer questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time I would like to ask the Minister if she will be bringing in any witnesses. Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: I do have witnesses, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that Ms. Lee brings in her witnesses?

---Agreed.

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

Ms. Lee, for the record, would you introduce your witnesses.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you Mr. Chairman, to my left is Ms. Paddy Meade, deputy minister of Health and Social Services, and to my right is Mr. Derek Elkin, director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Welcome, witnesses. General comments for the Department of Health and Social Services.

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

MR KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I didn't want to lose my opportunity to talk about the Department of Health and Social Services but, more importantly, the lack of programs and services we see in our small, isolated communities. We seem to be doing a lot to increase large programs and services with regards to the dementia centre, amalgamated clinics, large-scale hospitals, but we haven't done much by ensuring or improving the quality of health care services in our small communities. I, for one, have been raising this issue prior to division, and if you look at statistics going back prior to 1999 when we had division, when we were one Territory, we received better health care then than we do today. We can actually see the expenditures made in our communities where they had full-slate nurses, where they had their services being provided just by the capital expenditures being spent back then. But yet, every time you build a new clinic, you build

the dementia centre, you build a new hospital, those dollars come out of the same pot of money that the smaller communities are depending on for programs and services, and when we continue to say forced growth this and forced growth that, we are the ones that are adding to the problems by increasing more programs and services and taking away those dollars and resources to ensure we have a service provider that provides services across the board to all communities, and not use the excuse, well, sorry, you don't have the numbers, or you're not really that important and because you can take a bus or hitchhike or whatever you have to do to get to a hospital, that's your responsibility.

I'm just wondering, as aboriginal people in northern Canada, should they consider going to the United Nations, or even talk to Doctors without Borders and come to our communities, provide that health care service that this government is not providing. I think it has come to a point in the road in regard to actually saying is there another option to health care services for aboriginal people in those communities that aren't getting any. I hate to say this, but some communities feel like they're a third-world country in Canada, especially aboriginal people.

We talk about the health and well-being of our residents. There are people that are struggling in our communities who are cancer patients, who are patients dealing with diabetes, but do not have the ability to go across the street to the health centre and see a nurse. Little things like that make a difference in our small communities. Having the security and knowing that if I don't feel good or I'm not well, that there is going to be care provided for me in my home community.

There was a big step a number of years ago to implement mental health addiction workers throughout the Northwest Territories to ensure that that was one way of providing some means of services to our 33 communities. But what happened there is you gave it to the policy people in regard to drafting up the criteria and the formula for what type of mental health workers you need and basically the qualifications they're going to need. They made it so stringent that our local people could not acquire those jobs, which they used to fill prior to the decision to take back to the Department of Health and Social Services and were not able to provide those services in our communities because you couldn't find the people with those qualifications to move to these isolated communities and know that basically the quality of wellness or community security was not there. You don't have policing. You don't have a backup system in regard to a nurse. When you don't have basic housing in regard to those communities, we continue to be dealing with external or internal pressures to deliver services, but we do nothing by

way of finding ways to bring down those pressures so that we can physically see programs and services being delivered in our communities.

Mr. Chairman, I think it's about time that this government seriously looked at what's wrong with our health care system. The problem is it's top heavy. You spend more money on administration by way of operation administration than actually delivering health care on the ground. I think, if anything, that we do have to start reeling in some of those administrative expenditures and put it where it's needed by way of your front-line workers in communities, on the ground, so there are actually health care providers providing health care in all communities in the Northwest Territories.

More than ever we're seeing the effects from First Nations' communities to the health and well-being of communities, regardless of their diets, their diagnoses in regards to more and more cases of diabetes. Simply a lot of that has to do with a change in diet.

We're seeing a problem now that we're debating here in the House in regard to caribou. You can't simply take an aboriginal person or a person who has always, all their lives, depended on that as their main supplement for their diet. You have to realize that people depend on country foods as their main staple for maintaining their health. But what we're seeing is that it's harder and harder, and people are struggling to be able to have those fresh caribou or fresh fish or fresh berries that they basically have always depended on as a means of sustaining themselves, and having to deal with store-bought foods and products which have high traces of sugars and whatnot and that are having a direct effect on our aging population.

The other area that I think is important for this government to seriously look at, and I know that it's been some time since we actually built health care services for seniors by way of improving the seniors facilities in our communities, seniors care homes, and also the level of seniors' care in regions and communities that can definitely display that there is a high need for seniors' care in those communities than simply having to send seniors to regional centres and finding ways to retain the seniors in our home communities so that they can be close to family, their friends and, more importantly, communities that they grew up in. I think, as a government, we do have to work with the Housing Corporation and Department of Health and Social Services to find a way to implement that program.

I, for one, feel that this government has to do more to deal with substance abuse. We used to have alcohol and drug treatment centres in the Northwest Territories. We're seeing the problems with substance abuse. We're seeing the problems with hardcore drugs, regardless if it's cocaine, crystal meth, and also the problem in regard to addictions

and the effect it's having on the whole Northwest Territories and not having the options or alternatives that people can turn to and having to send them south for treatment.

There were a lot of federal dollars you mentioned in your budget in regard to federal initiatives, but I think one that hasn't been mentioned is what's going to happen in regard to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation funding, which again is ending this fiscal year, and looking at some alternatives to support those organizations that have done some great work in our communities by way of accessing this federal program and federal initiatives, regardless if it's through Health Canada and whatnot. I think it's essential that we do have the means and the abilities in our communities to cope with the day-to-day pressures of just dealing with the stresses of living in small communities, but also being unemployed, looking at the social and economic conditions that a lot of communities are in. Again, it's something that I believe this government has to take ownership of.

One of the areas I hear a lot of in regard to my region is the lack of dental care in the Inuvik region in regard to children who basically are having effects in regard to their dental care. Children who should have braces but aren't able to because there's no one in the Inuvik region that can provide them with that expertise. It's been some time since they filled those positions. But I think dental care is just as important as health care and, if anything, that we do have to ensure that the well-being of the residents is taken care of throughout the Territories. I know that from talking to a lot of parents where a lot of parents are stuck in the position of having to pay their own way to southern dental professionals when dealing with braces and whatnot, and also having to pay the cost of sending their kids either to Yellowknife once a month at their cost. They're bearing the costs of this, which isn't cheap. But yet that service should be provided, especially in the major centres to serve the regions, and not have to put the burden on the parents to take care of that cost in which now they're having to do it for the well-being of their children.

Mr. Chair, in regard to the area of services in communities, I think that we do have to do everything that we can to ensure that we do provide services and not simply say, well, it's the Minister's responsibility or department's responsibility and sort of it's up to the health boards. Again, for the health board in the riding I represent, it's going on five or six years that this health board has been running a deficit. It has not been filing any financial statements, has not been showing its public responsibility for accountability by financial accountability to not only this House but the people of the Northwest Territories. If you're not providing services by way of your responsibility, again, I stated earlier, that the Minister, through ministerial

responsibilities, has to either take back that responsibility, take back those dollars and find a different instrument of delivering that service regardless if it's through an NGO or through another means or through their office to ensure that services are being provided. For me, that's the biggest concern I have, is that I've seen too many good people go to the health centre and find out a couple of days later they've passed on because they either waited too long or they were misdiagnosed or they basically were prescribed a drug that they shouldn't have taken and it has caused death. I think as a government we are responsible to ensure that we do provide health and social services to all residents in the Northwest Territories and ensure that we don't have these situations where families are grieving over a family member because they weren't taken care of. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. We're on general comments. Mr. Jacobson, were you raising your hand? Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I really want to echo on what Mr. Krutko was saying in regard to misdiagnosis, people not being sent out in time in regard to cancer. In my communities that I represent, we've seen a lot of death in regard to cancer because of misdiagnosis and other certain illnesses that our staff is not basically passing along information as simple as travel to getting them down to their hospital appointments in the South.

The last 18 months I think in the communities we've been really hit hard with doctors' visits and not seeing any doctors, no dental. You know, the eye doctor I think you get once a year. It's really come down in regard to the quality of health care in the communities. It has come down a lot in regard to what we're used to. I think our Minister and her staff in the Beaufort-Delta should meet in regard to getting a game plan and a go-forward for providing health services in the communities. It's got to stop in regard to the lack of. It's easy to sit down here with all these books and papers, but when you're seeing it firsthand, Sandy, or Ms. Lee, where people are, if not dying, they're getting sick and being sent away, and for them it's almost a death sentence in regard to the service that is provided. I don't mean to put it in those broad terms, but it's true. I've seen a lot of good friends go this year that shouldn't have been deceased. So it stirs up a lot of issues in regard to the service. I mean, I know you are doing your best, but the Beaufort-Delta has to really start coming onside and providing our communities with the services that we need, and not just sending them into Inuvik. We've got to have nurses in the community for proper checkups and day-to-day stuff.

Mr. Krutko has brought up a lot of good issues in regard to that. I won't mention them, but I think we

have to really start working a little bit harder than what we're doing and go and visit up north. So for me, that's it, Mr. Chair. I look forward to a page-by-page on this Health and Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Next on my list is Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to speak about Foundation for Change a bit. I know that the Minister brought it up in her opening comments and she's absolutely correct that it did go to committee. One of the biggest changes for me in the Foundation for Change was looking at community nursing. It's been something especially high on my agenda for the community of Wrigley. I look forward to seeing that change. I know that it took a long while to get to this stage, lots of barriers to overcome, including return of policing to Wrigley was part of the equation and with the help of my colleagues we are able to at least have some manageability about that. So with the Foundation for Change it's not only Wrigley, there will be hopefully some increased services. I've got six small communities in my riding and we do have aging populations out there and I'd certainly like to see increased care for our residents in all our communities. So I certainly support the planning around the Foundation for Change document, because it does include some resources here in our main estimates.

As well, I just wanted to also bring up that residents continue to be concerned about language, and cultural training should continue to be part of any new staff or even for our long-term staff, at least every couple of years should be at least mandatory training, because our elders are going there and I keep telling people that their language is limited in English and culturally we often say yes. When a nurse or doctor is saying "is everything okay," they'll say "yes" or else, "do you want to take these pills," they'll say "yes," because they're trying to be nice, but they're not really understanding what's going on when, in reality, after they leave they're telling people that they didn't have an adequate checkup or adequate care, that they were given Tylenol and were turned away. So those are some of the things that I think we must continue to do in the health care system, is to ensure that our elders and our non English-speaking people have the best care available as well, and to make sure that they understand the process and that they understand the system and the technicalities of what's being taught to them.

Along with language, of course, is the medical terminology training that's required for our dedicated staff that are translators and interpreters in our health centres and in our hospitals. So that's continually got to be part of the training system, I believe, Mr. Chair.

A couple of my colleagues spoke about cancer rates and it's continually a concern and in my communities we've got to find a way to address it and see is there a root cause that is going on with increasing cancer rates. There are people in my communities, too, who have lots of people and elders dying recently, and mostly of cancer. I have been looking at doing a Member's statement later on this week about that. With concerned community members, they do believe there may be a trend. If there is a trend, then there must be a way in our system to help monitor that or confirm it and see if, indeed, there is a root cause. Lots of people are concerned, too, that the root cause may be from many years ago, an incident or chemical; or is it current? That is something that we have to look at and not be afraid of looking at it, Mr. Chairman. We have to have the courage and conviction as a government to see if there is a real trend out there, if there is a real root cause. We will have a real good look at it and not just accept the fact that cancer happens. Sometimes it can be prevented. We know it can be prevented. Then we must have a real good look at it. Those are some of the emerging issues that are coming from my communities. The department has some huge challenges in terms of finding funding and getting their fair share of funding from our government for programs and services that they do deliver.

I think that, despite the forced growth, it is kind of like it has to be done, but I am sure it can be monitored. But at the same time, reduction of any programs and services, especially in the health field, is going to have to be monitored, because we don't want our people affected and not having our services or the ability to travel. They certainly need that, Mr. Chairman.

That concludes my comments on the opening comments of the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on my list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to take a little different tact here when it comes to the Department of Health and Social Services. I think we have a system that can be adjusted, that could do better, I am sure. Every community should have a nurse and everybody should have access.

But overall, in general terms, as a government we are spending \$326 million on health and social services for 42,000 people in a remote and often rural part of Canada. It is a very big challenge, but I think for the most part we have a Cadillac version of health and social services here in the Northwest Territories.

One thing that irks me is how many times we have to spend a lot of money to come up with some program, some plan, some doctrine to follow when

the things that we need to do in terms of basic services to people is pretty straightforward. I know we get often into a lot of other specialty kinds of care and programming. That is fine, but I guess I have been around for a long time and now we have a Foundation for Change. I remember when I was Minister of Health, it was the Cuff report and we were going to integrate and we were going to come up with areas of specialty in the communities. It just seems like we have always got some expensive little road map in our hands that makes us happy, when in fact the needs of the people in the Northwest Territories are pretty straightforward. But I think we have a lot of professional, caring, concerned, genuinely dedicated people out there in our communities on the front lines, with the exception... And I do not wish to pay any disrespect to Mr. Krutko's concerns or Mr. Jacobson's concerns about access to health services in their communities that they represent. I don't want to pay any disrespect to that, because we are fortunate in larger centres like Hay River and Yellowknife where you can walk into a clinic any time of the day or night and somebody is going to take care of you. But for the most part, there is no one that this government would not fly from the ends of the world to get to Yellowknife or Edmonton or any place where they could receive health care services. I don't believe that apart from some logistical things, like I said, which my colleagues have referred to, I don't think that this government is trying to deprive anyone of very high quality services when it comes to their health.

Now, having said that, if I were a health care provider and serving in that area in the Northwest Territories, I think it must be frustrating for them as well, because the fact of the matter is there are a lot of people in the Northwest Territories, a disproportionate amount of people in the Northwest Territories who are involved in activities which are detrimental to their health and to their well-being. They know the things they are doing are detrimental to their health and well-being and yet we send people out.

Mr. Chairman, you didn't set my timer so I am now out of time. I have only been speaking for two minutes. Not even two minutes; one minute.

Thank you. I don't often go on and on in Committee of the Whole.

You might have noticed, but this is something I just feel strongly about, so let me say it. A lot of people out there, a disproportionate amount of people are out there in the Northwest Territories are doing things which are detrimental to their health and well-being. They know it. I don't know how far we as a government can go to stop them from doing it. We can create awareness. We can talk about nutritious foods. We can talk about smoking cessation. We can drop the pop. We can do all of

these things, but, at the end of the day, people have a personal responsibility to make a choice about how they live and how they live in relation to their health and well-being.

I'm not pointing fingers at people. I could live more healthy. I can exercise every day. I know that if I exercised every day, I would probably prolong my life. For the sake of my grandchildren, I should probably do that, but I am not doing it so I am talking about myself too. I read all the statistics about working too much, having too much stress, overeating, not exercising. I know all that stuff too, so I am in that guilty boat too, so please don't think I'm being critical or judgmental here. But if I was a health care professional and I had people coming to see me that said I'm borderline diabetic but I drink 10 cans of pop a day... I mean, just look at the numbers of the amount of soft drinks that we consume in the Northwest Territories. It is in the millions of containers in a year. We know we have this emerging issue with diabetes, but if people still want to drink stuff that has 50 grams of sugar per serving, then what are we going to do as a government?

We can be running after these issues and trying to catch up with the problems but, you know, when I hear people talk about cancer rates, it is no different here than in any other part of the country. I don't believe the cancer rates are higher than any place else. Somebody said that the elders are dying of cancer. You know what? Everybody dies, and everybody dies of something. Seriously. You have to die of something. You could be just fortunate and just go to sleep one night and not wake up. Generally speaking, everybody dies of something. When you are old, quite often you die. Absolutely.

---Laughter

For sure, you will die. Anyway, I'm not trying to be facetious, but our government is supposed to be the underpinning of a safety net in the area of health and social services. We are there to aid and help people, but we have got to have people who want to help themselves as well.

A lot of the money that we spend is in health and social services. It is really not because of lack of awareness. Some people get sick too, and some people don't want medical care. Sometimes we say, well, that person didn't find out they were sick until they went to the health centre. They died two days later. You know what? Some people know they are sick and don't want to be treated. They do not want to be interfered with. They do not want to go through being taken away from their family. They don't want to be a part of that. You hear that a lot. I understand that. Some people notice it and they just don't want to deal with it.

If I was sick, I think I'd want to deal with it, but some people don't, for whatever reason. I don't think that we can take all the ails of the Northwest Territories

and beat up the Department of Health and Social Services and say we're not doing enough as a government to try to meet the needs of the people. That is not something that I believe. I know there are glitches. I know there are things that happen sometimes that don't make sense and in a Territory this small, if we get a situation like that and we have a constituent like that, we have the ability to talk to our MLAs. We go to the Minister. We say, hey, there's something that's not working here. There's something that's a problem here. Somebody was, somebody fell between the cracks, so to speak. We even get a response to those issues.

So I am not saying the system is perfect. I wish we spent more of our money doing the stuff that we know needs to be done rather than creating books that talk about it and lay out plans. I think everyone knows that I think we spend too much money on that kind of thing. I think we have to put this in the context of a relatively small number of people in a fairly far flung region of the country and we, as a government, are doing the best we can to meet the needs of that diverse and remote population. When you compare what we have to fall back on in the area of health and social services compared to anybody in the world, and I will say anybody in the world, we have got what is attempting to meet the needs of those people.

Again, I say with no disrespect to my colleagues who represent small communities where I would rather be spending money to put nurses and social workers in those small communities than I am to produce another report called Foundation for Change, okay? I want my colleagues to understand that. I want as much money to go to those frontline, basic services as possible, not specialty kind of boutique study things. All those kind of soft things that aren't at the heart of delivering the services right to the people right on the front lines, we could do better in that area, I believe. But I think the intent is there, the financial commitment is certainly there. What we need, I think, from people to a large extent too, is commitment from people for their individual choices, because I think our medical system is dealing with a lot of people who are doing a disservice to their own health. I think we all have a role to play in addressing that. The government can't fix all your problems and you can't go to the doctor after you've used and abused yourself your whole life and say fix me, I'm sick, because it just isn't possible. So that's all I have to say. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list is Mr. Bromley, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there is still time to get this in before we're done here today... I'm just kidding.

---Laughter

First of all, I wanted to say that I also recognize from the Minister's comments this is a huge

challenge. The costs in many of these areas are going up and some of the areas are beyond our control. I believe we spent about 25 percent of our budget on health and I suspect, based on my rusty knowledge of other jurisdictions, that it's even been higher in other jurisdictions. Given the challenges that Mrs. Groenewegen has highlighted, that's some sort of a marker that we're doing not too badly, but clearly the challenges are rising.

I wanted to mention I really appreciate the support that the department is providing to some of the things like the social services child and family services review. That's important support and it's nice to see the consolidated primary care clinic coming to fruition here soon, I believe right about the new fiscal year.

I am concerned about some of the costs that we need to be planning for in terms of delivery that are required if all of the Joint Review Panel's recommendations are approved by the NEB. I believe there are additional health care services as well as drug and alcohol treatment programs and facilities, et cetera.

Certainly we are facing the same trends in demographics. I am very happy to see the Alzheimer's facility coming on stream here soon and I am interested in knowing how that will serve the need out there. I don't know exactly what the capacity is here. I think we will be hearing about that soon and celebrating that facility, but what is the capacity of it in relation to the need that is out there and where are we headed on that given this changing demographics and trends?

The Minister mentioned rising health care costs, especially in pharmaceuticals. We know that in the western jurisdictions, the Premiers have agreed that they should get together and start purchasing drugs to help reduce those costs. That is an opportunity that I hope we are aggressively pursuing. Technological advances in health care, and again, we see amazing amounts of money going out the door for those technological advances. Some of those are real issues, others are things like handling information and so on, and I am starting to wonder how much we need with a population of 42,000. We can't come up with some system by throwing half the amount of dollars at people instead of new computers and software, if we couldn't actually make some savings there as well as some other benefits, and chronic disease.

I think many of the things Mrs. Groenewegen mentioned that I had on my list were about prevention, a focus of this Assembly, and I see the role for other departments to be integrated with health and social services here. We are doing some of that. But I think, again, as I mentioned earlier today, there are some real opportunities for integration with ECE programs, Justice, MACA programs, for example, ENR on the environmental

side. The Foundation for Change is something we have heard about and we are supportive of and I am looking forward to more discussions on that as it gets initiated and towards full implementation. But we have a record of such new thinking and strategies that have not been brought to full realization in the past and I know there is a nervousness amongst the public that here we go again, sort of thing. I think that there is an opportunity to make some progress on these major issues the Minister has raised, but I want to know that the commitment is there to see it right through to the end so we can realize some of those opportunities.

Finally, of course, the loss of the Territorial Health Access Funding is a big one and I will be interested in hearing how we plan to deal with that. The Minister ended by saying that we will need to choose those programs that will end and those that we choose to go forward with. If we do not get that support in March, what is the process for that and how will the public participate, if they will? I hope there is thinking being done on that. I think it is no surprise that the federal government is in a pretty good deficit situation. It would be nice if this worked out, but it doesn't hurt to start thinking about that right now early on. I will leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): General comments for Health and Social Services. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of comments. Many have been mentioned already, but I will re-emphasize them with my own take, I guess.

Initially, I want to say that I totally agree with the Minister's statement that the current spending of the Health and Social Services system is not sustainable. I've had concerns, I think, since I arrived here, that every year the total cost seems to go up. I do hope that over this next year it will be galvanized by the lack of THAF funding if it doesn't come through, but I hope that the department is going to be looking at all aspects.

I think, as well, and I mentioned in my statement yesterday, I think the program review office is an area that can assist the department in trying to keep the costs down and look for efficiencies and so on. In, I think, the business plan it was mentioned that there's a continual increase in health costs, particularly in the area of seniors as our general population ages and so on. So I'm interested, when we get to that part, to hear what sorts of plans the department has to try and deal with providing a continuum of care for seniors that isn't going to break the bank, so to speak.

In terms of the Foundation for Change, I am supportive. I hope it's not going to be another effort to produce another report. I hope that this is actually looking at how we can change our provision of health care and that we are going to be

coming forward with something that we can actually turn around and implement in short order. We haven't had an update on where that particular reform is going at this point, so I look forward to an update from the Minister of the Social Programs committee, hopefully, at some point in time.

One of the things I wondered in terms of the Foundation for Change is whether or not the board reform initiatives, and there have been some that are flying under the radar for the last little while, but whether or not there is going to be any changes, any board reform relative to health and social service authorities that's going to have an impact on the budget. I don't know if any changes have any impact on this upcoming, or if it's going to be another year or so before we're going to see that.

In terms of funding, I am extremely concerned about the possibility that the THAF funding won't be renewed. I think it will be a huge blow. We've had some discussions at committee with the Minister previously and have been advised that the department is looking at a plan if that funding doesn't come through. I would hope that those plans are well underway. I hope it's not just empty words that, yes, we're looking at things and they haven't started yet, because March is not a very long time away. If we don't have the THAF funding, if it's not renewed, there are a couple of areas where I think we really need to seriously consider maintaining the service that we have.

I know the business plan talked about expanding midwifery services. Well, I don't imagine that's going to happen if we don't get the THAF funding renewed. We need to maintain the midwifery programs that we currently have and not cut those.

The other area is in terms of nurse practitioners. I think nurse practitioners fit in with our change in thinking and going to primary care and community care. Nurse practitioners, those that we have, must be maintained, in my view.

A couple of things in terms of the budget in general and the business plans: I'm supportive of an increase in respite funding for provision of respite to parents who are caring for children and need the respite. I'm very supportive of the implementation of the Family Violence Action Plan, Phase II. It's absolutely something that's necessary. I think phase I and the beginning part of phase II have proven that it is a successful plan and program.

Another large concern for me is the Supplementary Health Benefits Program. We haven't seen any indication of where that program is going. Presumably work is happening. That's a huge expense. It adds to our health budget quite a lot. I don't know that it's indicated in the budget whether or not changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program are reflected in this particular budget. So I'm interested in finding out that when

we get there, and also what sort of consultation and what progress there's been on consultation.

I think that's it, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next on the list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The territorial health expenditures just run over \$325 million per year. The staffing is about 1,257. We have our own health board in the Sahtu, which runs about a \$10 million operation. When you look at the numbers here in terms of the amount of dollars that are spent in the Sahtu compared to some of the regions, knowing the Sahtu is deemed as an isolated region with the winter roads only going for three months of the year and a lot of fly-in/fly-out of the services there, when you look at other regions that have some of the communities that are along the all-weather roads, they seem to have the same budget. You'd think that regions that have fly-in/fly-out services, that their budget would somewhat increase in terms of the operations. But we seem to be on par with some of the other regions in terms of them running their health boards. I'm not too sure how funding is allocated in terms of the types of services we have from the different regions. I just noticed that in there and there's probably a good explanation as to how our funding gets to... I'm just making an observation.

The other one I want to ask the Minister -- and Ms. Bisaro brought it up in her comments -- is the way that the government is going to look at hopefully secure funding to the transfers that have been in our budgets that are going to sunset. These are millions of dollars here, these programs. The federal government has so far indicated that they're not going to entertain any type of agreement to secure them, and I think there is some discussion as to how do we seek millions of additional dollars to continue with these programs. It just means that there's a shifting of how we deliver services in the North to our people here in Yellowknife or into our communities. Hopefully the Minister can give us some type of game plan as to what, for sure, she could say in the House, confidently, that we're going to work on these issues with the federal government in terms of transfers that are going to be sunset. As Ms. Bisaro indicated, March is coming up and that's something that we really need to look at.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of diabetes has been a growing concern of mine in the region. More and more people are being diagnosed, and more and more people could be possibly looking for some type of test in terms of the condition of their health, namely to see if they are on the brink of becoming a diabetic. For six years, Mr. Chairman, I know health has always been an issue here and it seems that the basic services of diabetes testing and diabetes care is very important to the people in the Sahtu

and the service of health care in our smaller communities. We still need to deal with how health care is delivered in our small communities. They made some great strides in improving the services. In the community of Deline they have the telehealth supplies or operations there, but they're not using it. What's up with that?

I think that the telehealth was a good thing; however, it's not being used. Even to put telehealth or something like that along that line in the community of Colville Lake. They don't have an RCMP. They don't have social workers. They don't have a nurse on a regular basis like other communities. You know, people up there need services. They have to feel confident in this government that it's going to provide these services. They have agreements with our health boards. There are agreements with the communities to provide health care services. They are making some difference in terms of the services, however, in this day and age it's unacceptable to go to Colville Lake with 134 people and not provide some basic services, such as having a nurse there. You have people who are trained as laypersons with one day training here, one day training there. That doesn't quite fit the goals of the Health department's mandate here.

So these are concerns that I know my people want to see, hoping that one day we will see a presence of a nurse in Colville Lake, as I heard other communities like Tsiigehtchic, like their community, or other communities in the Northwest Territories.

We do want to thank the Minister for her Foundation of Change, because that gives us some hope, yet it's still on paper so we haven't seen the real work of it. The Foundation of Change does give us hope to see that we can do things differently in the Sahtu towards alcohol and drug programs, the structure and the governance of how do we deliver health in the communities, roles and responsibilities. Mr. Chair, as you have noted many times, there is expertise among people in our communities that can deal with wellness. They may not have a university degree or some western style of training; they have a degree in culture and a degree in how to work with people on the cultural basis. We are not utilizing these people in traditional methods of healing and wellness. We seem to be putting them on a pedestal when we want them, but we don't want to use them in a formal sense of having these services in our community. We still rely on the psychologists or the medical practitioners.

A lot of people have told me that when they go to the health centres, a lot of the times they're just given pills and told to go home. So services are not the same as in larger centres, and I know because I live in a community and I've experienced that.

So I look forward to this Minister rolling up her sleeves. We've got about 20 months left in this Assembly to see what big changes we can do. I will work with the Minister, and I said before in the House that she did a tour with us in the Sahtu and she heard our people speak and she knows what our needs are. So I want to say, Mr. Chair, that I look forward to going through the budget with her, looking to see where we can make some differences in the health care or in the social service area. Even that, we don't have social services in one of our communities because of the housing. That is unacceptable. However, there's lots of time to go through in detail and see what this Minister can do to improve some of the care in the Sahtu.

In closing, I wanted to ask the Minister later on in terms of how is she working with the Stanton Health Authority to look at how she can bring aboriginal foods into the hospital. Sixty-five percent of clients are aboriginal people and they survive solely on a lot of aboriginal foods we serve to them, especially caribou. They like that kind of food in the hospitals when they are getting well. So I'll ask the Minister later on in terms of what her plans are in looking at the Stanton Hospital master plan development. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list is Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress. Thank you.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will now rise and report progress. I would like to thank the Minister and the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses out.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 62-16(4) and would like to report progress. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 2, 2010, 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. Replies to Budget Address (Day 4 of 7)
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act
 - Tabled Document 62-16(4), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2010-2011
 - Minister's Statement 47-16(4), Transfer of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 2nd, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

