



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| PRAYER | 5061 |
| MINISTERS' STATEMENTS | 5061 |
| 47-16(5) – Fiscal and Economic Update (Miltenberger) | 5061 |
| 48-16(5) – Vacancies in Public Housing and Homeownership Units (R. McLeod)..... | 5062 |
| MEMBERS' STATEMENTS | 5063 |
| Remembering Chief Paul Biscaye (Beaulieu) | 5063 |
| Delivery of Specialist Health Services (Groenewegen)..... | 5064 |
| GNWT Support for Traditional Harvesters (Yakeleya) | 5064 |
| Community Health Nursing Program (Abernethy)..... | 5065 |
| Delivery of Services at Stanton Territorial Hospital (Ramsay) | 5065 |
| World Food Day 2010 (Bisaro) | 5065 |
| Payday Loan Company Fees and Charges (Bromley)..... | 5066 |
| Power Outage in Ulukhaktok (Jacobson)..... | 5066 |
| Condolences to Families of Deceased Nahendeh Residents (Menicoche)..... | 5067 |
| Liberation Treatment Offered to Multiple Sclerosis Patients (Hawkins) | 5067 |
| RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY | 5068 |
| ORAL QUESTIONS | 5068 |
| WRITTEN QUESTIONS | 5078 |
| TABLING OF DOCUMENTS | 5078 |
| NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FIRST READING OF BILLS | 5078 |
| Bill 12 – An Act to Amend the Liquor Act | 5078 |
| CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS | 5078 |
| REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE | 5093 |
| ORDERS OF THE DAY | 5093 |

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, October 15, 2010****Members Present**

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

The House met at 10:11 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 47-16(5):
FISCAL AND ECONOMIC UPDATE**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two years ago the world economy experienced a downturn unprecedented since the Great Depression. The turmoil touched everyone including Canada. The NWT economy shrank in 2009. Employment fell by 5.2 percent and mineral exploration by 80 percent.

We are encouraged by the fact that the positive signs of growth observed earlier this year appear to be confirmed. Forecasts of NWT economy are predicting growth in 2010-2011 fuelled by a rebound in the diamond industry. The Conference Board of Canada forecasts that our economy will grow by 4.8 percent this year and 9.3 percent in 2011. Mineral exploration is forecast to increase by 125 percent this year to almost \$100 million from \$44 million in 2009, although it will not reach the levels seen in 2008. However, because labour markets have yet to gain the same traction, employment growth will lag the recovery somewhat. This is consistent with the outlook we presented in the 2010 budget last January.

Despite these positive reports, we cannot assume that we are out of the woods yet, economically speaking. The world's economic outlook continues to be uncertain. Economic growth in Canada appears to be slowing and the state of the U.S. economy is troubling. We have adopted a fiscal strategy to see ourselves through these uncertain times. We know that our plan is a sound one. We must manage our way ahead with continued caution and vigilance.

We entered the downturn in relatively good financial shape, which allowed us some room to respond to the decline in economic activity in the NWT.

The 2009 and 2010 GNWT budgets were prepared based on a conscious decision to mitigate the effects of the recession. This included maintaining spending levels and pursuing an aggressive plan of infrastructure investment.

Over the previous and current fiscal years we will have invested more than \$700 million in infrastructure in the NWT, not including the Deh Cho Bridge. However, we do not have the fiscal resources to maintain current levels of investment indefinitely.

The budget we approved last March assumed a slow economic recovery following the upheaval of late 2008 and early 2009. We recognized, however, that our fiscal plan needed to include measures to return to a sustainable path over the next few fiscal years; measures such as maintaining a tight rein on spending growth and reducing capital investment over time to historical levels.

We are not alone in the fiscal approach we are taking. All governments in Canada are expecting a period of tight fiscal control as they seek to return to balanced budgets.

The fiscal strategy laid out in our 2010 Budget calls for new spending to be capped at 3 percent per year starting in 2011-12, net of compensation increases. It also calls for a return to lower levels of capital investment once current projects are completed.

Yesterday I tabled the 2011-2012 Capital Estimates. Our capital plan proposes investments of \$126 million, not including infrastructure contributions to communities and the NWT Housing Corporation. These will bring the total planned investment in 2011-2012 to \$171 million. This means that over the life of the 16th Legislative Assembly we will have invested over \$1 billion in badly needed infrastructure in the Northwest Territories.

Despite the forecast growth in the NWT economy, we should not expect dramatic growth in our own tax revenues.

We will be monitoring corporate tax information in the coming months, to learn what effect the downturn had on 2009 corporate income in the NWT.

In late September the Department of Finance issued a discussion paper seeking input from NWT residents on options for introducing a revenue-neutral carbon tax to encourage a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and hotel tax to fund tourism strategies. Both of these options have been brought forward in earlier consultations and while neither of these options reflects current GNWT tax policy, they are intended to stimulate public discussion that can inform further work.

Last week the department hosted the third roundtable on fiscal and revenue options, where representatives from a broad range of business, social and environmental organizations, as well as community and aboriginal governments, talked about these options and provided their thoughts. While there was not unanimity, there was a general consensus that both of these options deserve more thought and research. I encourage all NWT residents to read the discussion paper and submit comments by the end of October.

Mr. Speaker, the approach laid out in our fiscal strategy will return us to a sustainable fiscal path. But achieving this will require strong discipline on the expenditure side. We are entering the final year of the 16th Assembly. With the limited time left to us we need to focus on consolidating the gains we have made, and finish and deliver what we have begun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 48-16(5):
VACANCIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING
AND HOMEOWNERSHIP UNITS

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to update Members and the general public on recent housing construction and related vacancies in the NWT.

Over the summer, I, along with fellow Members of Cabinet and this Assembly, had the opportunity to tour communities in our Territory. One of the more common questions we were asked pertained to vacant housing units. It is understandable that concerns have been raised about vacancies in our housing portfolio, especially given the level of core housing need in many of these communities. Therefore, I would like to provide some context for why there are vacant units and outline our approach to put families into these much needed units.

The federal share of the \$117 million in federal and territorial funding for northern housing under Canada's Economic Action Plan was designed to put housing on the ground within a short time frame as an economic stimulus measure. Failure to build housing quickly would have put the NWT at risk to

having funds reprofiled to other jurisdictions if the funds were not utilized on a timely basis. As a result, the NWT Housing Corporation seized the opportunity to conduct an expanded construction and repair program to ensure that this funding would create a long-term and lasting impact, and improve housing supply and conditions in our communities. It meant recognizing housing needs in communities, building homeownership units before allocating through the normal program intake process, and repairing units to utilize this funding at a rate far beyond historical levels. While this approach allowed us to provide good quality housing to many families, it also meant that a number of units remain unoccupied pending the fall program intake.

The NWT Housing Corporation has over 4,000 public housing, homeownership and market housing units in its portfolio. At any given time, particularly during construction season, many of these units are unoccupied due to modernization and improvement projects to improve the quality of housing for NWT residents, resulting in many units not being available for occupancy. Given the significant federal investment, this situation was more pronounced during the summer of 2010. During this period we had the opportunity to undertake major renovations and retrofits to approximately 173 units. In addition, a further 44 units were beyond economic repair and targeted for replacement. Vacant public housing units are not a static number and changes often as allocations are made on a monthly or more frequent basis by our community partners, the local housing organizations.

Construction of public housing units is targeted at replacement as public housing stock has remained static at 2,400 units since the decline of federal funding for operations and maintenance was begun in the 1990s. While federal funding for the construction of new homeownership units has been appreciated, it is clear that the housing needs of the NWT cannot be fully realized through the construction of new homeownership units. This is particularly the case in rural and remote communities. The federal investment has proven to be a challenge as homeownership units may not be meeting all of the housing needs of NWT communities. While we recognize this challenge, we also recognize the importance of seeing these units utilized as quickly as possible in order to meet community housing needs.

Our approach to deal with the vacancies in our communities begins with our Housing Choices program intake. Over the past six weeks NWT Housing Corporation staff have been in all of our communities accepting applications for HELP, PATH, and CARE, as well as providing one-on-one counselling to applicants. As you may be aware, program intake ends today. Early indications are

that the interest and demand for these programs remains strong in many communities and I am confident that we will fill many vacant housing units in our communities through this process.

Should our program intake not fill all vacancies, the NWT Housing Corporation has developed other options to deal with vacancies. First, the NWT Housing Corporation will pursue a targeted program intake in those communities. This will ensure that any and all eligible clients are given an opportunity to benefit from available housing.

Secondly, should there continue to be vacancies following the second intake, the NWT Housing Corporation will undertake discussions with those communities to determine their priorities and suggestions for the possible use of these units to address their specific housing needs.

The NWT Housing Corporation will also discuss with the GNWT and communities the potential of converting these homes to public housing. As I stated earlier, the best housing option for many residents in need in the NWT is public housing. With the decline of O and M funding from CMHC, the NWT Housing Corporation continues to be limited in its ability to add new public housing to its portfolio.

We recognize that many communities have less public housing than they need and in some specific communities there is no public housing program. Therefore, the GNWT has to consider the addition of public housing units to our portfolio as an option, not just to fill vacant units but as a part of our overall approach to providing affordable housing now and into the future. I have also directed the NWT Housing Corporation to identify potential gaps and mechanisms in current programs in order to better meet the housing needs of NWT residents.

In closing, I believe Members would agree that our accelerated construction has resulted in housing on the ground in communities where there is a continuing housing need. The NWT Housing Corporation has been able to build nearly 700 units over the past five years and repair over 1,000 public and private dwellings, all within our fiscal capacity.

The NWT and other jurisdictions have benefited greatly from federal investment over the last several years. The GNWT has also recognized the importance of housing and has invested significant funds to ensure that we can achieve the maximum benefit from federal investments. With the sunset of federal funding for construction just a few months away, these investments are quickly drawing to a close. The past five years of construction has left an important legacy in our communities: adequate, suitable, and affordable housing that can meet the housing needs of our residents for years to come.

Our challenge now is to not only benefit from these investments, but build upon them as we move forward in an effort to promote further investment in housing that will continue to meet the needs of our residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Colleagues, before we proceed I would like to draw your attention to the gallery to the presence of a former Sergeant-at-Arms. Ms. Nicole Latour-Theede is there with us.

It also gives me pleasure to welcome my constituency assistant from Hay River. Ms. Diana Yaeger is in the gallery.

Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REMEMBERING CHIEF PAUL BISCAEY

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness and honour at the same time that I pay tribute to the last chief of Rocher River, a community that has not existed since the early 1960s.

On May 24th of this year Mr. Paul Biscaye passed away after being ill for almost two years. Paul leaves behind his wife of 57 years, Theresa, and six daughters, Anne, Sabet, Georgina, Julia, Violet and Gloria. Paul is predeceased by his only two sons, Raymond and Fred John. Paul was blessed with 10 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Paul was born near Big Gap outside of Rocher River in 1930 and was raised in the Rocher River area. After marrying Theresa, they continued to live there until around 1968. In his early years he trapped and lived around the Thuben Lake area and Rocher River, spending the summers fishing in the Simpson islands.

Paul was the last chief of Rocher River. He was a well-respected elder who lived a healthy life and was a role model for all. He got along with everyone and was known for teasing the young people and often made up nicknames for them.

Although Paul only had a grade 2 education, he was very knowledgeable. He was a trapper, a fisherman, and worked with prospectors at staking, worked at both Pine Point Mine and Giant Mine. However, his career was mainly in the sawmill in Fort Resolution where he retired as a self-taught millwright.

In his later years Paul dedicated his time to promoting the Chipewyan language and the Dene culture. He enjoyed being out on the land, playing cards with friends and watching hockey. In Fort Resolution he was voted the number one fan. He would even come to Yellowknife for the local Easter

tournament and spend hours at the arena watching hockey.

Paul was a very sociable person. He enjoyed getting out, visiting and meeting people. I remember him as being a very friendly person, and this was evident by the respect he was given by both young and old. Paul was awarded the Elder of the Year by Akaitcho Territorial Government in 2002.

Paul was the last Biscaye in his generation, he did not have any siblings. However, his name and legacy will live on through his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I would like to thank the family for allowing me to do this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DELIVERY OF SPECIALIST HEALTH SERVICES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about a situation that has come to my attention in my constituency office from numerous constituents. Mr. Speaker, it has to do with the delivery of specialist health services. In theory, it would be a great achievement to attract medical specialists to the Northwest Territories Stanton Territorial Hospital and to service people of the NWT in their home territory and avoiding things such as the high cost of travel, accommodation when they have to go to the city, separating families when they need medical attention.

Mr. Speaker, when a new discipline or specialist service is brought on stream here at Stanton, what is expected is that anyone who is a resident here who had previously been seeing a specialist in southern Canada would then automatically begin to see that specialist. In order to justify having that specialist, it is necessary to ensure they have a caseload that would warrant their attendance and residency here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, in theory this is a wonderful achievement and it is a great idea, but the complicating factor in this is that some people have been receiving medical treatment from a specialist in the south over a number of years. They may have a chronic illness that has required them to establish a doctor/patient relationship with a specialist who knows that patient, who knows their case well, and an argument can certainly be made for the merit of continuity of care and the comfort it would give that patient knowing that they can continue to see the doctor who knows them and who knows their case.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the solution is to this problem, but it has arisen numerous times in the last month in my office and in Hay River. I am

not sure, again, how we can address that, because, of course, we do want to have those specialist services available here. But when they are something new that is brought on stream, how do we deal with those people who already have a longstanding relationship with a physician in the south? Later today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services on that and see if we can come up with a system that would be fair to everyone. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT SUPPORT FOR TRADITIONAL HARVESTERS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I listened to the Premier, and in his sessional statement he talked about the Northwest Territories and he made reference to the Assembly goals that we were going to try to achieve through this Assembly. He mentioned two of them: healthy, educated people and one of the other goals was an environment that will sustain the present and future generations of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support these goals, but how do we get to them? Well, there is a means that we can achieve them. Mr. Speaker, by doing some research from the NWT Bureau of Statistics, it shows that in our communities in the Sahtu our traditional activities are heavily supported by our people in the manner that people live off the land, they hunt and fish, they trap and use country foods. Mr. Speaker, it's very high in our communities in regard to the numbers that show up in the stats of people that go out on the land to practice the tradition to live their culture and to teach and to educate their children about the land. These values are very strongly supported, as these numbers indicate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the number of young people in our region is very high. In the entire Sahtu region, Mr. Speaker, 45 percent of our population is under 25 years of age and, Mr. Speaker, you know that the Sahtu has only seasonal jobs up to six months at best and people with low... The economic wage salary scale is way down. There's a high percentage of families with less than \$30,000 of income coming in per year. So a lot of people rely on country foods, rely on the land. So I want to ask the Premier, when questions are asked, about what type of programs will the government do to support trappers and hunters and families to go out and live on the land, to support them due to the high cost of living we have in the Sahtu region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING PROGRAM

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today I'll be asking the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services some questions on the Community Health Nurse Development Program. This program is a competency-based, on-the-job training program to train nurses so that they're competent to work in community health centres.

It's a great program, but research shows that this program, since it was developed in 2005-2006, has graduated about 20 nurses into community health positions. Of these, 14 are still working as community health nurses in the Northwest Territories and, for the record, six of these individuals are indigenous aboriginal nurses who have either returned to their home communities or to their regions.

Bottom line, this is a great program. My concern today is the fact that over the summer I've heard from a number of people that this program has either been cancelled or that it has been postponed and there's no intake, or that it is being reviewed and it may no longer exist in the near future. Given the success of this program and the value this program adds to our health system, I'm very concerned by these rumours that I have heard. So today I'll be asking the Minister whether or not this program exists, and what we're doing to ensure that it does continue to exist, and what we're doing to get nurses in community health centres. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DELIVERY OF SERVICES AT
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about a trend that is developing in the decisions that are being made in the delivery and provision of health care services at Stanton Territorial Hospital.

My colleague from Great Slave spoke yesterday about the relocation of the medical travel offices out of Stanton; only a small 8.5 by 11 sign posted on the door, no more face-to-face interaction, no transition plan, no communication plan, and it lacks any cultural sensitivity whatsoever. This is completely inexcusable. How exactly are emergency medical travel situations going to be dealt with? To make matters worse, these offices were replaced by administrative offices; this, Mr. Speaker, in the most prime patient care real estate in that hospital.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago there was close to \$30 million in the capital plan earmarked for Stanton Territorial Hospital. That money disappeared last

year from the capital plan and I hold the Minister responsible for that money not staying in the plan. Far too many decisions are being made on that facility in the absence of any long-term vision or plan for the hospital.

Over the past three years this government has paid off accrued deficits at that hospital in the magnitude of \$18 million. Eighteen months ago the Minister came to committee with a plan to fight the deficit. Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, the deficit continues to bloom out of control at that hospital as well as at other health authorities across the Territory.

We need a remedy. Is the diagnosis chronic underfunding, loose billing practices, unfunded positions, poor management, or a combination of all of those? The bottom line is we need to find a way forward at Stanton.

My fear, Mr. Speaker, is that because of these burgeoning deficits, the public will be targeted by this government to pay more. I've been informed that management at the department and at Stanton are now planning to start charging people to use televisions in their hospital rooms, and also the department and hospital are looking at implementing a pay parking system at Stanton Territorial Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I hope they don't take any lessons from the Department of Transportation on how that works at the Yellowknife Airport. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WORLD FOOD DAY 2010

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow, October 16th, is World Food Day, a day with the theme of United Against Hunger. It's an opportunity for us to reflect on our food, our food supply, and to think about who has food and who does not.

Throughout the world, no matter where you look, there are people who are hungry, people in poverty, and here in the NWT our residents are not immune to that problem of hunger and poverty.

In the last 10 years or more we've seen an increase in the number of food banks in the NWT and a marked rise in the number of people using those food banks. More and more our people are struggling to have enough food, enough of the right kind of food to have food security.

But what is food security? It's having enough food that is affordable, that is safe and healthy, that is culturally acceptable, food that meets dietary needs, is obtained in a dignified manner, and is produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just. A big definition but it works.

So what are we doing about NWT food security? In general, not enough. But we have a number of

programs which work to help our residents achieve food security. With the help of the federal government recently, with some funds from a program called Growing Forward, the GNWT started a Small Scale Foods Program. Resulting from that, we now have about 29 community gardens here in the NWT, gardens which provide food for the community and its residents, and some of these community gardens give as much as one-quarter or more of their produce to either a local food bank or a women's shelter.

Locally grown foods are cheaper, more environmentally friendly -- there's no need to transport them, so no greenhouse gas emissions -- and they contribute hugely to local food security.

Mr. Speaker, as Members know, in Yellowknife, assisted by the Donation of Food Act two years ago, an organization called Food Rescue was established here. On a daily basis Food Rescue provides food to numerous non-profit organizations; NGOs providing services to those less fortunate. These NGOs can now ensure greater food security for their clients because of donations of foods from Yellowknife businesses, and those donations are orchestrated by the dedicated and hardworking volunteers of Food Rescue.

There are smaller programs as well, such as the Breakfast for Learning program, which ensures that school kids get exposed to healthy nutritious foods and meals. Yet, Mr. Speaker, many of our residents still struggle with food security, an issue to which this government must give a higher priority. In a rich country like Canada, there's no place for poverty. We should not have people who are hungry. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PAYDAY LOAN COMPANY FEES AND CHARGES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an urgent need for government action on a growing problem plaguing our people, that of payday loan companies' exorbitant interest rates and hidden charges.

People living paycheque to paycheque and people gripped by substance abuse are among the clients of these firms. Usually small amounts are borrowed for brief terms, but as borrowers learn, added costs are anything but small.

Two court decisions in Yellowknife have proven that when you add up all the fees and charges, the annual cost of a loan can be as much as 1,000 percent. So a \$200 loan can end up costing \$2,000. The court decisions threw out these loans as illegal and uncollectable. This didn't happen automatically, though. People with limited means had to go to

court to have this loan sharking struck down. How many never even get investigated?

The Criminal Code sets a maximum interest rate of 60 percent of principal per annum. That's no help when desperate people have to navigate confusing and complicated loan forms with copious amounts of fine print that don't clearly state the full costs of borrowing. Failure to enforce existing law doesn't help.

Other jurisdictions have acted to end this victimization, with laws of varying strength. Work is being considered by this Assembly to introduce such law, I hope. We need to expedite this work and ensure that the law is strong.

Four firms have sprung up in Yellowknife in recent years, all conveniently located near liquor stores and bars. It's obvious that business is good. I say business is too good.

I don't know what's happening in other communities. I'm very interested to hear whether there might be similar things happening in Inuvik and other centres.

We have a chance to introduce model legislation that controls profiteering on the needy. I call on the government to move this law forward as a priority and to increase enforcement of existing law. To this end, I will be asking questions of the Minister responsible for consumer protection.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POWER OUTAGE IN ULUKHAKTOK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 4th and 5th the community of Ulukhaktok experienced a 27-hour power outage. Here is the assistant SAO Joseph Perry's report. It's with great pride that I write you about the recent power outage. The community lost power last Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. and it was restored Wednesday afternoon, affecting over 20 households as well as the airport. Special thanks goes out to the housing foreman and his crew, airport maintainer and his crew, municipal foreman and his crew, recreation director, administration, and all of the other teams that worked together and set the action plan in motion to make everybody as comfortable as possible.

The most important task was to restore the heat. Generators were placed in strategic locations to ensure that everyone had their furnaces running and at least essential power. The housing crew set up split shifts throughout the night to ensure all generators were full of fuel and that none failed.

The recreation director collected donations of coffee, tea and snacks, et cetera, and opened up

the shelter for those who wanted to join in with others for comfort and just to talk.

The airport maintainer ensured the heat was restored at the airport and was standing by with flare pots to light the runway in the event of NWT Power Corporation being able to make it in that night. Two people were on the phones standing by all night in case a plane would arrive.

Everyone in the community remained calm and assisted in any way they could. Again, the first priority was to restore the heat, make sure all the food was available for those in need, and keep the people informed of the situation.

This is a fine example for everyone working together in the community of Ulukhaktok and they are commended for their understanding and patience during emergencies. Communication, cooperation is alive and well in Ulukhaktok.

The NWT Power Corporation arrived as soon as the weather cleared, due to icing conditions. They diagnosed the situation and quickly restored the power and were extremely professional and diligent in their duties.

I would just like to thank everybody in Ulukhaktok and thank the Power Corporation for their good work. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED NAHENDEH RESIDENTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to give my condolences to our cousins, family and friends who lost their loved ones in the Nahendeh riding over the summer and fall. In great sadness I want to say that it was a particularly difficult one for the communities as we lost a total of 11 this summer. I would like to note that nine were elders.

Most recently, Ms. Corinne Modeste from Fort Simpson passed away last week at the age of 81.

Bella Norwegian of Jean Marie River died on September 22nd at the age of 94. Ms. Norwegian had been a midwife and healer for many years. She was predeceased last May by her son Fred Norwegian.

Thomas Poitras died in Fort Simpson on the bank of the Mackenzie River. His friends called him Pork Chops. He leaves his widow, Dorothy Michel.

Recently retired from Renewable Resources, Mr. Isadore Lomen from Fort Liard fell overboard while pursuing a moose on the river. He loved the river and spent time with his family in a cabin.

Mr. Johnny Sassie was born at Bouvie Lake in 1953 and died of cancer in Fort Liard. He leaves behind his wife Corinne.

Mr. George Deneron, also of Fort Liard, was a calm and kind elder who followed a traditional lifestyle and was an advisor to the band.

Elder Rosie Horesay from Wrigley -- it was my favourite place to visit -- she never had ill will to anybody.

The oldest resident of Wrigley, Ms. Helen Ekanale, died of old age at the age of 95.

Willy Sake, another kind-hearted elder who was from Jean Marie River. He loved and stayed on the land until his passing.

Ms. Ina Bertrand of Fort Liard, a young woman who lost her struggle with cancer.

An elder, Mr. George Horassi, a snowshoe maker from Tulita who moved to Fort Simpson.

Also to Ms. Terry Remy-Sawyer, also known as Terry Norwegian, the mother of my constituency assistant, Ms. Pearl Norwegian.

Once again I offer my deepest sympathies and wishes of courage and strength to the families who lost their loved ones to deal with their losses.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LIBERATION TREATMENT OFFERED TO MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS PATIENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about the liberation treatment offered to MS patients throughout the world. I'm hoping that the Minister of Health and Social Services here today will hear the call for some type of action on this particular issue.

Liberation treatment is now offering new hope in a way that has never been seen before when it comes to MS patients out there. They've had drug therapy and certainly physiotherapy to keep their lives in some type of order, but it is a problem that is pointing in one direction. Liberation treatment has come forward and is offering a new style of promise to people who have not had hope before on stopping this disease.

I believe it's time that our government take a serious look at this opportunity before us. If anything, as they say out there, it doesn't work quite well or perfect on every single patient, but those who receive liberation treatment will tell you that it has changed their lives in a profound way, that it has returned the quality of their life back in a way that they never dreamt of before.

Saskatchewan is moving forward in a way to give this a full shot on giving the chances back to these

people who have MS. Other provinces are seriously considering this. If we look at the cost alone just on liberation treatment, we're talking in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000 per treatment. The reality is, how do we compare that to the cost of drug therapy that they're receiving today?

Through research I've found that a particular person who is on drug therapy specific to MS could be costing about \$1,000 a month just on drug treatment. That's about \$12,000 a year just on treatment in their existing position. That doesn't even consider the secondary protocols of drugs, such as to treat their depression, which could range anywhere into another \$5,000 to \$8,000. We could be spending almost \$20,000 a year just on drug therapy that we could be saying, wait a minute, if we offer them any chance at hope, maybe they don't need this MS drug therapy, maybe they don't need the depression therapy because their lives have returned.

In short, this comes down to quality of life. If the government wants to do it on numbers alone, all we have to look at is drug therapy two years in a row would pay for the cost of treating someone through liberation treatment. But if we want to do it from the human point of view, the point of view that cares about people, cares about their outlook on life, that brings back promise to them, I think giving liberation treatment for those MS patients out there brings hope and certainly helps their outlook on life.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later today regarding this matter. Hopefully we'll have some good discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Again I'd like to welcome Nicole Latour-Theede to the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 198-16(5): GNWT SUPPORT FOR TRADITIONAL HARVESTERS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Sorry, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

This past summer the Minister and I toured the Sahtu region and we met with the members of the communities of the Sahtu. We heard from the communities in terms of support for the hunters, the trappers, the harvesters on the land and that the high cost of living in the Sahtu is something that is

quite a concern for us. More importantly, the high cost of pursuing their traditional activities in terms of eating wild food from the land.

I want to ask the Minister, in these types of discussions we have with our people, what type of support will the Minister look at to support our traditional activities to support our people.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There currently exists a selection of programs that support the traditional activities on the land that are housed in ITI and MACA. As well, one of the things we're looking at in terms of new support would be through the business planning process coming up. We're looking at the expansion of the funding program that now assists community hunts.

MR. YAKELEYA: In terms of one of the programs the Minister talked about, the Community Harvesting Assistance Program to support traditional hunts, I know from the reports I've been getting from the Sahtu in the last month that there's been a huge increase in interest of hunters going out and pursuing this activity with their children and families. As you know, there's a high number of families with less than \$30,000 of income.

I want to ask the Minister, in terms of the high cost of living and the uniqueness of dealing with the situation in the Sahtu, is this type of funding going to be looked at in terms of the high cost of living in areas and allocating dollars to communities that do have higher costs to pursue the harvesting activities.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This I know is an issue of great concern to many of the members of the communities outside of Yellowknife where harvesting and hunting are significant activities. As the Member is aware, discussions have been held in relation to the business plans and Strategic Initiatives committees and work that's being done. The intent is, having travelled with the Member to the communities in his riding where we heard in almost every community about as we look to live off the land and we look for other opportunities other than may be available through some of the caribou herds that are in decline, the need for assistance. It's on that basis that we've had those discussions and we want to come forward with some options for expanding the funding for the CHAP funding.

MR. YAKELEYA: Can the Minister inform the House as to when some of these changes could come to light in terms of sharing the CHAP funding program with the communities?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Being part of the business planning process, it has been discussed. It has been built into the main estimates.

The House will be gathering for its final major budget session in late January or February, going into March, and that's when the matter will be decided by the House.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the outline that the Minister has informed the House, how soon after that discussion will we know if it's a positive discussion or positive outcome that the communities will know that they will be eligible for some of these support dollars that they desperately need to continue on with the harvesting of their traditional foods?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the business we do in the south is tied to, of course, the fiscal year which ends March 31st and starts April 1st for the new budget. The budget for the House will be passed and approved and we will start the flow April 1, 2011.

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

QUESTION 199-16(5):
POWER OUTAGE IN ULUKHAKTOK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of the Power Corporation. In my Member's statement today, the community of Ulukhaktok on October 4th and 5th had 20 households with no power, including the airport. Nunakput at this time of the year on the coastline communities, there is fog and freezing rain. I am just wondering if the Minister could speak to the Power Corporation to see if we could send crews into the communities that they represent to clear the ice off of the lines. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for that question on the Power Corporation. It was unfortunate the incidents that occurred there, and the power being out for as long as it was and the weather affecting the crews from getting into that community. We must, as the Member has stated, ensure that the community pull together in a very solid way, and a successful way, and ensuring people manage to get power to their homes and keep their homes heated. We thank the community for pulling together on that.

The Power Corporation, on the issue of the outages that have occurred both in Ulukhaktok and in Inuvik, for example, I have spoken to the board and they are getting me some additional information as well as looking at the recruitment process to come up with some plans on their maintenance structures. I will have to talk to them about that as they go forward. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: I want to thank the Minister for that reply. I am just wondering if we could set up a backup system for each community on the coast, and in Inuvik as well, or making sure that when the power goes out in the middle of winter when it is 40 below and you have a blizzard, it is usually for three days. We have some sort of system in there that we could... What could you do to make it happen in regard to having a safe system that we could rely on?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, all the work that the Power Corporation does in trying to provide a reliable service to the communities does include a level of redundancy, and that is in the generators, or Gen Set as we call them in the communities, so that there is backup.

The problem becomes more so an issue when we talk about our lines and transformers and so on. They have equipment that they could replace, but it is a matter of getting people into our most remote communities when something does occur like that and we try to marshal the crews to get out as soon as weather permits in some cases to, in fact, restore that power. We do have redundancy. The issue becomes, for example, around power lines, transformers, those areas where there are some problems that do occur. I will get additional information on the level of redundancy and the cost of that as well. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, for the maintenance program in regards to the low outlying communities, is there one in place for the summer months or for the communities?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I need some clarification on that. Is there a backup system in place over the summer months? We do have, for example, Gen Sets that are available and we move them in from time to time where they are needed in our communities where there are major outages and major breakdowns. Again, that is marshalled up at the time when we have them set up so that we can move them throughout the Territory. Again, for more specific on what area of backup the Member is looking for. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The maintenance program that I am referring to is just like going in there in the communities in the summer making sure the lines are connected properly to the poles, making sure they are grounded out in high wind areas, and seeing if we could also get local qualified people in the communities that represent the Power Corporation being able to fix these situations that we know that happen periodically in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I will get the maintenance schedule for our communities and provide that to Members. I know in our work we do, when we are replacing some capital components, that they do have a schedule for our communities. I will get that information for Members. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 200-16(5):
LIBERATION TREATMENT OFFERED TO
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS PATIENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my Member's statement I raised the issue of the liberation treatment that can offer a new hope to MS patients out there. I have written the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding this concern and I would like to call it an opportunity of hope for those people who have MS. My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is: What is her department doing to look at this treatment? Is there any possibility that the Department of Health and Social Services can get on board and see if we can select a couple of patients to try this treatment to see if we can bring new hope, opportunity, and have a return of quality of life that these people have lost and so much deserved? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories and the Department of Health and Social Services is on board with all of the other jurisdictions in Canada. All of the Ministers of Health have agreed that we are supportive of this treatment going forward once there is scientific evidence that would take us to the next level. All provinces and territories have agreed that we will work together and work with the scientists to be ready when the scientific evidence shows that this procedure is ready for clinical trial. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the issue before us here is the Minister is saying not enough science out there that says one way or the other. Saskatchewan believes that there is enough science out there to give this a try. If I have it correct, I believe Newfoundland is seriously looking at this and if you ask anybody who has received the treatment for liberation to help them, certainly they think the science exists, because they are travelling all over the world to get these types of things.

Not to be cynical, but may I remind the Minister, and certainly this House, that for years scientists said cigarettes were just fine too. Science will say one thing depending on who is paying for it and science could say something else depending on the

other person, but the reality here is this is a new hope and certainly that is what I am asking for. What type of strategy can we put in place to bring new hope to people who haven't had hope for a long time? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, for the Member's information, Saskatchewan is not doing clinical trials. They are doing clinical research which is being done in a number of sites. They are being funded by the federal government too. Minister Aglukkaq announced that. The federal government and Saskatchewan and the Province of Newfoundland are not doing clinical trials. What they are doing is the Minister announced a funding to monitor those who are receiving this service overseas. There is no clinical trial being done right now, but we are all working with scientists in various jurisdictions in different clinical research, because clinical research has to give us the scientific evidence that would tell us that it is safe to move to clinical trial.

I want the Member to know that we are on board along with all other Ministers to work together so that we are ready when the scientific evidence shows that it is ready for clinical trial. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I will agree with her on the clinical trial part, but who do you think they do the clinical trial part on? On people who have MS, in my view. If you talk to people who have MS out there, and I have some constituents who do have this, they view that as an opportunity for treatment and they would like to certainly be involved in this opportunity, as I've tried to describe it. Quite truly it is an opportunity of hope finally coming to a sector that has had very little hope and opportunity.

So the issue continues to be sort of the same point, which is how do we get our patients, our residents who have MS here in the Northwest Territories involved in any type of opportunities, such as this liberation treatment? Even if the Minister wants to call it research, how do we get them involved in the research of this new therapy? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you. We would be part of or we could sign up to be a part of national research when the clinical trials are ready to proceed. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is any clinical trials or procedures like this have a very set objective process that scientists and doctors follow. They have to be random, they have to be double blinded and it has to be safe. In all of the jurisdictions there are lots of researchers at different university settings that are studying this issue and right now. The information is that science does not indicate that we could do this clinical trial safely. But NWT residents could get on board with clinical trials once that becomes available as a safe clinical trial procedure. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anything that moves this forward even by an inch is a success, in my view. I want to get people into this treatment. Again, we'll call it research, if that's all we want to describe it as, although I know very well that it's being used as real treatment for a lot of people.

As I said earlier, we have MS patients in my riding who would like to be part of this process. Is the Minister willing to get out there and reach out to the MS community to start finding out if there are people who would be willing to join the research, who would want to be involved in the opportunities before us here? This is a chance of a lifetime, if I may describe it as that, but certainly a new hope in a life that needs new success. So would the Minister set something up and work with the MS community to make sure our residents could be involved in this profound, positive opportunity? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you. We will be monitoring and working with other jurisdictions to see the results of clinical research that is being conducted. A lot of multi site researchers are being funded by the federal government and we are also watching to see what's happening in Saskatchewan as well. So, Mr. Speaker, we do not have a research capacity in the Northwest Territories to do our own research, but certainly we will be part of the national research and findings and any progress that we can make on this issue. We are focused on this issue very much nationally and as a small jurisdiction. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 201-16(5):
PREVENTATIVE HOUSING MAINTENANCE
PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS AND
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have questions for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation regarding targeted seniors housing programs.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister advise me if seniors are still the highest core need group in housing across the Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors continue to be one of the highest core needs across the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: I thought they would be the highest core need group; that was my understanding. However, can the Minister agree that once a unit or a house is considered beyond

economical repair, that that unit is scheduled for replacement or should be replaced as opposed to being repaired? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Once a unit is determined to be unsafe or unhealthy to live in, or beyond economic repair, then the plan is normally to demolish the units and replace them. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: You can imagine the high cost of that, replacing all the seniors' homeownership units across the Territories. Can the Minister commit to directing his staff and the NWT Housing Corporation to develop a program that targets core need housing for seniors' home repairs? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The NWT Housing Corporation has a few programs that are targeted at seniors, the Seniors Preventative Maintenance Program being one of them. You used to be able to qualify for up to \$875, but it's been raised to \$2,000 and that will enable them to get some preventative maintenance work done on their unit. As well, through the CARE program, the old seniors program, they would qualify for possibly up to \$20,000, but through the CARE program they can qualify up to \$90,000 and seniors are given a priority. But as I heard in one of my visits to the Member's community, there was some discussion about the old program and \$20,000 and maybe using that. So it's something that as a corporation we'll continue to explore and if we find that we get more value for our dollar by spreading them out and doing more units, then that's something we'd have to consider. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I'm asking these questions is because the CARE program is not addressing the issues with the seniors and the seniors wish to see targeted programs. So can the Minister, in addition to looking at a seniors home repair program, a targeted program for a seniors home repair program and commit to directing his staff and the NWT Housing Corporation to develop a program that targets seniors and disabled persons in a preventive maintenance program? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. The Seniors Preventative Maintenance Program enables seniors to access up to \$2,000 for some work. There are also two or three programs, where we're a delivery agent for CMHC, that specifically targets seniors and one of them is Home Adaption for Seniors and Dependents. So there are some programs out there.

I've heard the Member's concerns, I've heard the concerns from one of his communities that I visited. So it is one that I will take back to the corporation

and see how we can best address the needs of seniors. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 202-16(5):
DELIVERY OF SPECIALIST
HEALTH CARE SERVICES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my Member's statement today, I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. This has to do with the delivery of specialist care, specialist services to residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I fully understand and applaud the department for attempting to attract, recruit and retain specialists of various disciplines here in the Northwest Territories. It makes sense. However, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that specialists are sometimes available here in the North and sometimes not.

In the last several weeks in Hay River I've had two constituents who had been seen for a long period of time by a specialist in the south who was a neurologist, because most of these constituents have MS and this is a chronic condition, which properly managed and monitored can go into remission and can be substantively, even held at a certain level for a period of time. One of the negative contributing factors to a condition like MS is stress, and when a patient has had a longstanding relationship with a doctor, they know their case, they are trusted by the patient and this creates some stability for that patient.

So in both of these instances, kind of on the eve of medical travel to go to Edmonton to see their specialist, they were informed that their medical travel was denied because there was now a neurologist available to see them in Yellowknife. This does not seem like a good way to manage this and I'm asking the Minister of Health today is there a different way we can do this so that we avoid this kind of stress for these patients? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the need to make this sort of process as smooth and seamless as possible for the patient. I am aware that one of the patients in Hay River we did approve the travel, but we did give notice that for next year she would have to travel to a neurologist in Yellowknife. Also, I will work with the department to make sure that we review the files and see that if there is going to be a change in specialists that they need to see, that we give them as much notice as possible. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I do appreciate the Minister is right that there was an exception made in one instance. However, it doesn't really address the problem going forward and ongoing. I think that a more in-depth analysis needs to be done of the situation. For example, even if there is a neurologist now resident in Yellowknife, what is the caseload of that neurologist? How long will additional patients being added to the caseload have to wait in order to see them? Is there an extraordinary heavy caseload? Is it a light patient load whereby if we don't include these other folks then they won't be able to continue to practice here? We need a more in-depth analysis.

The other complicating factor is that quite often, even if they come here to Yellowknife and are assessed by the neurologist, some of the procedures and testing they need are done in Edmonton anyway. So I don't think we can take just a really simple approach to this. I think we need to take a very critical look at it on a discipline-by-discipline basis when it comes to the specialists. Could the Minister agree the department could undertake that?

HON. SANDY LEE: I agree with the Member that this is not a simple matter and it does involve patient care and comfort and continuity of care that the patient expects.

Specialist service in the Territories and at Stanton Hospital is one of the most important and expensive services. We've spent about \$13 million on specialists and they're often over budget. We also spent a lot of money on out-of-territory services. So it is important that when we get a specialist service such as a neurologist, that we use those resources at maximum.

With respect to wait times, we did review that and I certainly could work with the specialist to make sure that those wait lists are managed as much as possible. I am aware that, especially with MS patients, we have quite a few of them in Yellowknife. It seems it is more common in Yellowknife and Hay River. It is important for us to have a neurologist service here. We're lucky we have those and we just need to make sure that we manage as well as possible so that we communicate well with the patients.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: For further clarity then, in the case where a patient with MS has had a longstanding relationship with a physician, with a specialist, a neurologist in the south, has been travelling out to see that specialist, is it only the medical travel portion that is affected? So, in fact, if the patient said it is so important to me that I need to see this particular doctor because they know my case, I know them, there's a trust relationship built, is it possible for that patient to say, okay, I will pay for my own medical travel to get to Edmonton? Will the department then continue to support that patient

to receive that service in the south? Is it the medical travel that's the issue or is it the actual care that the service that the position is delivering?

HON. SANDY LEE: I'll have to get the details, but I would venture to guess that actual service of that specialist that we would have to pay in wherever place that they go would be as high, if not higher, than the medical travel and related expenses. There is a formula for the services like neurologists and inter-jurisdictional billing and such. So we would be paying for that specialist in Edmonton or wherever, while at the same time we are paying for our in-house specialist.

Specialists are, as you know, quite, I don't want to say expensive, but we pay a lot of money to have somebody like a neurologist. We have to minimize occasions where we are double paying when we have an in-house specialist in the Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister consider grandfathering people who already have a longstanding, established relationship with a specialist in the south?

Also, can the Minister confirm that the neurologist who is currently located in Yellowknife, does that specialist have a full patient load or do they have capacity to take on more patients?

HON. SANDY LEE: I would be happy to get back to the Member on the load, the wait times and such. Also, we should be mindful of the fact that the Medical Travel Policy says that we pay for medical travel and treatment of patients where those services are not available in the NWT. It may be that somebody may have to see another neurologist because the service that they provide here is not exactly alike. So we make sure that we have the services there. I will get back to the Member on what the patient load is, wait times.

With respect to grandfathering, that is always not a good idea. I will just get back to the Member with that information.

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

QUESTION 203-16(5):
DEFICITS EXPERIENCED BY
NWT HEALTH AUTHORITIES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got questions today to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It goes back to my Member's statement where I was talking about deficits that have been accruing specifically at Stanton, which is what I want to talk about today, but at other health authorities across the Northwest Territories.

Eighteen months ago the Minister came to committee and presented a plan that would see

those deficits get back to zero. In fact, over the past 18 months deficits at not just Stanton but at other health authorities across the Northwest Territories are growing at an uncontrollable level and pace. I'd like to ask the Minister, over the past 18 months what is leading to increased deficits being run up at health authorities across the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we have discussed on many different occasions in standing committee and in health information dialogue and in the health community, deficit is a common issue everywhere in Canada. Every jurisdiction is faced with rising health care costs, rising health care services, rising drug costs, equipment costs, labour costs and the demand of service. NWT is no exception.

Stanton Territorial Health Authority is a territorial body. Their deficit is not Stanton's deficit per se, but it is a system deficit. Dr. Corkal, who is the medical director, and the CEO, Kay Louis, and the public administrator are tasked with this issue. They are working very closely together to see how we address and get to a complete and comprehensive plan. I'd be happy to work with the Members on the other side to make sure that we make prudent and very clear decisions that would minimize the impact on our residents, but that it shows a systematic change that will require courage and foresight and vision about how we go forward with respect to our health care.

MR. RAMSAY: Obviously this isn't a new problem. It was a problem in the time I've been here, almost seven years; just over seven years. It was a problem two years ago when the Minister came forward with a plan to address it. She says there's a plan being worked on today. How am I supposed to believe that the Minister and the government can come forward with a plan that's workable? The one that she brought forward two years ago, they haven't done anything with. In fact, things have gotten much, much worse.

When is this plan the Minister speaks of going to be presented to the Standing Committee on Social Programs so that they can see a way forward on fighting deficits at the health authorities across the Territories?

HON. SANDY LEE: I'm sure the Member would appreciate that our overarching goal in this House cannot be about reducing the deficit to zero without understanding what the impacts of that would be. I don't think the Member would support reducing or eliminating programs at Stanton that would impact our residents and the regions across the Territories.

It is important that we work as leaders of the Assembly and work with our health care partners

and health care administrators to get advice from them on exactly where the cost drivers are, what are the things that we must have, what additional resources should we support them with, but what are the system efficiencies that we need to make decisions on. If that means moving some of the offices out of Stanton, if it means charging for parking or whatever else the Member mentioned, they have to be ranked with all of the other priorities.

These are very, very serious issues. Every day on the national media you cannot go a day without somebody talking about the pressure in the health care system. My part as the Minister is to make sure that I'm not trying to balance the budget for the sake of balancing the budget. That would not be the easiest, but it would be the most blunt way to do it. I think it's important that we do it the right way so that we protect the core services and important services.

MR. RAMSAY: Going back to the plan that the Minister presented two years ago and talked about balancing budgets, I'm not sure exactly what she's talking about. I'm not standing up here today suggesting that programs be cut, services be cut. I'm suggesting that we come up with a workable solution and a plan going forward.

I have a question that I don't need a long, verbose answer to. I'd like to ask the Minister, is the department and Stanton Hospital, is there an intention to start charging people for parking at that hospital?

HON. SANDY LEE: I am not aware of that plan. If there were, I would let the Member know.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Staying on the same line, looking for a short answer, how about for the utilization of television and phone services in patient rooms at Stanton Hospital? Will patients be charged for utilizing those services?

HON. SANDY LEE: On the note of parking, there are lots of government buildings where the employees do pay for parking. That would be the kind of thing that administration would do on their own. I will get an update on that. I am not aware of patients being charged for TV or any other service, but I think anybody who has travelled to southern facilities, all those are charged. So I'd be happy to talk to the authority to see if there are plans like that or any other plan. It hasn't come to my desk. I'll share that with the Member when it does.

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

QUESTION 204-16(5):
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR
HOUSING PROGRAM APPLICANTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. He actually preceded my Member's statement which I had scheduled for next week on vacant housing. Nevertheless, it's a serious concern in my riding and we'd still like to address it.

The Minister does say that the intake period ends today and I hope that many of my constituents did file applications and make the effort to get in. I'd just like to know, will the Minister be able to compile intake numbers and provide those numbers to myself?

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once the application process is over today I will be able to provide some numbers to the Members, if they wish to see the number of applicants in their communities.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: During my constituency tour this fall many of my constituents continued to tell me that because they're being in arrears, that they're not eligible and they actually didn't want to apply again this year. What kind of flexibility in terms of eligibility does the NWT Housing Corporation have when they are viewing a client's application if they have some arrears or big arrears? How do they manage those?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, arrears is a huge concern. That is why I have been trying to get the message out across the NWT that arrears need to be taken care of because it affects your ability to access some of the programs. However, that being said, one of the programs, the HELP program, does allow a minimum amount of arrears. I believe it is up to \$5,000, and the flexibility, I have also asked the corporation, as I have said in my Minister's statement, to look at the core need income threshold and maybe be a little more flexible in that, because we have a lot of people out there that would be good homeowners, however, some are just likely over the core need threshold. I have asked them to be a little more flexible when looking at that. That is why I am quite confident, Mr. Speaker, that we will see a good majority of these vacant units fill up after the intake period, once all applications are processed. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I, too, look for some success in this intake period during the fall time. However, those constituents that do have arrears, Mr. Speaker, still speak to me about their disputing how those arrears occurred, how they happened. Some of them are very old. I have

raised continuously with the Minister and in this House about it and an appeal mechanism within the Housing Corporation. When is the Minister going to enact such a committee? Or, actually, it should be an independent committee, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of doing that right now. We are hoping to have an appeals committee in place by April 1, 2011. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the case of a community, if there are no eligible clients for a particular unit, what is the Minister's plan to allocate for that particular unit in the community? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, if we have no eligible client for that one particular unit, as I have said before, we will try another targeted intake to see if there may be eligible applicants that we may have missed. If that fails, then we would speak to communities to see if they have... We have had community groups approaching us about the availability of some of our youths. We have said to hold off until after our application process. All that being failed, we have to... We will consider turning them over to a public housing unit, because that is one of our biggest needs in a lot of our communities. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 205-16(5):
COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow up on my Member's statement. My Member's statement was on the Community Health Nurse Development Program and the confusion that exists out there with respect to its current status. Does it exist? Has it been eliminated? What is going on? My question is for the Minister. What is the status of the Community Health Nurse Program? Does it exist or has it been eliminated? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The program continues. We continue to support the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, that is good. What does that mean? From what I understand, there has been no intake in that program for the last year at least. There is, as far as I know, no planned intake. As far as I know, my research shows that

there is only one person enrolled in the program and they are coming to an end very soon. I am glad to hear that it is continuing, but what does that mean? Is there going to be a new intake? Are we going to put some more people in the program? This is a great program for transitioning hospital-based nurses into community health centres. The numbers show that it has been very successful to date.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Member. This is a very important program, but like any other programs, it has to work within the existing budget. It went over budget by quite a bit, so our approach right now is to support students that are already there. We are spending \$750,000 this year. We will bring in new intake as the budget allows.

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am very confused. Like I said before, I understand that there is only one person enrolled in this program. That certainly can't possibly be costing us \$750,000. If there is \$750,000 set aside for the Community Health Nurse Program and there is one person in it, how are spending that money? It seems a little odd.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I will get back to the Member on the details of where that budget is being allocated. The Member should know that there is a lot of cost associated with having a CHN. It is a very important program, but it needs a partnership from the authorities and mentors and extra costs in supporting a student through the program. I will undertake to get back to the Member on the breakdown of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of the costs associated with running an individual through the program. I know the program covers a portion of the salary, but it also covers some training O and M. But I guarantee you it is not \$750,000 for one nurse. If there is only one nurse in the program, I see no reason why we can't have any intake on that program immediately. I would like the Minister to commit to reviewing the program and if there is only one employee or one nurse enrolled in the program, I want her to commit to having an intake immediately to put some people in that program.

The program works, Mr. Speaker. It has been successful and it gets nurses in communities, and 14 out of the 20 are still there today and six of those are indigenous aboriginals. It works. Make it happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, the department and the government is doing a lot of work to put our nurses through our various training programs. We

just direct appointed a number of nurses. We support nurses going through this program.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget for the CHN Program, we have a contract with Aurora College for \$460,000 and we spent \$350,000 in salary subsidy for CHNs in their second year program. It is important that we support them through their programming, and we will be interested in taking on new students, but we need to make sure that we have the budget in place to support them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the Member know that we support this program. I support this program, but it would be irresponsible for us to not pay attention to the budget. Mr. Speaker, I think we agree on the point that we support this program. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 206-16(5):
LEGISLATION TO GOVERN
PAYDAY LOAN COMPANY OPERATIONS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of MACA, the Minister responsible for consumer protection. It is regarding the control of payday loan gouging. I understand that a legislative proposal may be underway, the first step in creating laws to control these abuses. We certainly need action now. I am wondering if this Minister is moving forward quickly on this. Can we expect solid support from this Assembly for the fast-tracking of this law to protect not only Yellowknife residents but travellers from communities caught short on money when they are in the capital? Will the Minister confirm that legislation is forthcoming and that bringing this forward is a priority and perhaps confirmation on the status of that? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously this is a concern that we have heard on a couple of occasions now. Although MACA, through the consumer affairs department, hasn't really received any complaints, we understand that it is still a concern out there. There is the cost of credit disclosure that is going to be introduced and that would compel the lending companies to fully disclose the interest rates that they are charging on loans. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, that gets into my second question here. I think there are two essentials for any law on this. The first is that firm and reasonable controls on the actual amount of additional charges, that can be attached to a loan agreement. So I'm hoping that there will be those

controls as well as the clarity and declaration to the customer.

The Quebec legislation, which is considered the most strong -- and I hope that is being referenced by the folks drafting this bill -- establishes a percentage ceiling that forbids additional charges exceeding a certain percentage of the principal amount.

The second one is clear language, of course, as the Minister has noted, so the borrowers know what they are signing.

So will the Minister confirm and commit that both of those will be in this legislation? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I haven't had an opportunity to look at the legislation that's being drafted. However, I will commit to the Member that, as committee, they will have opportunity to have some say into what goes into this particular piece of legislation.

MR. BROMLEY: Yes, so the first was firm and reasonable controls on the actual amount of additional charges. So I will look for that.

As the Minister knows, it is a much more expeditious, faster process if those can be in first rather than coming to committee to, again, identify them later and go back, a time-consuming approach. The new law is meaningless, however, without enforcement, Mr. Speaker.

We learned in recent media reports that MACA officials don't monitor lenders' practices to prevent abuses. People being ripped off have to use the courts, which is difficult, costly, and, for most people, impossible. I'm sure the Minister recognizes this, that the clients often do not have the sort of capacity required, and that's the same reasoning for how they are being taken advantage of.

So will the Minister commit to placing a high priority on bringing this forward before the end of the 16th Assembly, legislation that is clearly enforceable and the enforcement requirement to back it up is there? That may take approaching the people rather than waiting for complaints. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: It is our intent to have this...(inaudible)...legislation passed through the 16th Assembly. We do take all concerns very seriously and this is one that we are starting to hear a bit more about in recent days. As a 16th Assembly, if this is a priority of the 16th Assembly, then that will enable us working with committee to move the legislation along a lot quicker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's commitment to this and I think it is something that we are hearing a lot about and I guess when it comes forward, I am wondering if the Minister would accompany it with some

information on the degree to which this exists in other communities. I know it's a big one in Yellowknife and the people from other communities are being taken advantage of in the city. So it would be good to have that information, as well, from other centres. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: My understanding is there are a couple of outfits here in Yellowknife that provide this service. I would have to confirm. There may be a couple more out in the larger communities, but I will confirm that information and I will share it with the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 207-16(5):
TERRITORIAL ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE
FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions today for the Minister of Health and Social Services with regard to the Territorial Admissions Committee. This committee was established about a year or so ago. From a press release last September, it states: "A new Territorial Admissions Committee (TAC) has been established to streamline the application process for long-term care into the NWT's 10 long-term care facilities." So the committee has been in place for a year or more and I would like to ask the Minister at this point how successful this program has been and how many people have been placed. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a number on me as to how many people were processed through that, but I can tell the Member that anybody in the Territories who is being considered for a placement into a long-term care would have had to have gone through TAC. So I will get back to the Member on the exact number. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that commitment. I do have some concerns about the operation of the TAC, particularly around travel. There are a number of our residents who are either in their home community or perhaps who have been placed in a facility outside of the NWT. I've read the policy that's on the department's website. I don't see anything in there about travel and how people are moved from one place to another. So I'd like to ask the Minister, since the policy doesn't help me out here, do we repatriate residents who have been placed in a facility outside of the NWT? Do we repatriate them into the NWT, assuming, of course, that our facilities have space? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, we do, especially with the opening of the Territorial Dementia Centre and

the Hay River Assisted Living Facility. We did review clients outside of the jurisdiction, our clients in other jurisdictions, to see if they can be moved.

Territorial Admissions Committee are administrators who review the files to see where our clients should be best placed within the Territory. Questions about how do they get paid to be moved would be on a case-by-case basis. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. It's my understanding that when residents are moved from an outside facility back into the Territory's, that the department will cover their costs. If we, for instance, move somebody from a small community outside of Yellowknife to, say, the Territorial Dementia Centre to Aven Cottage because they happen to have dementia or Alzheimer's, it's my understanding that that travel is not paid for by the Department of Health and Social Services. So I'd like to ask the Minister why we would cover costs to bring somebody from outside the NWT in, but yet we won't cover the costs to bring somebody from within the NWT to a facility that they need. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: That would not be based on the regions or the facilities. It wouldn't be because they're being moved from out of Territories or something like that. I would think that's a question of insured services versus uninsured services, something that we hear all the time. Hospital-to-hospital transportation, that would be considered insured services and that's covered under Medicare, medical travel. Long-term care is not considered insured services, so for some residents those are not covered. How the authorities deal with that is often they try to look to see if they need to go anywhere for medical travel, they will try to combine them. Authorities work hard to observe the cost as much as possible, but transfer from a long-term care to long-term care is not considered an insured service. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little confused by that answer. If we cover travel costs to bring somebody from outside the NWT to a facility within, then I don't understand why we wouldn't cover them to move from within the NWT to another facility.

I'd like to ask the Minister a question as well. It's my understanding -- and this is anecdotal evidence, I don't have much except for what constituents have told me -- that we will cover costs for family members to visit patients who are in a long-term care facility outside the NWT, but we will not do the same for family members visiting patients within the NWT from an outside community. So can I get an answer to why there is that discrepancy? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I would appreciate getting more information from the Member, perhaps, on the specific situation. It's case by case and it's depending on the person and what facility they are in. We pay for medical escorts, but we do not have a budget to pay for somebody to visit anybody in long-term care at any time. It's a question that we get asked all the time, so I would need what facility they are in and what condition and under what circumstances they were asked to have support. If they're indigent, if they're on income security, sometimes we've covered those. Sometimes they're covered under employer's benefits. There are so many different varieties, so I'd appreciate getting more information from the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The time for question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 15-16(5): CORE HOUSING NEEDS

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Can the Minister provide me with the core need breakdown of the following groups, by community, in both percentage and number of units:

- a) seniors;
- b) singles (non-senior);
- c) couples (non-senior); and
- d) families (greater than two people).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Mr. Robert McLeod.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 82-16(5): WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission 2009 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

TABLED DOCUMENT 83-16(5): ANNUAL REPORT ON THE NWT MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PENSION PLANS

TABLED DOCUMENT 84-16(5): LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RETIRING ALLOWANCE FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2010

Pursuant to Section 21(1) of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act and Section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, I wish to table the Annual Report of the Northwest Territories MLAs Pension Plans for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Pursuant to Section 21 of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act, I wish to table the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Fund Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2010.

Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 12: AN ACT TO AMEND THE LIQUOR ACT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, October 18, 2010, I will move that Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project; Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits; Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits – What We Heard; Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy; and Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, with Mr. Abernethy in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. On our agenda today is Tabled Document 4-16(5), Tabled Document 30-16(5), Tabled Document 38-16(5), Tabled Document 62-16(5) and Tabled Document 66-16(5). What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, for opening comments.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Agreed. Before we proceed with Tabled Document 66-16(5) we're going to take a short break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I'll call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break committee agreed that we would review Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012. First we'll go to Mr. Miltenberger for opening comments.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here to present for the committee's consideration the 2011-2012 Capital Estimates of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The estimates outline appropriations for government and community infrastructure investments of \$155 million in the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

The estimates do not include appropriations for housing infrastructure proposed by the NWT Housing Corporation in 2011-2012 totalling \$16.4 million. The appropriation for these investments will be sought during committee's review of the 2011-2012 Main Estimates. The NWT Housing Corporation's proposed 2011-2012 Capital Plan, however, has been included in the estimates document as an information item for review and comment by committee.

Including the proposed housing investment will bring the total planned infrastructure investment in 2011-2012 to \$171 million. This means that over the life of the 16th Legislative Assembly we will have invested over \$1 billion in badly needed infrastructure in the Northwest Territories.

The 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 capital budgets represented an unprecedented level of investment for our government.

We made a conscious decision, as part of our fiscal strategy, to invest in infrastructure at a time when private capital investment was declining in order to help mitigate the effects of the economic downturn. We will have injected over \$700 million into the GNWT economy over this year and last, creating significant contract and employment opportunities and addressing infrastructure needs across the NWT for health facilities, schools, highways, airports and other transportation requirements.

We will also continue to provide a stable source of funding for community governments so that they can properly plan to address their infrastructure needs over the long term.

Although smaller than previous years' budgets, the 2011-2012 Capital Estimates still allow for a substantial level of investment, and permits the completion of many of the projects begun during the 16th Legislative Assembly. As Members are aware, starting in 2012-2013 we will have returned to more historical levels of capital investment in order to maintain a fiscally sustainable path.

Major highlights of the Infrastructure Acquisition Plan include:

- \$37 million for highways and winter roads across the NWT;
- \$25 million for school replacements and renovations;
- \$28 million to continue to fund community governments for infrastructure;
- \$13.6 million for replacements and renovations to health facilities;
- \$10.5 million for airport replacements and improvements;
- \$12 million for small capital projects across all departments;
- \$5 million for the Deferred Maintenance Program; and
- \$3.9 million for the Capital Asset Retrofit Fund Program for energy efficiency upgrades to existing GNWT buildings.

Following remarks by the Honourable Michael McLeod, we are prepared to review the 2011-2012 Capital Estimates with the committee.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We'll now go to Mr. Michael McLeod for his opening comments.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I'm here with the Honourable Michael Miltenberger to discuss the 2011-2012 Capital Estimates of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

As lead Minister for infrastructure, I was tasked with revising the Government of the Northwest Territories capital planning process, with the aim of improving how we plan for, acquire, deliver and maintain infrastructure necessary to deliver required programs and services for our residents.

The changes we have implemented as a result ensure that all major projects are properly planned and costs are accurately estimated prior to seeking approval from this Assembly. This improved process, including the consideration of the capital budget in the fall rather than the late winter, has not only enabled us to increase our own investment in

critical assets but has also allowed our government to take advantage of both new and accelerated federal infrastructure funding. The results of this improvement are reflected in the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 capital budgets. These budgets represent a combined investment in excess of \$700 million, including an unprecedented \$485 million in 2009-2010. Community governments also saw investment of \$127.5 million over this period.

These changes have improved the delivery of large capital projects; for example, the Department of Public Works and Services managed \$162 million in capital projects in 2009-2010 and is currently managing \$149 million in 2010-2011. Major contracts have been awarded on over 95 percent of these projects and work is being successfully completed within the approved budget.

One of the major changes to the capital planning process was to make deferred maintenance a priority for investment. Since the inception of the Deferred Maintenance Program on April 1, 2008, significant progress has been made to reduce our deferred maintenance deficit and keep critical building assets operational. Through a combination of large capital projects, complemented by our Deferred Maintenance Program, we will have reduced our deferred maintenance deficit by approximately \$145 million by March 31, 2012. Diligent management of our government's deferred maintenance deficit will continue to be a priority for many years to come. The 16th Legislative Assembly can take credit for recognizing this significant problem and developing a vigorous and sustainable plan to address this issue.

While proper project planning and managing our deferred maintenance deficit are priorities, our government is also mindful that we need to be innovative and look for ways to reduce the energy consumption of our buildings and minimize their impact on the environment.

Through the delivery of our infrastructure programs the GNWT is demonstrating its commitment to responsible energy management and environmental stewardship.

I would like to highlight two building projects that will be completed within the next few months that highlight how our new process is working to provide focus on energy and the environment.

- The new data centre in Yellowknife, currently nearing the end of construction, has no heating plant. The facility will obtain its required heating from the computer equipment hosted in the building. Excess heat from the new data centre will be shipped to the GNWT central warehouse next door and help reduce this building's fossil fuel requirements and in turn reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- The new GNWT office building in Inuvik will obtain its heating requirements from the Northwest Territories Power Corporation power plant that is located directly across from our new building. Waste heat from the power plant will be shipped to the office building via a short pipeline and should eliminate the requirement to heat this building with natural gas.

In conclusion, I would like to say that despite the challenges we still face, much progress has been made to improve how we plan for, acquire, deliver and maintain our infrastructure. A more rigorous planning process has produced solid projects. We have eliminated the need to return to the Assembly to seek additional funds for those projects that were developed through planning studies. We have significantly reduced and will continue to reduce our deferred maintenance deficit and we have demonstrated an ability to think outside the box and seek opportunities, where appropriate, to develop innovative projects that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Many energy efficiency initiatives are underway, including the adoption and use of biomass fuels.

I look forward to discussing the 2011-2012 Infrastructure Acquisition Plan with the Assembly so we can continue the good work we started three years ago when we first gathered here as the 16th Legislative Assembly.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Miltenberger, do you and Mr. McLeod have witnesses you'd like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we allow the Ministers to bring in their witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Mr. Miltenberger, could I please get you to introduce your witness for the record?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. McLeod, could I please get you to introduce your witness for the record?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me I have Paul Guy, deputy minister of Public Works and Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Is committee agreed that we proceed with

general comments in response to opening remarks?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start by saying that I've been listening closely to the remarks that have been made by the Ministers and there was considerable material that I agree with and support, but I want to note in most general initial comments here that I recognize the international economic considerations and to some extent the decisions of this government have placed us in a position where I recognize the need to support the government's fiscal strategy that sees us through these times of uncertainty. I stress that we have a combination here of the international sort of globalized factors such as the recession and some of the decisions of this government that have placed us in a vulnerable financial position. Thus with those there is a need to be somewhat cautious. I support that approach.

I recognize that we've enjoyed considerable capital budgets in the last few years resulting largely from federal programs, such as the Building Canada Fund, the Economic Stimulation Fund and, of course, the Affordable Housing Initiative. I also recognize that we've made very good use of those funds. There have been some tune-ups to how we achieve our infrastructure and how we plan.

I saw a very interesting article that I will forward to the Minister of Public Works and Services, in Focus magazine, about large infrastructure projects and some of the phenomena that are associated with that in jurisdictions throughout the world, many of which are reflected in our own jurisdiction. I see some progressive progress on that in terms of delivering our infrastructure.

I also want to recognize the internal energy efficiencies and move towards renewable energy and new initiatives in that direction, and some of the savings that we're making. I think we're doing a good job there. I think we're becoming a leader on that in Canada. I want to recognize that and stress that there is a need now. What used to be considered thinking outside the box is no longer, so we need to redefine that box and start thinking outside of the box again.

One of the ways to do that, of course, is specifically with full-cost accounting. We're still looking at a conventional accounting approach. As a result, many of our efforts have stayed in the southern parts of the Territory, despite that fact that with a full-cost accounting approach there are huge opportunities for savings and moving further north. I think we have some projects in terms of using waste heat from fossil fuels, such as in the Inuvik project, that are getting quite far north and I'm happy to see that now. But many of the renewable

energy projects, I think the Tli Cho community of Behchoko is about as far north as we get and I see great opportunities for further gains there. Just by way of example, if we throw into the mix what the cost of building, expanding, maintaining, cleaning up after tank farms, the gains that could be made would become immediately obvious. That just does not seem to be part of the accounting yet. Hopefully it will be this year.

I also recognize that much of the work we do in infrastructure is really demonstrating the potential ways and in many cases the best ways of building infrastructure to our residents and our businesses. I think this is a very important step that we are taking in demonstrating these things, because it does provide a bit of a market for these. I hesitate to call them new technologies. They are not. They are old technologies that we are finally implementing. It does provide a platform for recognition by our residents and I see some uptake by our residents and businesses. That is to be commended.

I think most of my other comments are departmental specific. I did want to perhaps recognize a couple of things that perhaps we had some discussions on already, but one of them is the need to, when we have situations that are identical in two different communities where we are contemplating infrastructure and there is relatively little cost to choosing one community over another and that perhaps a preferred community is economically deprived relative to the other often as a result of whether or not they have had infrastructure projects, that should be part of the decision-making. I think there is a tendency for Ministers to take that to an extreme and think that we are suggesting that be a major factor in governing those decisions. That is not true. I think I am suggesting, and others, that it be a consideration. I am hoping that will start the... We have raised the point before, others and myself, that when we put in large infrastructure, we need to be sure that O and M dollars are clearly identified and part of the budget so we don't have really financial awkwardness in dealing with that situation. If we don't plan for it, it can cause unneeded kerfuffles. I just wanted to, again, profile that little piece.

When we get into Education and perhaps Public Works and Services, I don't doubt we will hear about the need to address some of the schools, the deferred maintenance on schools, and I think we let some things slide there. I would like to see a comprehensive approach with that.

Finally, the evaluation of the capital formula funding for community governments, I think that has been unchanged. Members have in the past and again this time around, I am sure, such as myself, will be raising the need to have a look at that and

recognize that economics have changed since we established that fund, \$20 million or whatever it is.

Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I will leave it at that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. We will go to Minister Miltenberger for a response.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member's comments. We collectively have managed our way through, in this Assembly, some very significant issues with the wrench in the economy to what is happening in the world around us. I agree that the billion dollars would not have been possible without the cost shared dollars with the feds, some of it 50 cent dollars, some of it 75 cent dollars.

The issue of energy efficiency is a key one. I know the Member has said he is tired of hearing about the \$60 million, but that was a commitment of this Assembly that is going to pay dividends for us. We will continue to look at the issue of full-cost accounting so we can fully capture the cost and negatives and pluses of any particular project that is being suggested.

The economic variable that the Member has talked about, we have acknowledged that we will look at that. Of course, I would just like to point out, when the Member mentioned two communities of comparable size and circumstance, it would of course automatically mean that this would be a criteria that applies everywhere except Yellowknife, which would have to be considered so that we do have a level playing field, but it is one that could require discussion. I think it would have some complexities that would be discovered as we look at it in detail. However, we recognize that it has been raised by committee.

The issue of the formal funding for communities I think are reviewed on a regular basis but, once again, we would look to the advice from committee. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It takes a whole effort of the Assembly to work towards our capital budget. I am very pleased that we are able to get through it earlier, just because of timing in some of the communities that don't have roads and have only access by winter roads. If you get the materials and supplies in at an earlier time, I am going to be pleased with that aspect of our capital estimates. As MLAs, we work hard in lobbying the Ministers, lobbying the government in writing or raising issues in the House and trying to get our fair share of resources for our constituency. I can say that is certainly the Nahendeh riding. I feel that we have our fair share of resources, but

constituents also point out that a lot of the lacking issues... I will kind of raise them as we go along.

I think the biggest thing for me is that many other ridings, including Yellowknife or Inuvik, have their huge projects like the Dementia Centre or the super school in Inuvik and other schools that are very expensive. However, in my riding I have two smaller communities, Trout Lake and Nahanni Butte, that all they are asking for is to have a look at their schools. I hope that there is a time that we can start building or replacing the schools in the smaller communities once again. It has always been Trout Lake's contention that their original Charles Tetcho School has never been replaced. In fact, Education decided we use the community hall to take care of the educational needs. We never replaced a school in Trout Lake. That is something that is high on my agenda. I certainly would like the government to consider that as we move along.

I am pleased to see that there is some planning study money for the school in Nahanni Butte as well. They have outgrown their school. It is a log home. It is a log construction. I would like to see that school be in... It depends on the study too, I guess, and the engineering, Mr. Chair. The community would certainly like to see improvements in that area.

I spoke countless times on the highway system in the constituency I represent. I have five out of my six communities that are road accessible. In the wintertime, there are six. When I travel to my constituency, hold my constituency meetings, it is always high on the agenda as well. The roads, roads, roads and I noticed that the Minister of Transportation is up there. Maybe he can indicate some of the investments in Highway No. 1, Highway No. 7 that are coming up in the capital estimates, or else, if he chooses, I can wait until the appropriate time when the department comes up too, Mr. Chair. I continue to press for it, especially for Highway No. 7. It is one of the gateways to the North by road. I always press the issue that the federal government created a new Nahanni National Park Reserve. They want the world to see it. One of the ways to do it is through our highway system. I would encourage the Finance Minister to use that argument when he can with our federal counterparts and Minister of Transportation as well.

I am pleased to see that a lot of the little issues are being taken care of as well. I am pleased to see Transportation is looking at runway lighting for Nahanni Butte as something that is being worked on for seven years. It is a small expenditure, Mr. Chair, but it is a huge pay-off for a small community like Nahanni Butte and all the visitors that go there and are concerned about the safety in the evenings, and it's about getting there earlier as well. So I'm certainly very, very pleased with that expenditure.

I would be remiss not to also mention the highway that goes from Fort Simpson towards Wrigley. You know that that also needs a lot of work. The residents of Wrigley use that as their lifeline. They are continually frustrated. There was some investment this year, but it was just so hard to keep up, but that will be one of the legs that has to be improved as we work towards a Mackenzie Valley Highway system, Mr. Chair. When that becomes a reality or should a future pipeline meet it, I really think we should start planning on improving that portion of the highway too.

In terms of Fort Simpson, it is the regional centre and in my recent constituency meeting in Fort Simpson, residents also spoke about the need to upgrade the hospital. I'm pleased to see there is going to be some investment in the capital budget. It looks like there's some planning dollars for it. You know, I would only urge a couple of things. I know that we are looking at standard buildings, but if this is becoming a regional centre, we've got to plan 20 years down the road as well. We'd certainly like to see replacement of a full operating hospital in Fort Simpson. Who knows what the future will bring. Like with the development of the highway, development of a pipeline, increase of any development such as mining, you will certainly see Fort Simpson grow.

So in the planning, putting the work towards it, I would like to see them consider those factors. Minister Lee was with me in Fort Simpson and we heard clearly from residents, "include us in the planning." A couple of them are actually staffed to make the hospital more user friendly and make it ergonomic, because they are the ones that use it on a daily basis. So that's certainly something that I would urge as we work towards the planning of that.

The other huge issue is housing. The Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation did indicate we are going to be faced with declining funds, so I'm not sure how we are going to invest in housing in the future. First things first, get people into the units that are there, the units that we built. Get them into there. Spend money. I do agree that we do have to spend some money on reinvestment and renovations and retrofits of the existing homes. That's where the need is. But we do have to wrap our heads around how we provide housing in the future. Hopefully something comes out either with the federal government or some kind of lobbying effort.

We are speaking about having an NWT Day in Ottawa. I don't know if housing and the declining CMHC funds is part of our strategy, but I would certainly like to see it as well there. It's a big issue in all my communities. Just in terms of housing, as well, a lot of it is when we build houses, people with higher incomes aren't eligible for programming, Mr.

Chair. I feel, and I know, that these are the people we want, the people with the higher incomes that can make the mortgage payments, that won't fall in arrears. So these are the people who should be in homes and not rejected. I will be speaking about that later on in the week, because I really feel that's one of the ways to get money back into NWT housing programs, one of the ways of having more money to build more houses in our communities.

I would just like to thank you for the opportunity for commenting on the opening remarks to the Minister of Finance. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. We'll go to Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Member for his comments. He raised a number of issues across the North and, of course, in his riding. The capital process in the last while has changed and we are starting to certainly see the benefits of using this process that requires us to follow a number of steps. We are quite satisfied that the changes are positive. The capital process and the capital budget have been really challenged in the last couple of years as we went forward to deliver many projects across the North. A lot of the regional centres have seen fairly large expenditures and large projects go into the communities.

We have also worked quite well with the smaller communities in doing replacement programs and new infrastructure and also infrastructure for alternate energy in communities such as Kakisa and Fort Simpson, and McPherson and Inuvik.

There are a lot of projects the Member has referenced in the budget for planning studies. The school in Nahanni is one, as the Member is aware. We also have other schools that are being looked at and considered, Lutselk'e and others. There is still some work being done for facility condition reports. I think one was down in Trout, and Education has that in their hands now and are reviewing it.

The Department of Transportation still continues to be involved in providing a lot of capital investment. In this coming budget that we will be dealing with on Monday, the budget for transportation is at \$60 million with roughly \$30 million to \$40 million carryover from last year. So it will still be fairly significant and as the Member is aware, we continue to support and do a lot of the renovations and work that needs to be done on Highway No. 7. Everyone is, of course, in agreement that it's something that will enhance tourism as we improve the quality of this road.

We're also working in the Member's riding to work on some of the airport work that needs to be done. The reallocation in Trout is going quite well. The lighting in Nahanni Butte, of course, as the Member

has indicated, has been a concern for some time. We had to find some comfort that putting in the runway lighting, that the training was also there for people doing the maintenance and that these lights are not going to get damaged, because the cost to replace them is quite high.

The Wrigley road is also seeing investment and will continue to do so. This is a stretch of the road that will probably be used quite a bit as the pipeline project goes forward, and, of course, we would continue our discussions with the proponent of the pipeline to ensure the road is of a standard that would withstand the increased traffic flows as this project is in production.

The Fort Simpson hospital is in the planning study. There will be all kinds of opportunity for the community of Fort Simpson, and all the surrounding communities in the region that utilize this facility, to provide input. Consultation is part of our planning study and we also would expect that we would talk to industry to see if there are any concerns or anything that could be flagged as an issue for them as the pipeline project and oil and gas progresses in that area.

Housing will probably be better served if the Minister responsible responds to the concerns regarding the declining funds and the work that he's doing with CMHC along with other jurisdictions from across Canada to flag that issue. It's been on the drawing board for some time and I would leave it to him to respond to that. He's indicated this morning in his statement that there's been a lot of work, over 700 houses constructed in the last little while and over 1,000 repairs done. So there are considerable things happening with housing, but I would defer those comments to the Minister of the NWT Housing Corporation.

I thank the Member for the issues that he's brought up. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of comments, many of which have been expressed already by my colleagues and I'm sure will be expressed again, but I feel they are important enough that I will repeat them.

You know, at the outset, I want to say that I agree with the fiscal strategy which has been outlined by the Finance Minister both last year and this year. I think it is the right way for us to go, and the fact that we've scaled back our capital budget for this year as compared to last year is a good thing. We don't need to be putting ourselves in a situation where we are stressing ourselves to the max, particularly with the Deh Cho Bridge Project now in our lap as well.

I'd like to say that I think the changes to the planning process are proving to be beneficial and I

think both Ministers have alluded to that already. I believe, and I'm glad to hear the Minister say, now that we are approving the capital budget in the fall, that it is having a beneficial and positive impact on the work that we're doing.

I do have some concerns in terms of carryovers. We've had huge dollar values of carryovers in previous years and at some point in time I would like to get the information of the carryover from this current capital fiscal year and how it's going to impact on the budget that we are discussing right now.

Again, a positive note, I'm really glad to see a continued focus on deferred maintenance. I think it's been a specific focus of our capital budgets. I think this is the third or fourth year ongoing now and I think it's making a difference in our properties and our assets and I think it's certainly a way that we want to continue to go.

As well, I am impressed with sort of a bit of a shift in thinking. I think Minister McLeod referred to it as thinking outside of the box, but particularly in terms of our heating requirements, innovative heating requirements and energy adaptations for new buildings and particularly referencing the computer centre here in Yellowknife and that we are using waste heat from power plants, we are looking at geothermal. All of those things are positive and they will assist us in keeping our infrastructure costs down, so I would hope that that is going to continue.

In terms of the Housing Corporation, I know that it's not officially part of the budget, but I do need to comment on the declining federal dollars relative to operation and maintenance of our housing stock. We increasingly add to our housing stock, we build new units, we replace new units but we also build many new units. At the same time, I don't see that we have a plan to deal with the O and M costs that are going to be more and more on the backs of this government as opposed to the federal government through the next 15, 20, 30 years. So I think it's something that I know that the government is aware of it and is working on it, but I think it's something that we need to stop hoping that the federal government will bail us out. I wouldn't say stop fighting. We definitely need to keep fighting for the money, but I think we also need to put a contingency plan in place and I don't sense that that is out there.

To me, it points to a need for the Housing Corporation to do a significant evaluation and analysis of their policies, and to totally revamp them and revise them so that they work for our current situation that we're in and the times that we're in.

I do have a concern with the lack of projects in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, specifically with regards to Yellowknife. We have received or we have seen a 10-year education

facility plan for Yellowknife. I am concerned that the recommendations from that plan, that report, are not reflected in this capital budget. I am particularly concerned about Aurora College with a lease that expires in 2012, with Sissons School which is badly in need of renovations and upgrading, and with Mildred Hall School which needs completion to their renovations which have never actually been done. I see no indication in the budget or in future years that these things are going to be looked at, so that's a general concern.

Like Mr. Bromley, I would like to see analysis or evaluation of MACA's infrastructure contribution formula for communities. I gather that I think we have been told that that is in the works. I certainly hope if it's not in the works that it's going to be in the works. Certainly the amount of infrastructure contributions to our communities for capital has been pretty much steady for quite a number of years and it really needs to be evaluated. Community infrastructure deficit is only growing. It never seems to go down, it always seems to go up. This is something that this government has to be aware of. I would like to see an evaluation and an update of that contribution formula certainly before the next capital budget.

In terms of our general capacity for capital projects, I'd like to know the impact of the Deh Cho Bridge Project on our capacity to deal with capital projects. We have been kept up to date over time as the Deh Cho Bridge Project has progressed and changed and we've been updated, and I thank the Minister of Transportation for that. But I do have a bit of a concern that in continually increasing our infrastructure capacity we're adding more buildings, but we also have a Deh Cho Bridge Project which impacts our ability to finish these projects, to get them completed on time. That's just a general concern.

I am, as Mr. Bromley, concerned about the way that this government in general accounts for operations and maintenance costs for new buildings. In terms of capital projects, we're very much up front about the cost for the project and it gets substantiated. Once the building comes on line all of a sudden it's kind of like the government goes, oh, gee, we have to heat this, we have to put lights on, and so on and so forth. Those costs are not planned for. They need to be. When we know a building is coming on line in the fall of any particular year, that budget year needs to include operations and maintenance costs for that new building. It's a change in perhaps budget planning that I think is coming, but I don't see much evidence of it. It really is an important part of our operations and maintenance budget. I do appreciate that we are starting to get better O and M costs in the project substantiations for capital projects. I think that's a really good start, but we now have to take the next step and put those O and M costs into the operations budget.

Lastly, I just want to comment on the capital infrastructure budget binder which we received. The documents were easy to understand and I particularly appreciate having the project substantiation documents in the binder up front so that if there are any questions, it can be looked at. There's an awful lot of information in those projects' substantiation documents. I appreciate having that up front.

I will have questions about specific projects when we get into departments, but that's all I have for now.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to thank the Member for her comments and some of the feedback she's provided on her take of the benefits and the positive results we're seeing and some of the changes we've made in the last little while.

Of course, there are concerns that all of us recognize up front, including carryovers. It's always been an issue and historically we've seen that number grow. I'm pleased to report that this coming year we would expect that amount is going to be a lot less than we've seen. We're still crunching the numbers. We don't have all the numbers in, but as of today we know that the percentages are down quite a bit. For example, over the last couple of years we've seen carryovers from Public Works and Services of up to 35 percent and we would expect that number this year to be down to 20 percent. As the year goes on and we are more comfortable with what the carryovers will be, we'll provide that information to committee.

We are certainly focused on providing alternate energy and trying to be green as a government. This government has moved considerably in the last while and there are a lot of projects on the go. That includes projects here in Yellowknife. The new office building that we're contemplating and proposing here is something we would expect to have biomass heating and have the ability to tie other offices, other buildings that are in proximity to it. We are working on a new hospital in Hay River and that facility also would be something that would be considered for biomass heating. All our new facilities as part of the design and as part of the planning process would be reviewed and see how we can include alternate energy or more energy efficient systems in this part of the project.

Again, we'd have to defer the comments on NWT Housing Corporation for review of their policies to their Minister for when that Minister is up for review.

The YK school plan is something we think will be a very valuable document, however, the document was not completed at the time when we put our capital budget together. It will certainly be an

instrument or a tool that we'll use next year as we develop our capital budget and it will be a guide that will be very useful for us.

The infrastructure funds that are earmarked for municipalities are something that has a review. I believe it's biannual and that's something that I would expect is coming up fairly shortly.

I'll defer the comments on the Deh Cho Bridge and its impact on overall fiscal resources of our government in the area of capital to my colleague Mr. Miltenberger.

I want to point out, though, finally, that the O and M costs that the Member has raised is a concern and is included as part of the planning studies. Maybe it's not communicated as well as could be. We have heard from the committee that this is a concern and we have flagged it so that it will be included in next year's budgets. It will be clearly demonstrated for next year in the substantiation documents so that everybody will know what the O and M is and it will be very obvious and up front.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just quickly in regard to the Deh Cho Bridge, it has not had a negative impact on the capital plan that's before us. We are all aware of the process that happened with the federal Minister of Finance and the negotiation for a \$75 million a year bump-up for five years in terms of our general borrowing limit. The fiscal plan we laid out and continued to follow predates some of the more recent activities. As well, once the bridge is concluded here, hopefully in the fall, it will be, for the most part, self-liquidating costs through the revenues it's going to generate. We are still going to stick with our fiscal plan, which is going to see us coming down to a more sustainable and historical levels of capital planning, but that will be a full discussion for the new incoming 17th Assembly to confirm that or change that.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Overall I feel that the infrastructure and capital planning of the GNWT has improved over the last few years. I've started to see some changes to infrastructure in smaller communities. I still feel that there is a huge infrastructure deficit in small communities. Recognizing that through the New Deal that capital planning for a lot of the infrastructure upgrades in the small communities are now the responsibilities of those communities, I also have to say that I feel that the money given to the small communities for capital through MACA and directly to the municipalities should have been kept in pace with at least the CPR inflation or whatever number that is necessary to use, to

ensure that they weren't seeing eroding dollars every year by the inflation amount. I would like to have seen the capital infrastructure into the communities sitting probably at around \$32 million as opposed to \$28 million at this time.

The support and infrastructure into the small communities would have a positive impact on the entire NWT. We have positive impacts in larger communities due to the fact that there would be less government supports such as need for programs in the area of wellness and addictions and so on if the employment was increased in small communities. We have a couple of ridings in the small communities that are completely, that employment rates are... Every community in a couple of ridings, including Tu Nedhe, have employment rates below 40 percent. That has a very negative impact on the community. There's no work, so one thing leads to another and aside from the fact that this government is paying huge amounts of money to income support programs, it does have other impacts as well, such as people quit getting up day after day after day with no prospects of work. Eventually that has an impact on the kids attending school and so on. It ultimately has ripple effects impacting education down the road.

Specific to the capital plan, I think that for Tu Nedhe I was pleased that this government looked at putting together a Rural and Remote Communities committee that had an opportunity to increase things such as the Access Road Program. I'd like to see any money coming into the Rural and Remote Communities committee, some of which I guess is capital and some is going into the base. I think access road may be something as an example of going into the base.

I think that a winter road is a capital item, because I see winter roads appearing as capital items in here. I think that winter road to Lutselk'e is something that would be, recognizing that that community sits between 350 to 400 people and there's a lot of need for people to at least haul some of their own freight in the winter months. If the road is only open for a month or two months, I think anytime you allow a community such as Lutselk'e to have an opportunity to drive out in their own vehicles and be able to pick up products and furniture or equipment, whatever is needed, even right to building supplies if need be in order to support themselves. As the current system lies, a person cannot really afford, no matter what type of income they have and especially compounded with low employment rates, could never really afford to build something. As an example, the cost of getting lumber in, the freight of getting lumber into a place like Lutselk'e without government assistance would be astronomical.

Again, under the community programs, I think that because of infrastructure deficits you'll find the

communities are building youth centres in Tu Nedhe or trying to switch various buildings around. I'd like to have the government in general, because in Lutselk'e as an example, where there's a possibility that maybe the youth centre may already be a building that exists and that building could be used for that. Replace that building and use the new replacement building. As an example, building a new community hall and converting the community hall into a youth centre. That's just an example. I'm not sure that that's a reality, but that's the type of thinking that has to go into the capital plan. I know I've been requested by both communities to have washrooms in the water treatment plant. An extra \$20,000 would be needed to add a washroom in Lutselk'e. That's a deficit in Fort Resolution that the water treatment plant doesn't have a washroom. I know there's a regulation that as long as somebody is not on site more than three consecutive hours, continuous hours, there's not a requirement for a washroom on site, but it's still needed regardless of what it says in the policy. So little things like that.

I think that Deferred Maintenance is a good program, important program. It's a program introduced by Public Works. It's been very good for schools, for the most part. Both the schools in Tu Nedhe have benefited from the Deferred Maintenance Program to the tune of well over \$1 million in Fort Resolution Deninoo School and \$300,000 spent. Although the money wasn't spent in Lutselk'e, the money is there. So with the deferred maintenance being added this year, it should be a nice project for the community.

I think that there's a need for daycare space. Whether it be added into the school or a separate new building, I think both communities need daycare space, good proper daycare space. I think that's something we deal with and a lot of this stuff that I'm referring to, you know, are things recognizing that the budgets are tight as we all discuss, but I'm looking at three-year plans. If we are going to put three-year plans together, this is the type of thing I would like to see.

Inside the three-year plan also, the completion of Highway No. 6 to chipseal all of Highway No. 6 and not just a portion of it. I think we are, as a government, headed in the right direction, as far as that highway goes. I think I'd like to see more certainty by having some of that money put into a three-year plan.

ITI is also responsible for parks. I think that in Fort Resolution it was scheduled for a park. Because the community was unable to make a decision on where exactly they would like to see that, that money was pulled out and the Minister advised me it would be put back. I don't see that in here at all.

I think we're letting a policy or regulations, rules, increase costs to our projects. I find that to be a bit

of a problem. For example, a simple renovation to somebody's home, a lot of seniors can't afford the materials, but the Housing Corporation will buy the materials. There's not enough money there, but they are asked to put... Without liability insurance and so on, it's difficult for the people to do their projects. I think the government should look at some of the requirements, loosening the requirements on some of the simple projects and allow people to hire their own carpenter, for example. I think I'm out of time, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. I'll go to Minister McLeod for a response.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again, we are very pleased to hear that the Member has recognized that the capital process is improved and it's working a lot better. The New Deal, of course, has changed the way we do business and our relationship with the community governments. It's given the communities more responsibility and it's also given them a lot more freedom and flexibility to invest in projects that they see fit. This was an issue that we heard for many years historically, about the inability of communities to decide what was their priority.

At the time of the New Deal coming into play, the communities would receive \$17 million collectively, and that was reviewed and it was decided at that time that we would increase the dollars up to a \$28 million budget. There have been a lot of good projects, as the Minister of MACA will report to you, and things are ongoing. The community is now part of the New Deal to develop long-term plans, sustainable plans. We are looking at a lot of projects that are coming forward; and very good ones, I have to add. We do review the O and M on a regular basis. The capital is something that has been reviewed. At this point we haven't increased that number, but it is something that we can review to see if that is still a sustainable amount of money for the communities. We have not heard directly back from any of the communities that it wasn't enough. However, having said that, there are probably communities that are going to say there's never going to be enough.

The employment rates, of course, as the Member has indicated, are very important. It is important for us as a government to invest in all our communities so that there is job creation. That was something that we were very mindful of as we started with the 16th Assembly as a whole. We knew that the economy was really in a slump. Oil and gas, exploration and diamond mines were all reducing activity. We made a decision to invest a lot of money in the area of capital. I think it is really demonstrated that it has helped a lot of the communities. Most of the communities have projects that are ongoing. Most of the communities have invested their own dollars that they have

received through the New Deal on projects. Housing, of course, through the Housing Trust has invested an historical high in the area of housing, with the construction of 700 houses and many repairs.

The winter road to Lutselk'e has been discussed a number of times before. Right now it is not part of our inventory, and we did look at it several governments ago to see the benefit of trying to bring a lot of the freight that was planned for. I think it was the arena that was being completed at the time. We looked at the cost and compared it to the use of a barge, and the barge system was a lot cheaper for us. I recognize that there has been one time that a road was constructed way back. There were certainly a lot of challenges, along with huge costs, and having to deal with safety issues such as pressure ridges, blow overs and just trying to keep the road open on the huge lake that is needed for a winter road to that community.

I would have to see what the need is for a request to put washrooms in the water treatment plant. Most of our facilities are in close proximity to the communities and other community facilities. I am not sure if there is a real requirement. This is the first I have heard of it. We will raise that issue. I am sure the Minister of MACA is listening.

The Deferred Maintenance is really a program that is, again, producing good results. The deferred maintenance across Canada is a huge issue. We are no different. We have had the ability to reduce our deferred maintenance by a considerable amount. It is a program that we need to have ongoing as facilities come up for review and are identified. That will keep going.

The school in Lutselk'e that the Member has raised, I indicated before that it is in the planning study right now and it is earmarked for this coming year. Those will give us better direction as to what the next steps will be, whether it is going to be retrofit, renovations or replacement. It will have to wait for those results.

The Highway No. 6 work has really been going well. We have had some good feedback from the community. The community has been satisfied with the way work has been going. This highway has been raised as an issue by the community for quite a few years. The work moving forward is really well received. However, as the Member has indicated, it needs to continue and we are working on doing so. We want to be able to, over the next while, completely renovate that road. We do have a plan for the completion, however, it's dependent on funding, and funding can only be approved by this government on an annual basis. We've identified funding for the last little while this past year and we hope to have some money identified for next year. I can't speak for the next government as to what

they'll do, so that will be something that will be raised with the Members of the next government.

The ITI parks, I will defer the issue to ITI when they come up for review, along with issues raised regarding home repairs. I think that would be better served raised with the Minister responsible. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to provide a few guiding comments to the overall budget process. First and foremost, the process, I am very pleased we continue this with the fall capital budget. As I've indicated for a long time, it's good to see that it continues this way. Our budget numbers are summed up in groups, therefore we haven't spec'd out individual numbers and we haven't made it too easy for those people who are bidding on the maximum of what we estimate our potential budget on a particular item is.

I have had a number of contractors tell me, though, even though the government has switched the capital plan to the fall, that some contractors still cite there are still issues with timing, tendering, and they are curious as to why it is still taking so long to get tenders out in a timely way. And if I may be so bold, that's the whole idea why it shifted to the fall session of October, to ensure we get them out in a more timely way.

That said, my suggestion to the Minister would be I would encourage the Minister and his staff to reach out to the NWT Construction Association and poll its members and ask them how they feel it's working. It's great to be sitting here in the Assembly to be able to say this is how it works, but we should be asking and polling some of the real people out there who do this type of work, and accessing the advice, and even guidance at times from the NWT Construction Association would be a good place to start. I think it would be quite useful for our organization.

That said -- that's from a contracting point of view -- I would also encourage the Minister of Finance and his officials to perhaps reach out to the NWT Chamber to ask them if the timing of the way we release our budget has positively or negatively affected its members on opportunities of bidding in a fair and reasonable way, to make things like construction seasons or, for example, freeze-up and breakup, when you have to get office products or hospital products up to a region, that the only way to get it there is either over the top or up the Mackenzie River. Are we appropriately setting the timing of our budget that works for them?

Again, it's more a point about getting the appropriate feedback. It's great that we can sit in these towers here and say things are great on the

land, but once in awhile it's certainly worth the walk down and asking the people on the ground what it's like and is it working for them. These decisions, devoid of their input, are really just decisions that could have little or no meaning.

Mr. Chairman, one particular issue I raised during the review process -- and I'm getting the sense that there is positive feedback early on -- is the full capital planning operations cost. What I mean by that is it's easy to do a quick shift and replace a building and realize the operational cost would be relatively the same. It's easy to assume that. But when we establish a new facility, whether it's, for example, a hospital, a seniors centre, a new school, quite often what we are voting on is the ideals of a particular project. When we support that project at its construction costs, we are not fully taking into the lifecycle costs and, therefore, it's difficult to predict that. So we are making decisions, in essence, without the full information.

As I understand it, there is some agreement within the Department of Finance and probably Public Works to say we'll work to include some of that information. That's a very important point I was trying to get at. We have to realize what we are agreeing to.

I once heard someone say we'll help a person buy a truck, but they weren't going to buy them the insurance, not going to pay for the gas and the operations, those types of things. So it's easy to get a free truck, but can they afford to operate that? That's my point here: understanding the operational costs over the lifecycle of the building. Building or asset, I should define it that way. It doesn't hit us that year when we agree to put in a new health centre, for example, it hits us two or three years down the road when all of a sudden we now have to add another \$1.5 million to count for the electric bill, we have to count for the oil bill, the water bill, those types of things. We need that information. Like I say, as I understand it, there is some willingness to consider those things.

Another area of concern of mine is the stimulus effect of investment of capital dollars. I raised during the capital planning process here that I think it's very important that we find a policy framework that can help identify regional investment even if it was a regional investment based on a minimum theory. Every region is not the same, so it would be difficult to come up with an ideal framework that works every time, but the point being if we could find a way to stimulate every region, ensure that capital investment happens in a way that suits a particular region best, and certainly territorial capital dollars are being spread throughout the Territory and I think that creates a bit of a network where people are pleased. They see the government and no region feels like it's being left behind.

Certainly, in a consensus style government, my view is we have to double check everything we do, to make sure every region feels they are part of the process and not being ignored. At times I find that these capital plans spend more time worrying about what the department feels, but from time to time I think there should be more outreach to MLAs, asking MLAs what they think should go into their area. I'll tell you, when you hear concerns in the House, quite often you hear we'll look at it, we'll think about it, but that's where the end of that discussion goes. But I'll tell you, if you are in a community region, as many of my colleagues here in the House are from, they will tell you about specific on-the-ground projects that have a major impact on their community.

So it's important for a Yellowknife Member to support community Members in reasonable ways and I think that's certainly reasonable.

Mr. Chairman, I did want to highlight just a small area specifically in the budget, or I should say what isn't in the budget, and that is the continued lack of investment in a couple of schools in my riding of Yellowknife Centre; namely Mildred Hall and Sissons School.

Mildred Hall has already been cited by one Member previously as having had received most of a renovation when it had a renovation a few years ago. It's a shame and considered an embarrassment that the government didn't fulfill what I believe is its full obligation to make sure that we had things like their windows replaced, which was part of the renovation plan, but never got in. As well as the fact that the gymnasium that it has is still not adequate for the school. I'm not sure if the fact that it keeps not showing up in the budget is a plan by divine intervention or whatnot, but I think it's very important, because it affects the operating costs of the school board. They have to make sure they adjust properly, work around these problems. Maybe it's the Finance Minister's or the Public Works Minister's choice not to invest in these particular areas and hoping that maybe the Health and Social Services Minister will pick up the fact that the kids may have more colds and need winter jackets to be able to sit in those classrooms because of the fact that the windows leak with cold air coming in in the winter. I'm not sure what the theory is behind that.

As well, Mr. Chairman, Sissons School continues to be shown as a school being overlooked. Now, you'll hear from the Minister of Finance or certainly the Minister of Public Works say we're still working this out with the school boards about how to balance schools fairly throughout the capital. That is very true, but the reality here is we are avoiding proper investment into a school that needs to be upgraded mechanically, as well as to facilitate educational

planning and delivery that's happening in the school, which is Sissons.

This is an important point that I certainly hope somebody pays attention to. This will still be a public institution, and the longer we continue to ignore that and we say we'll wait for the school boards to sort it out and then we'll support it, the fact is we are just continuing to ignore real maintenance on this particular school that needs to be done. So we are punishing the school or maybe the school system, in my view.

The fact that this type of support is being ignored until the school boards work it out, but as I said earlier, this will always be a public institution. If the government doesn't want to maintain it and maybe it's long-term plan is to maybe...(inaudible)...it off from the government plan such as to give it away, force the school to give it away, et cetera, maybe that's why they don't want to spend any money on it. I mean, you see that practice. People stop investing because they don't want to be part of the system anymore. But the reality is, it's my view that Sissons will always be a public institution in some form. It's been talked about trying to work it out with YK No. 1 and the Catholic School Board and perhaps even Aurora College to do a shuffle there. These are choices that need to be made by those boards. It's not for me to say one way or the other, but as I said, there will be territorial capital dollars under the umbrella of public institutions always there.

Mr. Chairman, that sort of wraps up an overview of my concerns and comments at this point. I will be speaking specifically to specific projects as we reach that page when we get there. Thank you kindly.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. We'll go to Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to hear that the Member is pleased, at least with the process. He's raised a number of concerns, the first one being the issue of tenders still being put out later than we would anticipate because of the change in the timing and the approval process. I think that is a concern that has also been voiced by the NWT Construction Association, although they are very pleased that we have changed the timing of our capital budget approval. They've endorsed it. We have consulted with them.

Our challenge, of course, over the last two years is the number of projects we have to deliver and have out the door every year and although it's a good challenge, it's a difficult one. We have our capital plan and also all the projects under Deferred Maintenance and some really strict deadlines put in place with some of the federal funding programs.

The positive side of it, though, is we have delivered, for the most part, all our projects this year. For example, we have 95 percent of our projects out either in construction or in the process. The fall schedule is really something that we feel is a good one as a government, as departments. It gives us certainty on what projects are moving forward and allows us to design and it allows us to draft specs and put tender documents together a lot sooner than we would have through the old system. We would have really been challenged had we not changed our approval system to this new one.

I want to point out again to the Member that we have included O and M costs in the planning process. We apologize if that wasn't apparent enough, but we have flagged that and it will be clearly demonstrated in next year's substantiation documents that are presented to the Members.

There are two types of costs when we talk about O and M and new facilities. There is the rigid O and M costs that are incorporated in any facility that we take on and, of course, there is the program costs that are reviewed and sometimes increased as the facility is put in place, whether the facility is new or changed or program specific. So that is something that is really the responsibility of departments.

The issue that the Member raised about identifying regional investment and taking into consideration the economic activity of the community or the region or where the project is going to go is, of course, a difficult one. Our system is based on need. We identify projects that are of highest need. That is compiled by the different departments that have infrastructure projects. The focus is on protecting people and protecting assets. Those come through and come forward, they are identified during the summer months and come forward and are reviewed. There are two committees that act as filters that make sure all the information is correct and in place. Once that's all done, the Deputy Ministers Committee forwards it to the FMB and it's also reviewed at that point and provided for review by the Members. It's a fairly comprehensive process that we've put in place and it's been working quite well.

About asking MLAs what they would want to see in the writing, I think that's something that already happens. I think we hear very clearly from each Member that has a capital interest in certain projects, that that is something that's usually quite evident in this House or in terms of correspondence and private discussions. That is something that is part of our process.

Of course, we have a limited budget. There was an issue raised about some of the schools; Mildred Hall and Sissons. The Mildred Hall School I think had a limited budget, as the Member indicated, and it would have to be up to the appropriate Department of ECE to do the legwork on it and

bring it back. In terms of the maintenance on Sissons School that was raised and identified as an issue that we should look at, that right now is not something that Public Works and Services or any of our departments provide for that facility. That is something that is contracted out. ECE provides the maintenance dollars directly to the boards and they do it on their own. There is, and has been, some retrofits in some of the schools. That is, of course, on behalf of ECE and that is done by the board.

I put it out to a question earlier, that there is a fairly comprehensive strategy that's been put together for all the schools in Yellowknife, and that is something that will be used as a guide as we move forward and work with the different school boards and the members of this community of Yellowknife.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Ministers and their staff for being with us this afternoon. I know a lot of this has probably already been covered, but I just wanted to highlight a few things while I've got the floor.

Obviously I'm a big supporter of the Deferred Maintenance Program. I think the Department of Public Works and Services has done a good job, the government has done a good job in that area, and I'd like to say that I appreciate that.

Also, the new capital planning process is not so new anymore. I think this is the third year and I do believe it was the right decision. Money has been getting out the door. I'm interested to see if, indeed, the carryovers will continue to trend downwards. I guess the less capital money we have to spend in years to come, obviously the carryovers are going to come down too. Hopefully, as a percentage, we'll be able to tell if indeed that's making a difference.

If I could, missing from the capital plan, I know the Minister just mentioned the comprehensive education facility plan that was done here in Yellowknife for schools and educational facilities in the capital. I share the concerns that other Members have. I don't know why nothing is in this capital plan to address that plan that was done. Something should be here. The work was done, it was presented to MLAs over a year ago, or close to a year ago, so I'm surprised that nothing has materialized in the plan.

There is going to be a need for a dedicated campus for Aurora College here in Yellowknife, that's for sure. It's interesting to see how the government can look at office space requirements in a city like Yellowknife and figure out in short order that the government for future government operations is going to save millions and millions of dollars if it builds its own dedicated office facility. But then when it comes to an education facility like a college campus, like a dedicated court facility, we just don't

seem to have the same willpower or horsepower or resources to look at that in any meaningful way. My belief is the government -- and I'm thinking long-term here, 20 or 30 years out -- will have tremendously more resources if we make the investment today and get away from especially specialized areas.

That courthouse, I'm not sure how many times the government has paid for that courthouse facility over and over again. It's very specialized. Highly specialized. We need to again address the fact that the Northwest Territories does not have a dedicated stand-alone court facility. It's located in an office building downtown that's been cut up and hacked up and renovated numerous times over. It's still inadequate, it remains inadequate, and we have to address that at some point in time in an effort to save ourselves money.

The same can be said for the college campus. I think we should own a dedicated college campus here in Yellowknife. Why wouldn't we? We're spending millions of dollars on lease costs in an office building that isn't conducive to a college campus or environment. The lease is coming up. We have to get a plan to get out of there and build a dedicated facility.

I know I've talked about the Fire Centre in Fort Smith as well and I'll mention that again. Again, that's a highly specialized area. It will cost us a lot of money to lease the facility in Fort Smith. We should be looking at building a facility in Fort Smith dedicated to that fire centre. We really can't afford not to be building specialized, especially specialized areas of government operation instead of paying exorbitant lease costs for years and years and years. We did it for the office space requirements in Yellowknife and I think we should be taking a look at presenting business cases for a courthouse, for a college campus, for the Fort Smith Fire Centre and things like that. I look forward to that work getting done.

An increased presence in Ottawa. I know many Members have talked about transportation infrastructure with the Transportation Ministers there and just how important federal dollars are going to be for our future transportation infrastructure requirements. We certainly need an increased presence in Ottawa. I'm glad to see that the government has come forward with a federal engagement strategy. It's a little bit too late, but better late than never. We've got to get on with this, because we can't go it alone when it comes to transportation infrastructure. We've got a lot of opportunity out there with the P3 initiative from the seasonal overland route. There are also possibilities there for the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We've got to pursue those things at any and every opportunity that we can. We have to find out where that money is and pursue it.

The other thing I did want to get into was the bypass road here in Yellowknife. Again, this will be the last time I mention this. I wanted to thank the government for that fine piece of infrastructure and the role that it played in allowing the City of Yellowknife to partner with the federal government in building that road. Again, it's partnerships that I think are going to get us someplace when it comes to developing the infrastructure here in the Northwest Territories. The federal dollars might dry up a little bit but we have to be seeking them out at every opportunity.

I think that's about all I had. I know it's getting close to two o'clock and you'll probably recognize the clock here shortly. I want to thank you, gentlemen. I think we are certainly on the right path when it comes to capital planning. Obviously it's a balancing act, a juggling act, and not everybody is going to get everything they want. We just have to keep trying to do the best that we can.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the Member's comments, particularly about the process and the decisions that we as the Legislature and the government have made responding to that feedback.

The issue of the concerns about the school facilities of course has been addressed and the Member will be, I'm sure, addressing it with the Minister of Education, along with the issue of the college campus, and with the Minister of Justice with the courthouse.

We've had, and will continue to have, the discussion about the increased presence in Ottawa at other tables collectively as we plan how we're going to do that. As the Member indicated, we are down to about our last seven months, I heard somebody say 332 days or whatever it was, 321 days that we have left until the next election. The sands of time have really been running out on us.

Once again we appreciate his comments about the bypass road. Coming in with the new Legislature, they will hopefully be able to build off the work that we've done collectively here.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Ministers' statements, I'm just going to summarize my comments to them on their statements.

Certainly with this legislation, the 16th, we have presently said we've spent close to just over \$1 billion on infrastructure. That's quite impressive. Yet when you still look at the infrastructure in the Northwest Territories, that's still not enough to our assets in our communities. It's a matter of

allocating. Like Mr. Ramsay said, some you win and some you lose and some of the infrastructure that gets placed on the capital plans for discussion for approval.

I'm really interested in terms of the federal stimulus infrastructure dollars that are going to be coming to a halt. It's almost like feast to famine when you're looking at the next couple of years for infrastructure in the Northwest Territories. I think our fiscal strategy would have to really kick in and hold policies really tight on how we're going to go forward in missing our partnership with the federal government on infrastructure investment in the Northwest Territories. In small communities I know that the Government of the Northwest Territories is a major employer in economic opportunities to almost 50 percent of economic employment comes from the Northwest Territories government in capital infrastructure.

The issue of housing is not on the capital books but it's in our discussion for information. I look forward to having discussion with the Minister on how we go about fulfilling some of the needs that the Minister heard from my riding and other ridings, such as vacant lots and vacant houses and putting these programs to meet the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories. I do want to say that I do look forward to continuing on with the Minister in a new direction for the capital planning budget for fall time. That makes a lot of sense. That deferred maintenance is going to be right up there in priorities.

I want to say that MACA does address funding for community governments and is providing a stable source of funding. I'm not too sure that it's adequate, because the needs of the communities are so high. We are giving them a lot of money, yet the needs seem to be so huge in terms of which projects they can get in the community. I look forward to some discussion in that area.

One issue I wanted to look at was in terms of infrastructure and capital in our schools in the small communities. I hope the message is out there that because you're in a small community it means this is the type of quality education you're going to get automatically, versus what you're going to get in the larger centres that have a different level of education in their schools. We are trying to work hard on this capital infrastructure budget to get some of those quality education courses into our schools and to bring our students up to par that would be equivalent to larger centres.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to say that overall I'm happy with how this has come about. There are a lot more questions, a lot more that needs to be said to the specific departments. I want to thank the staff and the people who brought this forward to us in this manner here.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Member knows, we, the country and the Northwest Territories are moving out of the stimulus phase and into the restraint phase. Many jurisdictions are struggling with enormous deficits and debts.

I appreciate, once again, the Member's comments about the new processes and thing that we've collectively agreed to. I think he's answered the question with the community funding when he made the comment that we spend an amazing amount of money -- \$1 billion -- but it's not enough. I think it's the same if you asked the Health Minister, if we doubled your budget could she spend it all tomorrow, she'd tell you yes and it probably still wouldn't be enough.

So we are going to have our challenges going forward and I would anticipate you will have a fulsome discussion with the Minister of Education as you talk about the quality of education in small communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I have nobody else on my list. Is committee agreed that we've concluded opening comments from the Minister and general remarks from Members?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): On behalf of committee, I'd like to thank the Ministers' witnesses and if the Sergeant-at-Arms could please escort our witnesses out of the Chamber. Recognizing the clock, I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-12, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. A motion is on the floor. Do you have a seconder? The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen,

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Monday, October 18, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project
 - Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits
 - Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits - What We Heard
 - Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northern Voices, Northern Waters: NWT Water Stewardship Strategy
 - Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act
 - Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act
 - Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.
Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until
Monday, October 18, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:10 p.m.