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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, June 5, 2012****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:35 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs. Jane Groenewegen):

Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Public Works and Services, Mr. Abernethy.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 21-17(3):
THE NEW GNWT

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Speaker, when the 17th Legislative Assembly set its goals, two of them were to support the growth of healthy, educated people and to operate an effective and efficient government. Today I would like to update my colleagues on an important development to the GNWT's digital communications network, which is helping achieve those goals.

The network connects our 33 communities to the government's communications system. Everything from critical department applications to Internet access and e-mail is delivered through this network. Without it, our ability to deliver high quality programs and services, especially in our remote communities, would be limited. It allows us to take advantage of new applications that enhance our services to the residents of the Northwest Territories. We recently entered into a five-year contract for the network that will improve the government's ability to serve the people of the NWT.

Since work first started to establish the new contract, the Technology Service Centre worked closely with our two biggest users: the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. This helped us to better understand how technology can serve health and education. And it ensured that the new network would be flexible enough to grow with our government. We are now getting more bandwidth for the same price, and we can add more at a much more affordable rate. We're also able to make sure that critical things like digital X-rays get top priority

when sending or receiving data. This is the most secure digital system our government has ever operated. We are committed to having the digital tools in place to be more efficient, more creative, and more cost-effective than ever before.

Our staff now have more ability to do in-house videoconferencing, reducing department travel costs. Communities that need it the most have had their bandwidth doubled.

In conjunction with the new DCN, and the future development of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link and the data communications improvements anticipated for the GNWT and all communities along its route, the benefits to the NWT will be significant in the years to come.

Madam Speaker, technology is critical to delivering our programs and services. I am confident that these improvements will benefit all of our residents in more innovative and cost-effective ways than ever before. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 22-17(3):
TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Madam Speaker, the traditional economy is an important source of income for many Northwest Territories residents and one of the sectors that this government supports as part of our goal of a diversified economy. Today I would like to tell you about the remarkable sales of Northwest Territories wild furs this year and the government initiatives that support and promote this important economic sector.

Over \$300,000 worth of genuine Mackenzie Valley furs were sold at the most recent wild fur sale held in North Bay, Ontario, last week. Beaver pelts, which had previously been underperforming at auction, went for an average price of over \$26 per pelt, compared to \$13 in 2011. This increase is due in part to a decision to ship all small and medium size beaver pelts to dressers and return them to the NWT for sale into the craft sector. This benefits traditional crafters and our trappers.

This past March at the wild fur auction in Seattle, our trappers received previously unheard of prices

for marten - \$380 per pelt, and arctic fox - \$200 per pelt, shattering previous high prices. In comparison, top price for marten in 2011 was \$150, and arctic fox, \$68.

I am pleased to say that total sales to date for the 2011-12 trapping season are over \$1.3 million, and we still have one more auction left at the end of June. This will be one of the most financially rewarding trapping seasons in nearly 30 years. Most importantly, our trappers, families and communities will benefit from these increased sales.

The traditional economy not only plays an important role in ensuring culture and traditions continue, but also provides economic benefits. Food harvested from the land can reduce the cost of living in small communities and is an excellent source of nutrition. In fact, estimates of values of food harvest are approximately \$20 million. When retail values are applied, this figure doubles.

Recognizing the importance of traditional harvesting, the Government of the Northwest Territories increased its funding this year to the Community Harvesters Assistance Program to over \$1 million. This funding is distributed to local wildlife committees who, in turn, distribute funds in their communities. Program funds play a crucial role in covering a portion of costs for renewable resource harvesters.

Also, Madam Speaker, we want to ensure these traditions and methods are passed on for years to come so the traditional economy continues to thrive. Investing in youth programs is an essential part of this. The GNWT runs the Take a Kid Trapping and Take a Kid Harvesting programs, which introduce youth in the NWT to traditional harvesting practices.

Local instructors incorporate visits to trap lines and give youth hands-on experience setting traps, snares and fishnets. They also teach traditional life skills, as well as conservation methods and best practices in the preparation of pelts for market. This year over 2,200 youth took part in 53 program initiatives across the territory.

By actively supporting the harvesting and marketing of wild fur through the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs Program, as well as supporting traditional economy programs, the GNWT is taking action to diversify the economy and provide all communities and regions with opportunities and choices. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 23-17(3): OFFICIAL LANGUAGES PLANNING

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Madam Speaker, our languages make us who we are as individuals and as a society. Today I would like to talk about service improvements and revitalization efforts for the Northwest Territories official languages.

Recently we concluded the consultation phase of the French Languages Plan. The Fédération Franco-TéNOise is reviewing it and we hope to share it with Members of this Assembly very soon.

The Francophone Affairs Secretariat officially opened in April and is planning for possible inclusion in next year's business plan, working with all government departments. We are also doing the early planning for an Aboriginal languages secretariat, an important part of the Aboriginal Languages Plan. We hope to include it in next year's business plan. As well, we are hosting the second Aboriginal Languages Symposium next spring, and are beginning the planning process.

In partnership with the Yamozha Kue Society and district education councils, ECE led the development of several language learning apps for iPads and iPhones. They are available for free on iTunes and use games and teaching techniques to help people learn the basics of the NWT Dene languages. Future apps will feature Cree and Inuit languages. As well, the department supported the new Chipewyan dictionary produced in Fort Resolution. This 369-page resource was truly a collaborative effort, with education and language specialists, elders and youth involved.

I will be developing amendments to the Official Languages Act. In accordance with the wishes of the Dehcho First Nation we will rename the South Slavey language to Dehcho Dene. We will also eliminate the Official Languages Board.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to updating this House on our progress over the coming months. Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OFFICE SPACE VACANCY RATES IN YELLOWKNIFE

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Yellowknife office or commercial market had approximately 20,000 square feet of vacancy or around 1.6 percent prior to June of this year.

Just recently the new federal government consolidated the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development into a new building,

which then pushed our Yellowknife office vacancy rate up to 80,000 square feet or 6.4 percent vacancy.

We know that a recent RFP has closed for a new GNWT 60,000 square foot building to house devolution of Aboriginal Affairs from the federal government to the territorial government, knowing full well this building will hold very little net growth in terms of staff positions or expansion during the devolution transition.

In essence, Madam Speaker, we'll have a new GNWT building with no new forced growth while this government gets their financial house in order over the next couple of years.

Consequently, this new GNWT building will add an additional 60,000 square feet of vacancy into the Yellowknife area, bringing the total amount to 140,000 square feet of vacancy and pushing our market vacancy at over 10.7 percent. This is the point of my statement today.

The historical absorption rate of office space in the Yellowknife area in better years of growth has been around 10,000 square feet per year. Given the future of the NWT during some very uncertain times, with the diamond mine transitions, MGP on hold and our high energy costs of doing business, one can only predict that we have anywhere from 14 to 20 years of inventory of commercial office space dusting on the shelf and force this jurisdiction into one of the worst real estate slumps this territory has ever seen.

To make matters even more troubling, by pushing the marketplace vacancy rates above the safe areas of 4 to 5 percent, we could in essence be sending the wrong message to our institutional capital markets that have been investing in the North, which could further trigger a loss of confidence in our community and erase decades of progress.

We cannot turn back the clock now, as it appears this government was given the mandate to proceed. However, I say with conviction here today that this government must not allow itself to trigger a real estate slump and it should carefully monitor the stability of the markets as we proceed with this new Yellowknife GNWT office building.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I want to speak to the third item in my trilogy about inadequacies in the Residential Tenancies Act.

Most people can appeal to the rental officer for an intervention and a decision to solve their impasse. However, the Residential Tenancies Act does not allow the rental officer to deal with renters and landlords of transitional housing. There is no definition in the act for the term "transitional housing" or "transition home" so the rental officer has no authority over this kind of rental premise.

This failing was recognized by the NWT rental officer in his latest annual report for 2010, tabled in this House in 2011. The rental officer said, "Transitional housing is an intermediate step between living in a shelter or homelessness and independent living. Transitional housing is typically provided for a term and offers tenants their own private rooms and supportive living environment, including opportunities to develop the life skills necessary to maintain independent living. This form of housing is gaining in popularity and is considered by many to be a missing component in the efforts to fight homelessness. The current act excludes this form of housing and, therefore, provides no statutory structure to transitional housing landlords or tenants, or any method of dispute resolution other than the courts. Expanding the application of the act to include transitional housing will clearly require specific provisions and exemptions that apply to the program. However, this is not unlike the current provisions that specifically apply to public housing. Both landlords and tenants of transitional housing will benefit from the application of the act through defined rights and obligations, and a clear and simple dispute resolution process." It says it very well.

The rental officer refuses to consider any conflict where transitional housing is involved, and rightly so. It would be against the law. He cannot consider intervention under the Residential Tenancies Act because there is no provision identified. As pointed out, the only avenue available to settle a dispute for transition housing landlords and tenants is for the parties to go to court; a rather unlikely prospect for most people, as I mentioned last week.

Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act were done in 2008 but the issue of transition housing was not addressed. The government needs to amend the definitions in the Residential Tenancies Act to provide for a definition of transitional housing. All NWT renters and landlords should be covered by this act no matter what type of accommodation they live in.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPORTANCE OF SUMMER ASSEMBLIES

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. Summer assemblies have been an important part of Aboriginal cultures for generations. They come from

the time when our people lived off the land, following the resources they needed to sustain their families. They travelled seasonally and lived in small family-based communities. Major regional decisions were made at large gatherings that happened at least once a year and most often in the summer.

This tradition continues today in all our regions. As we look forward to the summer, we look forward to the summer assemblies. They involve First Nation members of all ages and feature drum dances, Dene hand games and prayers.

These events are extremely important to our way of life, but summer assemblies do more than celebrate our culture. They are the time to discuss critical issues facing Dene people. As in times past, communities are represented at these discussions by their leaders and delegates. It is an opportunity for them to make decisions to guide the future of the Northwest Territories through a process that is equally important to the process we are engaged in here today.

Summer assemblies build consensus on the foundation of Dene laws, key values and principles including respect for all forms of life, respect for elders, the impacts of our decisions on future generations, sharing, acceptance of others, learning from our past and seeking spiritual guidance and wisdom.

These values and principles are even more important now as we face such issues as devolution, lands and resource revenue sharing, self-government, the role of land and water boards and our relationship with other governments. It is in our best interests to hold to these values and principles not only as First Nations assemblies but as leaders and decision-makers in a rapidly changing world.

We look forward to a season of summer assemblies that will strengthen the Northwest Territories. As a government, the GNWT must listen to the voice of the people represented at these gatherings and respond in respectful and meaningful ways to the outcomes of their decisions. Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ESTABLISHMENT OF A
HOUSING APPEAL COMMITTEE

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker. I begin with a little tongue-in-cheek today. I'm happy to learn that the NWT Housing Corporation has fixed the leaky faucet that has been dripping in this House for the last eight years. I guess all the comments from myself and Members during that time finally pooled into a flood that could not be denied.

Clients of the corporation now have a Housing Appeal Committee. It is fully independent of the NWT Housing Corporation, as Members and the standing committee recommended during the 16th Assembly. Two public representatives and three senior government employees have been named to the Housing Appeal Committee.

I am pleased to see that Nahendeh is well represented with Mr. John McKee of Fort Liard. Like Mr. McKee, the other appointees have provided distinguished service to the people of the Northwest Territories. Of course, all members of the appeal committee will serve clients of the Housing Corporation across the territory.

The committee's task is to provide unbiased reviews of decisions of the corporation that clients consider unfair or incorrect. I am also hopeful that they can review past grievances, some of which are over 20 years old.

This is a good way to ensure that policies are justly carried out. I expect that the new appeal committee will prove helpful to all our constituents and may well have the added benefit of suggesting improvements for the Housing Corporation's policies and procedures.

Applicants for housing and existing tenants will have access to this appeal mechanism. It will also be available to applicants and clients of the Housing Choices home ownership program.

Now that I have acknowledged a positive for the Housing Minister, perhaps I will ask my colleagues to join me in another long-standing issue. If we flick enough pebbles at the Minister of Transportation, perhaps he'll find enough gravel to fix Highway No. 7. Mahsi cho.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
28TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INUUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is a very important day for the Inuvialuit people of Inuvik and the Beaufort-Delta region.

During the Aboriginal rights movement which originated in the 1950s, the Government of Canada had signed treaties with many Aboriginal groups, but the Inuvialuit had never entered into such an agreement. The Inuvialuit realized that if a claim was not made, they might not get a voice in deciding their future.

In 1974 they established an organization called the Committee for Original People's Entitlement, COPE, to resolve the matter. Acting as a collective role for the Inuvialuit, COPE entered into negotiations with the Government of Canada. After

10 years, the Government of Canada and the Inuvialuit gathered on June 5, 1984, in the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk to celebrate the momentous occasion. It is on the shores of the Beaufort Sea that the Inuvialuit Final Agreement was signed.

The IFA is built on the hopes and hard work of the many involved and its continued success is attributed to the ongoing dedication of the Inuvialuit. The IFA was the first comprehensive land claim agreement signed north of the 60th parallel and only the second in Canada at that time. Approved by the Canadian Parliament as the Western Arctic Claims Settlement Act, it took precedence over the acts inconsistent with it. The act was also protected under the Canadian Constitution in that it cannot be changed by Parliament without the approval of the Inuvialuit.

Today marks the 28th anniversary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. I would like to take this time to wish the Inuvialuit people of Inuvik and throughout the Beaufort-Delta region, the NWT and Canada, a great day of celebrations and a happy Inuvialuit Day. I wish them further successes and achievements with their future endeavours. Quanami, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUCCESS OF THE NWT RECYCLING PROGRAM

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I congratulate the government on our steady progress towards a greater environmental sustainability to the Waste Reduction and Recovery Program as reflected in the annual report for 2010-11 tabled last December. The report is a catalogue of good news. With beverage container recycling, NWT citizens achieved an 82 percent rate of return or about 25 million of the 30 million deposit containers sold. Twenty-seven locally operated depots, three satellite depots and three processing centres are providing 12 full-time jobs, 30 part-time jobs and five seasonal jobs, plus opportunities for volunteers and community groups to make money from waste.

Now in its sixth year, the program has resulted in a return of more than 135 million beverage containers that might otherwise pack our landfills or pollute our land. While the cost of return transportation for collecting containers are expected to rise as NTCL transitions the full price for backhauling, the program is up and running, set for success.

Progress in the Single-Use Retail Bag Program is equally impressive. The year of 2011 saw the extension of the program to apply not just to grocery stores but to all retail stores. Good marketing and public education programs help us

adopt this new shopping habit and cloth shopping bags. Good riddance to this major source of litter in landfills.

The Waste Paper Product Initiative has completed its three-year run. High transportation costs and low waste paper resale value present challenges, but progress is being made in some centres. Environment Fund revenues exceeded expenditures by \$465,000 and ended the year with a strong positive balance.

Past surveys have indicated public desire to see electronic goods such as TVs, personal computers and microwaves recycled, with further research underway to identify options. Action on tires, batteries and other recyclables are on the horizon, hopefully. We are getting good guidance from our Public Advisory Committee. I look forward to the management review underway and new program efficiencies.

People have embraced the opportunity to live more lightly on the land. We are helping our next generation develop positive consumer habits and we are throwing away the throw-away society. I am confident this government and our people are up for even greater success. Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Colleagues, before we continue with Members' statements, please join me in welcoming back into the House today in the visitors gallery, the former Member for the Mackenzie Delta, our former colleague and Member of this House, Mr. David Krutko.

---Applause

Welcome back. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEW PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL SCALES FOR SENIORS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier this year the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation announced changes to the public housing rental scales for July 1st. The changes include charging rent to seniors who do not pay rent now unless they have younger adults living with them. The new rent scale will start at about \$75 a month, which many elders will be asked to pay. This may not sound like a lot of money to some people, but the cost of groceries and other necessities are very high in the small communities, especially in the Sahtu and further north. Our elders are on fixed incomes, already stretching every dollar they have. Many of them are already living in poverty. This increase is going to hit them very hard.

It is just not me, but a few elders in the Sahtu are objecting to this change. The NWT Seniors' Society, which is the territorial organization, has

spoken out against it. Why? Because there has not been proper consultation and discussion.

The Elders Parliament which took place in this very Chamber less than a month ago passed a motion calling on the GNWT to delay making any changes to public housing rent scales for the seniors until such time as a full consultation has taken place with the elders, communities and NWT Seniors' Society. The motion also calls for the GNWT to make a public full cost-benefit analysis of the proposed changes and to work with the elders, communities and the NWT Seniors' Society on a comprehensive framework to ensure consistency and fairness across the seniors programming.

I think the Minister and the GNWT should be listening to the advice of the elders on this. Later this week I'll be tabling a petition and entering a motion opposing the plans to begin charging rent to the seniors in public housing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HAY RIVER COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to bring the topic of persons with disabilities to the forefront since we acknowledge Disability Awareness this week.

In the past five years, a group of dedicated volunteers has taken the Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities from a delinquent society to a vibrant and much needed part of the community of Hay River. They run numerous programs. They currently provide an Employment Assistance Program where 15 people are enrolled for training, job hunting and on-the-job support. They assist clients from the surrounding local areas and they put forward proposals to run traditional summer camps, pre-employment skills, life skills programs, summer student training programs and recreational activities, arts, literacy, as well as two mentorship programs in their office administration.

Thirdly, they operate a handivan transportation service from Monday to Friday eight hours a day and occasionally weekend pick-ups. This service is supported by donations from business and private citizens with an operational budget of about \$75,000. They recently started a service to Enterprise and in 2011 have provided 1,300-plus rides. They have been denied government funding for this handivan even though the government mandate action plan for persons with disabilities clearly states that the government will develop and provide funding provisions for local and accessible transportation.

This group has put in a request to Health and Social Service to increase their multi-year core funding, which was denied and they are told to do some fundraising. Their office is struggling financially, and with the limited availability of human resources to keep up with the demands of clients' needs, it is putting a real strain on their operations.

They are unable to provide all of the above services in their current 3.7 hour staffing position they are funded for. They are currently having funding that will end at the end of this month and if they do not receive additional funding, they will have to shut down.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BOUCHARD: Madam Speaker, the Honourable Tom Beaulieu stated this week that the Department of Health and Social Services supported the work for NWT Disabilities Council, the NWT Autism Society, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, the YWCA, the Canadian Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. We recognize these organizations provide valuable support to persons with disabilities, but my questions today will be for Mr. Beaulieu about Hay River persons with disabilities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to recognize a former Member for Mackenzie Delta, David Krutko. Welcome.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. I'd like to welcome those that are visiting in our gallery today and thank you for partaking in the observation of our proceedings here today. Thank you.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 82-17(3): VACANT OFFICE SPACE IN YELLOWKNIFE

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier today in my Member's statement I talked about Yellowknife office market status this year as we prepare the RFP of our newly constructed GNWT building in downtown Yellowknife. My questions are for the Minister of Public Works and Services. Has the department factored in with the addition of the 60,000 square feet pushing our limit

to 140,000 square feet of office space and pushing our vacancy rate to 10.7, has the department done some calculations what that potentially could do to the market for Yellowknife?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Minister responsible for Public Works and Services, Mr. Glen Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the last Assembly the government did a comprehensive general purpose office space review and that review took into consideration all current and future space. The numbers that we have are a little bit different than the numbers that Mr. Dolynny is suggesting and I would be really interested to see where he got his numbers. For Class A and B property, which is what the government would be renting, we show 70,000 square metres here in Yellowknife and with the addition of the new Gallery Building we see an additional 5,000 square metres. This, based on our analysis, will only take it to between 5 and 7 percent, which by any account is a healthy market. By the time our building is constructed – and the RFP has gone out, it has been awarded and construction will begin this September – that building will, if normal trends show to be true, be full and we'll still be back down at the 0.1 or 0.2 or 1.6 or zero percent vacancy here in Yellowknife. We don't see a significant impact on the Yellowknife market.

MR. DOLYNNY: I don't disagree that we're talking potentially in metres and square feet, the fact remains that these numbers are coming right from the buildings property managers themselves and, as such, I would recommend that we should get those numbers in order and make sure that we are talking apples to apples.

That said, my calculations come up with a 140,000 square foot estimate, which on absorption rate that we've been using in Yellowknife here over the past number of years is about 10,000 square feet per year, thus putting us about a 14-year potential shelf life of office space available. Has the department factored in this shelf life and what this could potentially do to the markets given that number?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm going to be talking square metres because that's the information I have in front of me. The absorption rate in Yellowknife has been about 2,000 square metres annually. If you factor in the new buildings that have come in over time, such as the Greenstone and the new office building, everybody has said we're going to have a big problem in Yellowknife with too much space. Almost immediately, within a year, year and a half, two years, both those buildings have been completely filled.

The analysis that was done shows that this is the trend in Yellowknife and that we can handle more office space in Yellowknife. There are some

problems. With this zero percent vacancy rate to 1.6 percent vacancy rate that has existed here in Yellowknife, the costs have been incredibly high. As a result, in the last five years alone the cost of our leases has gone up 40 percent. That's because the market is unhealthy. A healthy market is between 5 and 7 percent. That's what we're going for.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm not denying that the Minister is fairly accurate in his numbers. Five to seven percent is a healthy market for economy for commercial. We are, by virtue of calculations, pushing that number to over 10 to 11 percent, according to our calculations. Square metres, square feet, we have to get the right numbers out there. The studies that the Minister is indicating are studies that were done probably in 2009.

Will the Minister commit to maybe updating these numbers so that the commercial real estate market here in Yellowknife can be updated appropriately?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We're absolutely confident in the numbers that we have. The study was done in 2009 but it did actually take into account the addition of the new buildings such as the Gallery Building. All those buildings were taken into consideration.

We've looked at the numbers again. We've looked at the Class A and B buildings, the ones that we actually utilize, and we're confident that the rates will stay the same.

There are a lot of good things about this building. One of the things about this building is that over the lifecycle of this building it is going to save the Government of the Northwest Territories, and by default the people of the Northwest Territories, \$100 million which can go to programs and services throughout the Northwest Territories. On top of that we'll be able to have a bit better control over our leases which have grown by 40 percent in this tight market.

We've done the numbers, we've shared it with all the Members, it's out there. Happy to share it again, happy to share with anybody that wants to see it. We're confident in our numbers today.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Whenever this question is brought out, the Minister of the day will talk about the great benefits and I'm not denying them. Brand new building, it is great. We're going to see some efficiencies in heat and power and everything else. We have to remind ourselves here that we're putting a disruption, a market slump disruption in the commercial real estate market by virtue of us building our own building.

Will the Minister commit to overlooking, seeing, and updating the numbers so that we are indeed

dealing with proper square feet or square metres as the case may be?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There's not much point. It's already been done. The numbers are consistent. It takes into consideration the addition of all Class A and Class B buildings since the report was done. They're built in there. We're confident. The contract has been awarded. The building is being built as we speak. The ground will break in September. We're making next steps. At the end of the day this building is going to save the people of the Northwest Territories significant money, money that we can once again roll into the program. Given the history of buildings in Yellowknife it's not going to have a significant market impact. That analysis has been done.

People, as I've said, have talked about buildings coming to Yellowknife, fear of significant market disruption, like the Greenstone Building or the new office building across from Fiddles & Sticks. Shortly after those buildings were put up, and people complained or worried about the market disruption, both those buildings were filled and we were back down at zero percent vacancy. The Member refers to a 10 percent vacancy.

I have to say that 10 percent vacancy would only exist if both the new Gallery Building and our building were to magically appear on the ground at the same time. That's not going to happen. Our building is three years away and the Gallery Building will be full long before then.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. That exchange took seven minutes. If there's 10 Regular Members who have questions, that's 70 minutes. We only have a 60-minute question period. Let's keep that in mind. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 83-17(3):
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND THE
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll try to keep my comments down to a dull roar. I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement and my questions are directed to the Minister of Justice with regard to the Residential Tenancies Act.

The issue of the lack of jurisdiction of the rental officer over transition housing was raised in the Report of the Rental Officer, 2010-2011, which was tabled last December. I'd like to know, there are a number of issues in there, I can't remember the number – four, five, or six, I believe – that the rental officer raised as issues that needed to be dealt with by the department and in the Residential Tenancies Act. I'd like to know from the Minister what actions he and the department are taking in regard to the recommendation on transition housing and the other recommendations in the report.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll try to be a little quicker on this one. I've already answered this question last week when we talked about other changes that the Members were looking for in the Residential Tenancies Act.

Six recommendations were put forward by the rental officer. We've committed to doing an analysis of those recommendations as well as the recommendations to find a hammer, if you will. We will review those. We are going to bring those back to committee in the fall, an opportunity to have a discussion and set some direction on how we want to move forward.

The Member is right; one of the areas that the rental officer wants us to look at is the application of the Residential Tenancies Act on transitional housing. I do have to remind Members and everybody else that there's always two sides to every opinion and one of the most significant landlords of transitional housing here in the Northwest Territories has discussed this in the past, and at that time they actually recommended not to go forward with this particular provision as it would actually complicate their service providing in their institution. There are both sides to every story. We are going to do the review. We are going to bring it to Members for some decisions.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for his response. I appreciate that we are going to get some data, some investigation, some evaluation of the current situation and that something is going to come back in the fall. I look forward to that.

I guess I would like to know, then, and interestingly I'm not so sure that the Minister and I are talking to the same people involved in transition housing because there's differing views obviously. I'd like to know from the Minister, if we're not going to have a report until the fall sometime, Lord knows legislative amendments would be a long time after that, so I want to know if the department is able to do anything, if they are looking to take any action to address the issues in the rental officer's report in the interim while they do the investigation.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I've indicated, there are a significant number of alternate opinions on this one, so before we implement something, we do have to take it through the public process. We do have to take it through my colleagues on that side of the House to make sure that everybody's informed and that we make an informed decision. Once that's done, whether it's legislation or policy or procedure, we will do as the House directs. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I'll try my question again. I appreciate that we have to do investigation before

we make a strong recommendation. There needs to be some analysis done and there needs to be some consultation done. What I'm asking the Minister is: Prior to that report from the department and the Minister coming forward, can the Minister advise if there is anything that the rental officer can do in the interim to try and address the issues that he has raised? I'm thinking, perhaps, of mediation or dispute resolution, et cetera. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'll direct the staff at the department to talk to the rental officer to see if he has any suggestions. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be short. I'd like to know from the Minister if it is his intention to bring forward amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act within this 17th Assembly, if that's what's recommended. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Once the research is done and we take it to committee to have a discussion, if that is the wish of committee, I would be happy to take it forward. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Abernethy. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 84-17(3):
HAY RIVER COMMITTEE FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FUNDING

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions this afternoon will be for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Will the Minister commit to reviewing and reassessing the Hay River Persons with Disabilities application for core funding?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've had discussions with the Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities on their funding and advised them that the funding would not be increased due to budget pressures that we're all facing. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: Will the Minister look at reviewing the handivan program which is so vital to the community of Hay River?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I recognize that the handivan program is very vital to persons with disabilities and seniors. The handivan program is a municipal responsibility, so that's something that we could have discussion with the municipality, but generally it could be also dealt with directly with the municipality. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: My next question to the Minister: Will the Minister's department work with the Hay River Persons with Disabilities to stay open?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, we are prepared to do that. We've had discussion. Due to the lack of funding that we're able to provide, they have not signed a contribution agreement. We can go back and speak to them again and see if they will sign a contribution agreement to remain open. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Final supplementary, Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question: Will the Minister commit to this House that the department will never indicate to an organization that's already been working hard, already doing fundraising, to indicate to them and say go and do some more fundraising? Is that not insulting? I would ask the Minister to commit to not put that into a letter again.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I can give that direction to the staff not to ask the people to do fundraising to continue operations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 85-17(3):
UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION NEGOTIATIONS

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, in terms of the...(inaudible)...towards a Devolution Final Agreement-in-Principle. My question is to the Minister. Can he provide us an update in terms of the progress of trying to bring other Aboriginal groups on stream? I know there have been efforts to try and engage with discussions with groups. Can he provide us an update? Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To date we have three Aboriginal governments that have agreed to negotiate a Devolution Final Agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada. We are in discussions with the Tlicho. We offered and we hosted a Dehcho leadership meeting which, unfortunately, we were unable to attend because of weather conditions. We have since agreed to continue talking on some matters that are important to both of our governments.

Similarly, we had an agreed upon meeting with the Akaitcho which was, unfortunately, cancelled because of the death of a respected elder. We are continuing. As a matter of fact, yesterday I had the opportunity to have a brief chat with the president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Premier for his update. My question is, in the fall we had a very goodwill attitude, good spirited discussion with the Aboriginal groups in Detah. I wanted to know if the Minister would build upon that positive relationship and perhaps consider a follow-up forum to ensure that we are fully engaged with all Aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I recall the Detah meeting with all seven Aboriginal government leaders and Caucus. I think everybody there felt it was a very productive meeting and there was general agreement that we would have a follow-up meeting. We have attempted to do so but we haven't been able to get an indication of a critical mass of Aboriginal leaders in attendance.

As you indicated in your Member's statement, we are now into the annual general meeting summer season, so we are quite prepared to meet, probably in the fall sometime.

MR. NADLI: Would the Minister tell this House whether there is, perhaps, an effort to try to consider all options as we move towards a final agreement-in-principle? That the Minister would consider trying to exhaust all options, other than the discussions that are currently being undertaken to ensure that everyone is on side before this and the agreement-in-principle are concluded on devolution. Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As we've been across the North meeting with Aboriginal governments, we've had quite a wide range of responses in our attempt to find common ground ranging from get on with it, get the deal done, and in one case there's been a court case. We've had the Sahtu sign on. We're still in discussions with others. I think the fundamental issue is with regard to the fact that the Devolution Agreement, the AIP is based on recognition of modern land claims and treaties. When you talk to the Dehcho and the Akaitcho, there's a fundamental problem for them because they don't agree with the written version of the treaties and they believe that only the oral version of the treaties is the correct version. That's something that is a reality and we would have to deal with. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier McLeod. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 86-17(3):
MANDATE OF THE
NWT HOUSING APPEAL COMMITTEE

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to follow up on my Member's statement on the Housing Appeal Committee. Like I said, I'm glad to see that in operation. I just wanted to ask a couple questions on the operations and its mandate. I know that the Minister had announced it

in the House. When exactly was the start date for the committee? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The target date for getting the committee up and running is June 1st of 2012. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Madam Speaker, what was the mandate of the Housing Appeal Committee? Would it include taking into consideration those really long, outstanding appeals that half the constituents that come to me about housing issues are about these long-standing issues? Can those be addressed in this appeal system? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Madam Speaker, the Housing Appeal Committee was designed to hear appeals from public housing tenants after they have gone through their local board and the district office. There are a number of issues that they would be able to discuss. Also home ownership clients would hear some of the appeals as far as eligibility and decline.

As far as going back to grievances in the past, that was not the mandate of the committee. However, if it gets to be a real concern, it is something that we would probably have to explore. As of right now, it is not in their mandate. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Madam Speaker, I believe that we should go down this path. I think that the old grievances should be addressed. Half of the issues of housing for my riding are about that. The way houses were constructed, people weren't paid because the houses weren't constructed properly, hence they have lots of outstanding arrears. It would be nice to use this mechanism to address those concerns at least and come to some terms and deliberate them and examine them. I believe there is real reasoning there by constituents that raise them. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Madam Speaker, that is going to be an awfully difficult one to look at to say that my house wasn't constructed properly, therefore, I am not paying, because that could be a reason that everybody uses that is in arrears.

All the houses were built to the residential standards of the day. A lot of improvements have been made on these. That would be a very difficult one to look at and try and justify bringing that to an appeals committee, because I can see if we did that on one occasion, then we would open up a whole can of worms and everybody across the Northwest Territories that are in arrears will come back and say my house wasn't constructed properly; therefore, I am not paying. It is one that we would have to explore. However, I don't see too much merit in that right now. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I like Minister Beaulieu's response. He said yes. The Minister here says no.

I am asking the Minister if they can examine it, because there is merit in it. I am not looking for new people to start questioning housing standard construction, but in the past, serious issues and arrears are serious concerns for my constituents and in all ridings. I really believe that this must be examined. I think that was one of the real reasons I really championed the appeal system, because someone has to look at this. Someone has to address them. I believe that this appeal board can do it if the Minister is willing to explore that avenue. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, Madam Speaker. We will examine it. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 87-17(3):

REGULATORY REGIME AFTER DEVOLUTION

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to follow up on the Premier's/Minister's statement yesterday on devolution as well. The Premier updated us on the status and process for devolution or assumption of authority for land and resource management. This government and our public are on record for decades as serious concerns over the federal legislation now in place. But the Premier said we are considering two approaches of taking down the legislation. We have to weigh the pros and cons. Could the Premier lay out some details on the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches he alluded to yesterday? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The advantages of one over the other is with delegated authority, we can assume responsibility very quickly; with the mirror legislation, it would take more time. So it's a question of time and control. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Speaker, I enjoy receiving more detail if the time permitted on that, but quick versus slow, easy versus thorough... In his statement the Premier said that devolution is about having more accessible, accountable and responsive government making important decisions around land and resource management will bring those decisions closer to the people most affected by those decisions. Would the first one, a delegated authority imposing the existing legislation that we have complained about vociferously for the last several decades, be consistent with his stated goal

of bringing decisions and responsiveness to our people? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Madam Speaker, I guess we normally look at what is done previously on devolution, so a lot of times we look at what happened in the Yukon. In the Yukon they had delegated authority. The delegated authority certainly appears to be working in the Yukon when you look at how they are operating there.

With regard to mirror legislation, that will take a little more time. Also, the MVRMA is something that has been legislated through land claims and so on. It would be something that devolution could not change. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Speaker, I think certainly I am all for taking the time necessary to do a good job, and easy is easy. You usually don't get what you really want. I would encourage the Premier to give a lot of weight to that consideration within the restrictions of the MVRMA, which I am not suggesting we change.

The Premier said yesterday that this government shares the Government of Canada's objective, as he put it, of improving the regulatory system, and Ottawa is being receptive to receiving our suggestions on changing that regime. But meanwhile, Ottawa is gutting the Fisheries Act. They are imposing straightjacket restrictions on time requirements and so on. Minister Miltenberger said last week that the federal proposal to collapse the regional water board differs from our position. I question the Premier how do federal actions square with our priorities for responsible resource management and full public inclusions in environmental review processes. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Madam Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories shares Canada's objective of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Northwest Territories regulatory system and one only needs to look at how long it took for the Mackenzie pipeline to obtain regulatory approval. We know how important it is to have a regulatory system that protects the environment while supporting economic development but providing certainty to industry.

As far as the Government of Canada being receptive to what we are proposing, we are looking at making appointments and also protecting the administrative centres that are already here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to know that the environmental review of the MGP did not follow the process that we laid down on the MVRMA. It was cooked up completely separate from the processes that we established.

Had we followed those processes, I think things would have happened a lot more effectively.

Let's consider some concrete examples of the environmental protection we will consider essential once we take on resource management. Yesterday over 150 citizens turned out to express their revulsion at the regressive agenda of the federal government on the social environmental front. I had mentioned the Fisheries Act. I would like a response from the Minister. Does the gutting of the Fisheries Act fit with his view of this government's approach to environmental protection? Does straightjacketing the MGP, the largest infrastructure project in Canada, into a two-year process if it requires more, and I would say it would have fit with the sort of approach that this government is pushing forth? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Member's opinion on the federal government actions. Adversely the federal government is saying that they are making the process more effective and efficient. They'll be providing for protection of the environment, improving the protection of the environment and also providing for Aboriginal participation. So I guess we'll have to look into the details more and square the differences between the Member's opinions and the federal government information. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier McLeod. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 88-17(3):
CHANGES TO SENIORS
PUBLIC HOUSING RENT SCALES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of the Housing Corporation. The NWT Bureau of Stats estimates that there are 187 seniors aged 60 and over in the Sahtu region. This group makes up 8.9 percent of the region's estimated population of 2,105. By comparison, seniors aged 60 and up represent 9.9 percent of the population of the Northwest Territories.

According to the Housing Corporation, there are 74 public housing units occupied by seniors in the Sahtu. Of these, 50 units are occupied by seniors only. I want to ask the Minister, have these 50 units that are occupied by seniors only, or the 75 public housing units occupied by seniors, does the Minister have a record of visiting these seniors to let them know that by July 1st that they're going to be charged rent for living in those units.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We're now in the process of

communicating all of this to public housing tenants. I know across the Territories they are starting to let the tenants know what their rent could potentially be. As far as visiting these exact 70 or 50, I'm not sure if they've made it there yet, but the plan is to try and notify all public housing tenants across the Northwest Territories what their potential rent change could be. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I've seen some notices up in the communities where they have a big poster saying that they're going to implement the new rent scale. I want to ask the Minister, prior to making changes or looking at the changes or implementing some of the changes of the people in the Sahtu, the seniors who are living in these public housing units, prior to this, maybe six, seven, eight, nine months ago, has the Housing Corporation talked to these seniors who are in these units, saying that in the future we're thinking about or we're going to charge you rent? Does the Minister have a record of this in the five communities I represent of this rent that's going to be implemented for the seniors?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We have no records of having talked to people eight or nine months ago. Obviously, I can tell you right now what the answer is going to be. If somebody came up to you and said you're going to go from zero to paying rent, the answer is going to be no. If you go to those 675 people whose rent is going to drop by \$100 or more, if you say are you in favour of your rent dropping by \$100 or more, obviously the answer is going to be yes. So the fact that we did not go and talk to these 70 particular individuals, we all know what the answer is going to be. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: That's my point. When I go back to the Sahtu, that's what the elders are saying. They're saying no one told us. No one said anything and that is certainly showing a lack of respect for the elders and for the seniors. We have asked the Minister to look at incentive programs for young people to go back to work. That was great, but we didn't ask for him to look and charge the seniors rent. So that's what the elders are saying. They talk to us and that's what the territorial Seniors' Society is saying, give us full consultation on this, slow down, let's look at this together, but it's something that's unilaterally being written by this department, this government, to say from thereon thou shall pay the rent on July 1st. The elders are saying that was not the case and they want to have consultation. Let's give them respect. Will the Minister look at how can we do this, rather than saying the train has left? This is what we want you to be paying now to get on the train here. If you don't, too bad, you're left out in the cold.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. It's an unfair comment to say that this corporation has no respect for our seniors, when you look at all the programs we've offered over the years to work with our

seniors, help with our seniors. It's an unfair comment to say the Minister has no respect for seniors because he did not go and consult with all the seniors across the Northwest Territories.

I've said before the answer is going to be no if you ask them. We rolled this out publicly a few months ago. So they've had opportunities to know that this was coming and it's a question of fairness and trying to treat all tenants, residents across the NWT fair and I think we've done a good job of that.

For an example, if you look at some of the changes we're making, you look at a single mother of two that's making \$3,600 a month, under the old system she'd be paying \$985 or 27 percent of her income. Under the new system she's going to be paying \$325 or about 7 percent of her income. That's a savings of \$660. So those kind of changes have been made, and in our efforts to treat everyone fairly and equally we did come up with charging seniors rent with a \$1,000 exemption to their income which would put them in the lower bracket. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I heard from the seniors that this might be a good thing for them. I'm representing seniors who have come and talked to me and said we needed to be consulted. The cost of living in the Sahtu is high. Everything is high and our dollars don't stretch as far as down south. We need to be consulted. That is basic respect for our elders and our seniors, they might have an idea that it might have to work out, but they feel that they haven't been consulted and properly talked to about this issue. That's the issue. Other ones, that's good, but I'm speaking specifically for the seniors about this issue. This is what I wanted to ask the Minister. Will he consider and look at – I probably know the answer already – that the seniors need to look at this issue and see if they would do some more work on it before implementing this by July 1st?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. I think extensive work has been done on this particular initiative. We do recognize the cost of living across the Northwest Territories. That's why we've broken it down into three different zones. So depending on the zone you live in, it reflects in your rent. We do recognize that seniors are more challenged in some cases than regular public housing clients. So we came up with the \$1,000 exemption as far as their income goes, because had we not done that, then they would be paying basically the same as other public housing tenants with the same income. So we have taken a lot of other factors into consideration and we feel that we've done extensive work on this.

Again, if we were to go out and ask somebody if you want to pay more rent, the answer is going to

be no. So we feel that we've done our homework. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister McLeod. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 89-17(3):

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I'd like to raise the issue of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy. That framework was worked on and certainly developed in the last government about three years ago. Like the analogy of fireworks, it came out with a big bang, there was a bit of a fizzle and some oohs and ahs and it sort of disappeared. The question really is: What has happened to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy that was once heralded as a new opportunity to tap into a human resource such as the Aboriginal people that has not been promoted often enough? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The strategy still exists, the committee that's been put together to provide recommendations to the Minister and the department on Aboriginal employment in the Northwest Territories did go through a bit of a hiccup. We did lose a couple of members after the election as a result of changes in professions. We got that back up and running about two months ago and they've been starting to meet again and they're back providing us some direction and information. I'm looking forward to their input.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. That was a good segue into my next question, which is I'm under the understanding that the advisory committee hasn't met for almost a year. So if it's finally back on track or the wheels of this machinery are moving along, what have they actually produced in the last, I'll call it the term or the inception of the Aboriginal strategy and how much money has been invested to develop what we're about to hear from the Minister?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I don't know how much money was spent in the last government, I don't have that data, but I will certainly get that for the Member. The Member is absolutely right. Since the election of this Assembly, they haven't had an opportunity to get to meet because they actually fell apart because a number of the members changed their professions. We've got that committee back together and they will be meeting soon. They will be pulling together some recommendations and I will be sharing those with my colleagues once I have them.

MR. HAWKINS: The next question of course is: What have they produced to date? I appreciate the

Minister has just pointed out that they have not met, but this Aboriginal strategy must have produced something since its inception.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: My focus to date has actually been to try and get them back up and running. With respect to the specific output or the specific recommendations that they've provided to the last Assembly, I will certainly gather that information to share with my colleagues.

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

QUESTION 90-17(3):
FEDERAL ISSUES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to follow up with my earlier questions but broaden the category to a discussion of the issues that this government has or should have with Ottawa. The first one I'd like to discuss is the Canada-European Union Free Trade Agreement. Noting that Europe is now demanding extension of brand use names of drug patents and along with extension of the time that the brand name companies can keep the recipes for those drugs secret so that generic drugs cannot be produced, this would drive up the cost of drugs. Premiers across the country have been reacting and, according to Premier Clark in BC, writing Ottawa objecting to this. Ottawa so far is silent on the issue. Has the Premier written Ottawa to object to that demand from Europe in these free trade discussions of which we're a part?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have not written to the Prime Minister on this.

MR. BROMLEY: Here when we are at the table on such a high-profile agreement that can obviously influence us and our costs, as Mr. Ramsay mentioned yesterday in the House, this is a real privilege and opportunity and, I would say, a real responsibility. So will the Premier get busy and write Ottawa, object to this, let the Prime Minister know, and our negotiators, that we would object to this because it will raise the price of drugs for our people?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As the Member indicated, we are participating in these negotiations and we do have representation. I will discuss with the Minister responsible and I'm prepared to write to the Prime Minister.

MR. BROMLEY: The second one I have here is the Fisheries Act which was mentioned before. Professional fisheries biologists and administrators across the country are on record regarding the

proposed gutting of the Fisheries Act – not my words. The Premier's earlier response indicated he did not appear to be on top of that issue. I wonder if he would commit to doing an analysis, having his government do an analysis, and see if it is indeed in line with the sort of thinking that we are proposing for post-devolution or even today.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It appears the Member opposite has a tendency for hyperbole. We are very knowledgeable of what's going on with the Fisheries Act. Our Minister of ENR has written to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to get more detail on the proposed changes and to see what implications it has for the Northwest Territories.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That's excellent news. I appreciate that the Premier is way ahead of me on this one. I'm glad to hear that he's on that. I would appreciate it if he would inform the House about what he finds out there and his assessment of the response.

My last question is, obviously this is just one example, it happens to be an extremely important one for the people of the Northwest Territories, but people all over Canada, and most recently expressed by the people of the Northwest Territories yesterday in downtown Yellowknife, are concerned and carrying on protests in reaction to the escalating Government of Canada's actions which seem to be governing on a very narrow gauge as opposed to responding to all the needs of Canadians. Is the Premier aware of this and the sentiments that are being expressed by our public on these issues?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay, it seems like we've changed topics, but I guess it's somewhat related. Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be very pleased to share the information that we receive, like we always do, with the other side. We are also paying very close attention to Canada's Economic Action Plan 2012 related to responsible economic development. I am led to understand that there are some people that have some concerns with what the federal government is proposing.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

QUESTION 91-17(3):
FUR INDUSTRY IN MACKENZIE VALLEY

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a couple of questions for the Minister of ITI. I'd like to ask the Minister, I see we've had some great prices in the fur industry, are there plans this year

to take hunters and youth on a tour of the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Auction House. I know it was done in the past.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. David Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is something that we would give some consideration to if we were to receive such a proposal.

MR. BLAKE: I'd also like to ask the Minister if there are plans – it's along the same lines – I know a lot of trappers have noticed that there are a lot of otters which is somewhat of a new species in the Mackenzie Delta. A lot of people would like to see more trapping workshops that show trappers how to handle the species of the otter.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: With over \$1.3 million of harvested fur, and that money going back into communities around the Northwest Territories, it is important if there are opportunities for other species and the need arises for workshops, for otter, in this case, that's something that the department would certainly look at providing to communities.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

QUESTION 92-17(3):

HEALTH CANADA PLAN FOR NWT OFFICE

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions today will be for the Minister of Health. At the end of March of this calendar year the Premier mentioned the Economic Action Plan 2012 and there was mention within the plan by the national Minister of Health then about Health Canada's plan to open up offices in Yellowknife and they mentioned Iqaluit during that federal budget to enhance their presence in the North and to deliver services locally. They planned to deliver these in other jurisdictions as well. To date there has been no plan set. We have not heard anything, at least publicly, for that and very little detail for that has been published by Health Canada. Has the Minister of Health been in contact with his federal counterpart and is there an update to this announcement?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've had no specific discussion about any Health Canada positions being transferred into Yellowknife with the federal Minister.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm glad I'm also in the dark. Would the Minister indulge the House as to when he might contact the federal Minister of Health to

maybe get an update of this so-called Economic Action Plan?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'm prepared to do that after the federal budget is approved.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 93-17(3):

DIABETES IN THE SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, in the Sahtu there seems to be an increase of diabetes, of people who have this sickness. I want to ask the Minister if his department knows of this and do they have some kind of action plan to look at the increase of diabetes in people of the Sahtu.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Diabetes is a chronic disease. The department has a plan around chronic diseases which includes diabetes. We recognize that diabetes is increasing by 200 people per year across the Territories. We have not only developed a plan but are actually doing some work in healthy eating, exercises and so on that will combat diabetes.

MR. YAKELEYA: In the communities that I represent, people are now starting to realize that there's not only two or three people but five or six that now have diabetes in that community. Sometimes it seems to be hard to get some services, either getting them out to a facility here in Yellowknife or in Edmonton where they can take the one-week Diabetes Education Program. Not only for themselves but also for the families. Has the Minister looked at this type of program where it can be readily available for the people of the Sahtu?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The NWT Diabetes Clinic was open here in Yellowknife. We're reviewing the reason why the Diabetes Clinic is not open right now. There is a call across the Territories to have the Diabetes Clinic reopened in Yellowknife. Also in the new health centre in the Sahtu there is a plan to have a diabetes program in there.

MR. YAKELEYA: The diabetes issue is dangerous. It's coming. We can feel it in the Sahtu. Eight years ago we had very few people with diabetes. Now we have higher numbers each year. It's affecting our children in the schools. I know the Education department is doing some work. I want to ask the Minister in terms of the education awareness what his department is doing with diabetes in the Sahtu and other communities in the Northwest Territories. People are also realizing this

issue of diabetes is going to be a dangerous one if we don't take care of it.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Aside from discussing healthy eating in the schools and dropping the pop, some exercise, talking to schools about people exercising, talking about walking with people, we're also looking at carefully expanding the home care so that people with diabetes, that more attention is paid to people's feet. With diabetes there are a lot of preventable amputations that do occur in the health system. Each amputation costs about \$80,000 and there are numbers out there indicating that about 80 percent of those are preventable. If we can step up the home care to make sure that anybody that has diabetes who ends up with ulcers on their feet that attention is paid to that immediately and then we may be able to prevent. The thought is that we may be able to prevent 80 percent of the amputations, which will save a lot of money in the system.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the factors of the issue of diabetes is the amount of sweets children are eating or people are eating in the schools and especially with the younger children. Is the Minister working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment with the health curriculum in the high schools, when students pack in chocolate bars upon chocolate bars and pop and all the stuff that they're drinking and eating, that risk possibly being diabetic one day at a young age. Is the Minister working with the Education department to see if this curriculum is being given the attention that it needs in the high school?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We are working with Education. We are working in the schools. We do provide some funding to the schools. We've done some funding directly pertaining to food and people's hearts and so on to make sure. We've also had discussion at the Joint Leadership Council, which is the public administration chairs of all the authorities, about trying to introduce curriculum to health at the high school level. In the elementary or primary school there is health taught in the schools to the younger ages, but at the high school, at this time, I think there is some curriculum that needs to be developed in order to have a full health curriculum at the high school level.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. The Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

QUESTION 94-17(3):

AVIATION INDUSTRY MEMORIAL PROGRAM

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions today will be for the Minister of

Transportation. August 20, 2011, will be forever ingrained in our history as being a very terrible day. I mean, obviously, this is the day that near Resolute a plane crash took the lives of 12 people, 12 Northerners. Early on in this Assembly I know we spoke about this at great lengths, and I did talk about this with the Transportation Minister about looking at our Aviation Memorial Program, which was not touched since 1969. That was the last time it was dealt with, and that was the Pilot's Monument that paid homage to the engineers and aviation people of the day.

Since that point, the Minister indicated that he would look at looking into enhancing a presence for a memorial. Given the fact that this House will not resume until after that tragic day, is the Minister prepared to comment or come to this House to say his department looked at making enhancements to our Aviation Memorial Program? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. I can check with the Clerk, but I believe the issue of the Resolute crash of the First Air 737 is presently before the courts. I could ask, perhaps, the Clerk for a ruling on that before I ask Mr. Ramsay for a response.

Thank you for that. The Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The idea conceptually of an aviation memorial and the government's involvement in that is a good one and is something I have made a commitment to the Member previously that the government would be interested in doing.

As these things go, there are a lot of, obviously, aviation companies, businesses, families. There are a lot of issues that would have to be covered in the development of a memorial. We haven't received a proposal from any interested party in the development of a memorial. If that was going to happen, we would certainly work with whoever it was that brought forward a proposal on a memorial. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the Minister's commitment to this program as it was mentioned a number of months ago. However, like anything else, trying to get all parties together is obviously going to be a little bit tricky. Would the Minister commit to spearhead this project as a result, because a lot of the finances would come under this government? Would the Minister commit that his department would spearhead the enhancements of our Aviation Memorial Program, not only in Yellowknife but throughout the Northwest Territories?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I certainly would be interested in doing that and I will take that back to my officials at the Department of Transportation to see how that could happen. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ramsay. The time for question period is up. Item 8, written questions. Mr. Bromley.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 5-17(3): CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION COSTS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Transportation.

Regarding the list of impacts and actions outlined in the Minister of Transportation's May 31st Minister's statement "Climate Change Adaptation," please provide the costs resulting from impacts cited, including:

- a) settlement of the Dempster Highway due to permafrost thaws;
- b) increased road and gravel applications to South Slave highways;
- c) costs associated with the delayed opening of the Tlicho winter road;
- d) extra frost and ice removal at the Inuvik Airport;
- e) increased de-icing glycol use at the Yellowknife Airport and construction of increased glycol storage facilities;
- f) development and purchase of ice spray technology for use on ferries;
- g) purchase and introduction of ice-penetrating radar to estimate ice thickness;
- h) increased highway maintenance shift costs;
- i) the climate change assessment study being prepared with the transportation system;
- j) construction of test strips on Highway No. 3 between Yellowknife and Behchoko;
- k) development of a protocol for assessing the vulnerability of airports;
- l) preparation of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan;
- m) organization and delivery of winter road adaptation workshops;
- n) participation in the National Transport Canada information networks on climate change adaptation;
- o) development of a Best Practices Guide for Construction, Maintenance and Operation of Winter Roads; and
- p) development of a Best Practices Guide for the Construction of Transportation Infrastructure on Permafrost.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. 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. Item 15, notices of motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 6-17(3): CHANGES TO SENIORS PUBLIC HOUSING RENT SCALES

MR. YAKELEYA: Madam Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, June 7, 2012, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation delay implementation of the proposed changes to the seniors public housing rent scales until the corporation conducts a thorough and transparent consultation process with seniors across the Northwest Territories;

And further, that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation develop and bring forward to the Standing Committee on Social Programs a new proposal for seniors public housing rent scales that reflects the input and concerns of seniors but still recognizes the seniors' responsibility to contribute when appropriate;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 90 days.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Blake.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 3: AN ACT TO AMEND THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, June 7, 2012, I will move that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Human Rights Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. 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 2-17(3), Commissioner's Opening Address: Creating the Conditions for Success; Tabled Document 3-17(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2012-2013; Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act; Committee Report 1-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest

Territories; Committee Report 2-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report.

By the authority given the Speaker pursuant to Motion 2-17(3), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily sitting hour of adjournment to consider business before the House, with Mr. Dolynny in the chair. Thank you.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We've got five items on today's agenda: Tabled Document 2-17(3), Commissioner's Opening Address: Creating the Conditions for Success; Tabled Document 3-17(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2012-2013; Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act; Committee Report 1-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories; and Committee Report 2-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The committee wishes to continue with deliberations of Tabled Document 3-17(3), NWT Main Estimates, with the continuation of the Housing Corporation, on to Municipal and Community Affairs, Department of Justice, as well as Health and Social Services, time permitting.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. We will commence after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Welcome back, committee. Does Minister McLeod have witnesses he'd like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses into the House?

Mr. McLeod, would you like to introduce your witnesses to the committee, please?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me, to my right, Mr. David Stewart, president and CEO of the NWT Housing Corporation; and to my left I have Mr. Jeff Anderson, vice-president, infrastructure and finance, NWT Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Welcome back, Mr. Stewart and Mr. Anderson, to the House. We are on general comments for the NWT Housing Corporation. Next up for general comments I have from Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I begin I will just apologize and just reiterate anything I said yesterday just to kind of speed up the process.

Looking at the opening remarks, I just wanted to make a comment on the expenditures that were put forth for the budget here in the amount of \$43.9 million. I do recall in previous discussion we talked about the lack of arrears. When arrears are not being collected, it does affect the maintenance program because that money actually goes directly into maintaining the units. When we do these expenditures and if we're looking at putting some new units in the communities, I hope it does go on a needs assessment or areas where possibly there are some clients who are not paying their arrears because they feel that their units do need the maintenance and they don't feel comfortable doing that. That's one comment I wanted to make.

A good comment is the \$325,000 for the homelessness position. Speaking with the Alternatives North group that came in today to give a presentation to us earlier in this government, they had mentioned that housing was one of the contributing factors to homelessness in the NWT. Looking at the business plans we see before us, or actually that we had during the business planning session, a lot of good action was taking place and I did make comments back then when your department came and sat before the committee. It's really nice to see that you have taken the initiative with this and are going to move forward.

The Rent Supplement Program, the \$1.2 million, I'm glad to see that it does say in here that there is \$500 per month for a two-year period, so that really will help some individuals out, especially in some of the communities that are really going to need it shortly. I'm thinking specifically of Inuvik, of course, and the situation we're in. I'm not sure when the starting date is on that, but I'll let constituents know back home about that funding program. I guess based on the applications the department receives, they'll be looking at increasing that or not.

The funds that were allocated to the SAFE program are a really good move forward.

In terms of the home ownership program, I know I did have some discussions with some constituents

back home who have been previously approved for the home ownership program, and then having to revise their application and then not being able to get a home because it didn't require the needs of that certain individual or family. I think there needs to be some change in how that's developed, especially if they do meet the requirements but there's no place open for them. I do know we do have some vacancies in some of the communities. If they are vacant, there should be an opportunity to utilize those units.

From last night there were a lot of good comments made by my fellow colleagues. I just want to touch on those as the main ones I wanted to discuss without having to reiterate some of my fellow colleague's comments. With that said, I just want to thank the Minister and his staff for coming back today and for getting through this department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. For general comments we have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I'll start with some of my issues and concerns and support towards housing.

One of the things I support is this new rental scale program. It's built on encouraging people to stay working, where the old system was a deterrent to be working. If you made a certain income, because of your income you were discouraged because the rent went to high amounts. The maximum amounts are quite a bit less now, so there's an incentive to stay working. You are contributing to the economy yet taking advantage of public housing.

One of the other issues I know that's a concern in my area is senior housing and the amount of senior housing available. We are seeing a high demand for seniors housing and multiple units. I'm just interested in seeing where the department is going with that. Especially as our population ages, we are going to see more and more demands for that. Thankfully, some of that is the Northwest Territories and keeping a lot of seniors that typically used to travel south or move south once they became retirement age. Now we're seeing them stay in the North, spending their retirement in the North. I think that's a positive spin, but it's also putting pressure on our senior housing and, obviously, our health care system as well.

Another situation that we have that we're concerned with in the Hay River area is homelessness, I guess. A homeless shelter for men would be an added, additional area of concern, which I know Housing has had some dealings with. That's an area that I'm hoping that we're going to be able to work with Housing on some of those issues in the near future.

Getting back to the rental scale program, also I would like to see the department set up a tracking system on how this is being implemented and how effective it is, as well as doing a review after a year, 18 months, two years, whatever they deem adequate to indicate what some of the results are as far as financially and arrears-wise, as well as the effectiveness of the program and be willing to tweak the program wherever possible to make it more effective.

One of the other issues that are coming up with seniors housing is seniors having to pay for public housing. In the Hay River area, we've had some meetings. It's an area of debate. There are several seniors, quite a few seniors that feel that they are willing to pay a little bit. Often with a claim: as long as it's fair and equitable for everybody. There are some that are probably against it as well. In that area, I'm kind of torn and sitting on the fence because there is a 50/50 split, I think, in supporting or not supporting seniors having to pay housing.

Those are some of my initial concerns with the housing programs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Moving on with general comments, the Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I may repeat some stuff that was mentioned last night. My apologies in advance if I do. It just indicates where my concerns and priorities lie for the department.

At the outset, I want to say that I was pleased to see the recent framework that was published and released. There's a lot of good stuff in there. I know I felt that there were maybe some details lacking and the department has assured us that those details would be forthcoming. I certainly look forward to seeing more of the details to flesh out that whole framework.

Part of that is in the Minister's remarks from yesterday, the statement that the Housing Corp has seen and is going to address needs along the entire housing continuum. I'm really glad to hear that. I think the recognition that we have some gaps in our housing continuum is a real step forward. That's also in the framework.

The framework also talks to the new rent scale. I certainly am pleased to see we are adjusting our rent scales, that we are making some changes that I hope would be for the better. My ask would be that there be an evaluation of the impact of this new scale in about a year's time, so that we don't just put it in place and forget about it for 10 years, but that we look at the impact and determine whether or not what we have done as a change is a good thing.

I note in the Minister's remarks there's a statement that we have about \$2.4 million in forced growth and that it is mainly due to increased utility costs

which, unfortunately, everybody in the NWT knows about. But the second part of his paragraph, their task about continuing to do energy upgrades and I'm really glad to see that in there as well. I think we need to continue to put money into upgrades for energy, maintenance, the whole focus that has started to become prevalent within the government. I am very glad to see that.

Along with the continuum of housing -- and I've spoken to the Minister and I've spoken about it in the House, I know I've spoken to Mr. Stewart about it as well -- is the need for assistance for people in transitional housing. It's kind of interesting. I was talking about transition housing relative to another act today. The Transitional Rent Supplement Program, which the Minister mentioned in his opening remarks, I think is going to be a very valuable tool. Similar to the rent scale change, I hope that we will evaluate this program in a short period of time. Don't wait five years to find out whether or not it's working. From what I understand of the needs of people that are in transition housing now, between homelessness and their own accommodation, this is going to be something that will assist low-income earners a great deal. I'm anxious to see whether or not our guesses are right.

The move to establish a homelessness coordinator, in my view, is excellent. I was really glad to see that. I have said before that homelessness previously has been handled off the corner of somebody's desk in this government and we now have a focal point for homelessness. That groups know where they need to go with their homelessness issue or their problems or their concerns is a real bonus. I understand; I'll ask the question later on, but I understand that the programs will continue. I also understand that the Housing Corp is going to evaluate those programs. I think that's also a good move. I think they're a bit piecemeal at the moment and we need to figure out what it is we should be providing for homelessness and have a focused approach. I don't think we've had that for awhile.

I wanted to talk a bit about the LHOs. Some LHOs do great; some LHOs do not do all that well. I think from the Minister's remarks there is an increased capacity for training and workshops for LHO staff. I think that that's a recognition that some LHOs do need the extra assistance, and I was pleased to hear that they're looking at opportunities for bulk purchasing that the Housing Corp was going to try to create efficiencies wherever possible and that's very positive as well, in my view.

I am extremely concerned, as are all Members, about the declining CMHC funding. This particular budget had almost \$1 million investment by the GNWT to make up for what the federal government is not providing us, and in a \$1.4 billion budget it's

maybe not a lot of money, but we can do an awful lot in housing for \$1 million. So my hope here is that there's an indication that the Housing Corp is looking at sort of doing an analysis and trying to develop a plan for this declining funding issue. I don't see and I'm not really sure that a hard, fast, concrete plan is going to be brought forward to Members for consideration anytime in the near future. It would be something I hope that the Housing Corp is going to be working on and will present something to Members sometime soon to say we know this is happening, we're still working with the feds. But if they don't produce the extra funding, as I feel they should, this is what we're going to do as a government.

The only other two things I wanted to mention are rental arrears, which I didn't see in the Minister's remarks, but again, it's a problem that's been ongoing for quite a long time. Some LHOs are great in collecting their rent, others are not so much. I would just hope that the Housing Corp is going to target those communities that are problematic or do have problems in collecting their rents and have a very high percentage of uncollected rents. Those communities that are doing well, or the LHOs that are doing well, sure, monitor them, but I don't think we need to focus on them. I would say we need to focus on the ones that aren't getting the job done.

The other thing that I was wondering about, I haven't seen anything, is vacant units. There was a plan to get rid of all our vacant units. I think the Minister spoke to that maybe last week in response to a question, but what plans do we have when, I guess will we basically have all the vacant units that the Housing Corp has when will we have divested ourselves of them and got people into them so they have their own homes? That's it. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. That looks like we've concluded general comments. I'll now turn it over to the Minister to offer replies to general comments.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate some of the positive comments from Members regarding housing, but Members also pointed out there's still some work that needs to be done as far as housing goes, and we recognize that and we're continuing to work on that. I'm sure we'll have more questions when we get into detail.

Just to very quickly speak to some of the issues that were raised by a few of the Members. I believe Mr. Bromley had asked yesterday about the energy and the \$700,000. It's going to support 14 projects; it's going to impact about 250 units. So I'm sure they'll have more questions when we get to that particular page.

We had some questions on the home ownership side and we are looking at trying to get as many people into our home ownership program as possible and I think Ms. Bisaro and a couple of

Members yesterday mentioned the vacant units. We actually started out with 135 a couple of years ago because of the federal investment. We're down to 16 right now across the Northwest Territories, but we are always taking applications and trying to get people into those 16 units. Because of the investment we had, I think this particular year we were supposed to have quite an investment again in some of the units, but we've brought that down to four because we still had a few vacant units that we had to sell. So we're looking forward to getting those units filled.

I think it was Mr. Nadli yesterday who spoke about trying to get people into their own homes that have been living there for a long time and it's something that we would like to see as well. I mean, we would try and encourage it. Again, we have to be careful that a lot of these people have been living in these homes, in the public housing units for a number of years. So Housing has been covering most of their expenses. Once they get into the actual home ownership part of it and they take over the units, they have to recognize that there's going to be costs for utilities and maintaining these units. So we need to work with them and see if they'd be good candidates for home ownership.

Mr. Yakeleya spoke about a few issues yesterday, again talking about not qualifying for some of the programs. Housing tries very hard to try and fit in as many people into programs as possible. A classic example is the HELP program, where we have tenants in there for a couple of years. It used to be that if you had any type of arrears or anything, you wouldn't qualify just bang like that for one of the programs, but with the HELP program and recognizing we're trying to get more people in there, we're willing to overlook up to \$5,000 in arrears, which is huge. Also land tenure used to be an issue and land taxes used to be an issue, but we've overlooked that. So I think it's an indication of Housing's desire to try and get as many people into home ownership. Again, I always go back to the bottom line, we have to make sure that we work with these people so we're not just putting them in there and setting them up for failure and have them quit claim or give the unit back to Housing after a couple of years.

So we've seen some success and we tried a GAP program a couple of years ago, I think, if Members in the 16th recall, where we had tried to take some applications that were just over the core need income threshold and we were able to get maybe four or five more people into home ownership because of that. There were more people that were just over core need income threshold. There were a few people that were over but were turned down for other reasons. It may have been debt load and things like that. So we were able to get a few more people.

Mr. Blake had talked about the CARE program, and Care and Preventative Maintenance Program I think is the one he was referring to. That went up from \$2,000 to \$3,000 a proposal and that's a good way of working with people to do a lot of preventative maintenance on their home. Seniors are some of our biggest clients as far as that program goes. He talked about the multiplexes and that's our plan for the future, is try and go as many multiplex type units as possible, because it does cut down on expenses.

Mr. Moses had talked about arrears. Again, he made a very good point about the fact that arrears collection are quite important to the operation of the LHO because that money just goes back into their operation and if they're having trouble collecting rent, then they don't have as much money to invest into repair programs as they would like. I have to admit, though, we have seen some progress in that area and with the moratorium we just had we've had a few people step up to the plate and I think we've had some people in the communities also starting to step up to the plate. But that goes back to us working closely with the LHOs and monitoring the operations of their local.

We appreciate the comments on homelessness. Mr. Moses had asked about the start date. September 1st is the rollout date for that and we're looking forward to seeing some good progress come out of that, because we have heard from a lot of Members where it's awfully tough for somebody that's just getting a start trying to get a foot in the door to get into public housing. They don't qualify because they make too much and then they don't quite make enough for market rent. So I think this is a good way to try and address that.

A couple of Members spoke about the evaluation. I think that's something that it would be wise of us to do is not wait five years to evaluate a program. Especially with this particular budget year because I think we've seen more change in this particular year than any time in the past in the history of the NWT Housing Corporation. I think it would be wise for us after a year to evaluate a lot of the changes we've made to see where we could improve or see what's working well and make some improvements as far as that goes. I will commit to the Members that that is something we will take into consideration and that it's something that we should not only take into consideration but should do, and I will commit to that.

We've had a few good comments on the rent scale. We're quite excited about that. Obviously, in the budget we've requested a few extra dollars to help with the initial rollout of the rent scale. Our vision long term, and I think it's also the vision of all Members of this Assembly, is because we've eliminated some of the barriers that were there with people saying I don't want to work because I'm

going to get nailed with rent. We feel if we keep eliminating some of those barriers then it may encourage more and more people to get out and find some kind of employment and then start paying their share of the rent. I think maybe it won't be this year and it may not be next year, but I think long term this is going to have some positive benefits not only for the bottom line of the NWT Housing Corporation but for the health and well-being of the residents across the Northwest Territories.

Tracking system. Robert Bouchard had talked about a tracking system and review and we're rolling out the territorial housing system, and this is going to be a really good way for all the LHOs and headquarters to be linked so we can gather information at the flip of a switch. We will be able to monitor and work with the LHOs and those that do need some help. We recognize that. It goes back again to we have a lot of good LHOs out there, a lot of long-term employees that have been there for 25 or 30 years. We need to work with them a little closer and I think they recognize that and we also recognize that.

Ms. Bisaro talked about the recent framework and I have committed to doing an evaluation of a lot of the new programs that we've rolled out. We have tried to address a lot of the needs and filled in some of the gaps, as far as the housing continuum goes. The increased utility costs, our energy upgrades, we're still trying to work on that. Unfortunately, the utilities costs just seem to be getting higher and higher. I think we've had some improvement in that over the last couple of years.

The Rent Supplement Program, I spoke to that before.

The homelessness coordinator, we're quite excited about that program. I'll just let Members know that the money for that program is not going to be coming out of the \$325,000, it's going to be funded from within. We'll just re-profile some money from within the corporation to fund this particular position.

The declining federal funding obviously is a concern. The Member talked about the \$990,000 I think the government's had to put in this year to help offset some of that. We have committed to and will come back before committee in the fall with a plan as to moving forward. I think that answers a couple of questions the Members may have had as to when will we hear.

The rental arrears. Arrears are a huge problem and we're still working on trying to address some of that. I am fairly encouraged by some of the progress we've seen as far as arrears go and I think we're going to start taking steps in the right direction. I think more and more people out there are starting to recognize that they have a responsibility and if they want units maintained, if they keep up with some of the rental payments, then maybe we're

able to do that. So that takes a lot of pressure off our LHOs in trying to make the dollars go as far as they can. I've been in some communities, unfortunately, where there's not much respect for the units that they have in that particular community. There's a lot of damage and I've pointed it out to members of that particular community. We're hoping to see an improvement in that. I think overall we're seeing an improvement in tenants across the Northwest Territories realizing what their responsibilities are.

Some of the decisions we made – the seniors rent, I'll touch on that – are obviously not the most popular, but we feel in our efforts to try to treat everybody across the NWT as fairly as possible, then these are steps where we have to go. This was a particular program that was started in 1995, I believe, and maybe it's one that shouldn't have been started in the first place because we've given people that expectation where it's going to cost you nothing, regardless of how much you make. Given the \$1,000 exemption, I think that puts a lot of our seniors right at the minimum and we're just trying to pull some numbers here to find out the exact percentage of our seniors that will be at the minimum, but we think we've tried to address some of those. In conversations with some people out there, our seniors are used to paying their own way and there are some in every region and community that say I don't mind paying my own way. There are also some that are going to be challenged by this and we recognize that. That's why we went with... We thought a \$1,000 exemption might be a good starting point.

I think I've touched on many of the main issues that were raised. Obviously, Members are going to have questions when we go detail-by-detail and I'll not hold up that process any longer.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. It appears, committee, that we're concluded with general comments. Does the committee wish to proceed to detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you. I'd ask the committee to turn to page 5-41, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, financial summary information. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question on the housing for staff. I see it's not going to be funded this year. I know there's a huge need in the communities of Aklavik and Fort McPherson and I'm sure many other communities. I just wanted to know why that wasn't being funded this year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have had limited success with that.

We've had some communities actually put some units in place. We are looking at other options as far as working with the communities to provide staff housing. It is part of the overall framework that we've come forward with. We'll be having more discussions with committee on that. Recognizing the fact that we still have some communities where the incentive might have helped them try and put something in place for their professionals. We're always willing to look at it on a case-by-case basis.

MR. BLAKE: No further questions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Page 5-41, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, financial summary information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 5-43, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, corporate summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 5-44, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, active positions by region. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The tours that I've been having in the Sahtu region – and I know this came up in the 16th also – this issue here is with the district office in the Sahtu. One of the questions that came up in our communities was the value of having the district office in the Sahtu situated in Norman Wells.

I know the communities talked about moving some of the techies to the communities because the issue came that when the technician, it might improve. Some of the technical staff members come into the communities and they only stay the limited period of time and seem to watch the clock saying the plane is coming and they can't stay very long. They come once in awhile. The advantage of having them stay there all the time would completely help them understand the programs, understand the applications, and having these positions moved to the communities under a universal partnership agreement. This is one level of bureaucracy that we have in the Sahtu and some of them see that these positions could be moved right into the communities and funded by people in the communities.

I know this request came some time ago and it didn't get good traction with Housing as to not having these positions moved to the communities. I just want to raise that with the Minister.

I'm not making a request because I certainly haven't done enough research, but I certainly know that this has been a long-standing issue in the Sahtu communities. I just want to make sure that this issue is still alive with the government, even if they don't agree with it, that this is what the people want. Until we start making some improvements to having the technicians stay longer in the

communities. They may have improved. I'm not too sure. I certainly get complaints from Colville Lake and some other communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think if you look at the active positions by region, you'll notice that the Housing Corporation, probably within all departments, has most of our people spread out over the regions. Then if you count our LHO employees, we've got about 130 in all the communities across the Northwest Territories.

We have tried to provide more support to our district offices so our people can get out into the communities more. One of the things we're working on, one of the initiatives we are working on right now, is working with our LHOs to try and get them more involved in all aspects of the Housing Corporation. We feel that we're taking some steps to address some of that.

Our preference would be to have most of our technical folks in one central location within the region so they can all work together. It's just a matter of trying to get them out to the communities and maybe stay a little longer and then work closely with the communities and LHOs to try to get them more involved in a lot of the programs that the Housing Corporation delivers. That is one of the initiatives that we're working on right now. As soon as we have more information on that, I'd be willing to share it with the Members.

MR. YAKELEYA: I certainly appreciate the Minister's comments to look at the district office and to look at where the technical advisors could actually stay a little longer. They are making improvements. I made this point here because when I was in Deline, I talked to some of the people there, and basically one of the persons that I talked to actually had to tell the technical person – the techie they call him – to stay and come to my office because I need to talk to you and not to go back to Norman Wells. That's the only way I got the attention of the techie.

We need to do something with the attitude of the technicians when they go into the community to stay and listen to the people. We can't just say something and expect them to know this. They're not around there.

I'm glad the Minister is saying that the LHOs are maybe slowly going to start to know and assist through the district office what's expected. Things are not always run according to the theory. In practicality, it's a little more challenging. That's what I want to keep the Minister apprised of that. These techies are very important. But if they're always, their mind is on catching the 4:00 flight or 4:30, they're not totally there with the client. They're

rushing through it. Fill out this application and go see. Some of the LHO staff don't even know that they've got an additional job on there. That's why I'm asking and I think the people are asking. These techies are very important and they're good people. They're good people. I like them because they mean well. For some things maybe they're under pressure by the district office or the regional manager or financial constraints saying they're costing extra fuel and more dollars if you stay longer in Tulita or Colville Lake. It's going to cost us. It's all on budget. That's why I'm asking and that's why the people are asking. If it's not done properly, then maybe the techies should be coming out of the communities and not so much situated in one regional office in Norman Wells. Maybe we could look at cost-savings or making our money go more efficiently or effectively in the communities of Good Hope, Colville Lake and the other communities of Deline, Tulita and the Wells.

I'm just raising this as an issue, and that's what the people are asking. Again, I believe the staff here is going to work on that issue. If not, rest assured, I'll bring it up again at the next budget time.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I've heard the Member's comments and I'm told that we will have some discussions and work with our district office and try to give more support to our district office so they can spend more time out in the region. Then again, working with the LHOs and seeking a lot of input from the LHOs, because they do have a lot of local expertise that we need to tap into. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Page 5-44, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, active positions by region. Any questions? Page 5-47, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, executive. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions here are on policy development. I know the Minister is aware of the interest and the financial incentives of having wood heat in our public housing. Somehow there are a lot of jurisdictions around the world that have figured that out so that there is off-the-shelf technology, and insurance companies and liabilities are adjusted with the reliability of those systems. My first question is: Can we not find a way? I know this is a challenge but I also know it's being done elsewhere. Can we not find a way to develop a policy and start realizing this opportunity by way of, I guess, engaging our tenants in part of the utility costs, as well as reducing our energy costs, total energy costs and other benefits? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have to look at all options as far as the NWT Housing Corporation goes. I would be very careful, and we have to do our homework obviously, I'd be

very careful as far as putting woodstoves into every public housing unit. If there are other options we could look at like a biomass central heating system for some of our multiplexes, then we need to start going in that direction first.

We'd have to do some research to see what other jurisdictions are doing. We're a whole different kettle of fish up here and our situation is not quite the same as what they are in other jurisdictions, but it would warrant, I think, more research as far as our looking at different sources of heating. Wood pellet, as the Member has raised on a number of occasions, would be one option, but at the same time, we have to make sure they're cost competitive.

I believe in alternate energy as much as the next guy, but I want to make sure these are all cost competitive without massive subsidies that we'd have to be paying out. It is one though that warrants, I think, more research.

One of the things we want to look at right away is how could we incorporate biomass into a central heating system and use that in some of our multiplex units, which is the direction we're going in the future. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for the comments from the Minister. Those are good comments and I totally agree, you know, if we can do it on a larger scale than just individual units, that's definitely where the Housing Corporation should be coming from. He also said we would have to do the work. I think that's what I and others have been asking for all along, is to do the work required to... Actually, I'm not saying throw an individual woodstove into every house without the work being done. I am asking for that work to be done.

My next question is sort of related to that. I'm very pleased to hear the Minister's comments on his interest in the central heating systems, though, and I hope he will bring that to committee soon and follow up on that. I think it's a real opportunity for saving money and so on with due diligence on the economics of it and so on.

The option for a work/rent exchange or some other mechanism of engaging tenants, as we've discussed in the past, did not come through strongly in the new strategy I've seen, and I still see lots of opportunities for that sort of thing, engaging our tenants. Is there any further work being done at the policy level to explore options there? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Just going back to Mr. Bromley's original... We have some initiatives that we are working on as far as the energy efficiency part. I have a partial list here. Probably the easiest thing to do instead of me reading it off with the numbers and everything, I'll supply it to committee,

and I think you're going to be pleased with some of the initiatives and the first steps we're taking.

As far as the policy on working off arrears – and I think that's where the Member was going – we have had some discussions on that. We are putting something together here to see how it works. There are issues we have to work through, but I think that at the end of the day, we're looking forward to trying to get some initiative like that going, because a couple of pilot projects in the past have worked fairly well. There are other outstanding issues that go along with this particular one, but we need to work through those and see if we can get this one on the ground so we give tenants an opportunity to work off a portion of their arrears. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for the Minister's comments again. That wasn't exactly where I was headed. I think, when we have able-bodied people who are paying \$32 per month or whatever the new amount might be, who are unemployed but willing to work, it seems legitimate to either require their participation if there is a way we can responsibly ask for them to contribute, and in a way, I'm thinking almost like an informal apprenticeship program or something, that both contribute to the maintenance of our housing infrastructure and the development of our tenants' skills for those that are willing and able.

Another option would be a rent exchange, so instead of paying rent, to have the opportunity to provide the rent in forms of labour and at the same time, again, improve their skills and so on. That's sort of where I was going and wondering if there was any inclination or activity in the policy development area in that respect. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Those are discussions we've had at the senior level. We want to start off with maybe a pilot project as far as the arrears go and see how that works and then continue to develop the next part of it. I think, in some cases, there are places where they do take people that are living in public housing and they take a portion of what they earn, maybe 50 percent, put that towards the arrears and then they're paid a small fee. There may have been cases like that in the past, but in the overall picture as far as the overall NWT Housing Corporation and all our communities, it's something we need to look at. But the one we want to start off is arrears and see how that's working and see if there's more merit in trying to advance the next part of it forward. But it is on the radar. I can let the Member know that, and it's one that we are discussing, as well as a lot of the issues that the Members have brought to our attention in the past couple of years. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: My last question is along the same lines. Are we offering any incentives for power conservation, for example, recognizing that tenants are paying much less than the actual cost

of power? It seems like it would be worthwhile to offer incentives that would get us a net gain there and I'm wondering if we are doing any policy development in that area. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As far as offering incentives, I think one of the incentives is the less power they use, the less it's going to cost them in the long run. Part of our new approach and part of the framework is we're going to go from six cents to nine cents that we charge tenants. We're hoping having them pay a little bit of a higher fee will cause them to consume less power. It's a start and it's one that we are looking at.

As far as policy development and incentives, again, any initiatives brought forward by the Member, I think we'd be wise as a corporation to at least do some exploring and see if there's merit to many of these initiatives. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. One final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. Just to add to that a little bit, Mr. Chair, the tenant is paying six cents, going to be nine cents. The government is paying an average of a buck fifty, so it seems like there is an awful lot of room for incentive there to get beyond that modest three cents or nine cents to get the tenant to conserve electrical power and still be a net gain for the government. I'll just leave it at that. Just a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I'll treat it as a comment. Moving on, we have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Can the Minister provide us with small communities for shelters or homeless funding? I know the Minister talked about that in his opening comments. I appreciate the small community homeless funding that's coming forward. It's much needed in our communities in the Sahtu. I know some of these communities have this type of support. There are 27 communities that will receive this type of funding in the amount of 300 and some-odd thousand dollars. I wonder if the Minister can provide a written document to me and I'll ask how these communities are eligible, first-come, first-served. What is the highest criteria? How does this money get divvied up within in the year of this homeless funding?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's an application process that should be coming out pretty soon. They can put in an application for specific projects in their community. In 2011-12 we had about eight different initiatives out there from Bailey Hot Soup Lunch Program to Food Bank to Shelter Enhancement Project, Soup Kitchen. So there are some opportunities there.

Again, there is an application process and it's going to be coming out very shortly here. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I'll look forward to the application process coming out and notifying the communities in the Sahtu that they can apply for this and where to go.

Another issue I think over time the Minister has informed me of his community of Inuvik, there's a project – I stand to be corrected – where people work off their arrears. I'm not sure if that's something that's a general standard or is that something that they'll give to the LHOs. There's some people who have a hard time paying cash, but they can actually work off the arrears, either clean up around their yard or do something that will bring the value of that housing unit back to what it once was when it was first built. There are lots of things that they can do around the public housing unit. Sometimes these tenants just don't care. The house looks pretty shabby. We could fix it up. We can fix up these lots. Is that something Housing could look at as a thing they could do to help them work off their arrears? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: In my response to Mr. Bromley, I said it was something we were willing to explore. There have been some projects in some communities where we allowed them to do that. We have to be very careful that when the Member talks about the grounds, to make sure he means grounds of a person's particular unit. It would be awfully hard to tell somebody to clean up your own yard and we'll adjust some of your arrears. It's something we need to explore is what I'm trying to say.

I've committed to Member Bromley that it's something on the Housing Corporation's radar. I know in a couple of communities they have had some pilot projects where there's been some success to it. We need to explore that. There are other issues, as I responded to Mr. Bromley, surrounding this and I think we need to make sure we are okay with all liability insurances and things like that before we proceed any further, but it is on the radar. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I say this in all earnestness, some of the units that Housing operates, their yards are not looking very good unless the Housing staff says to the tenants clean up your yard. It looks pretty terrible. You say that's a Housing house. I guess maybe that's a bad example I use. Some of them need to paint their house or steps or do something. Housing staff always say they're too busy, they don't have time or whatever. I'm saying is there any way that the tenants could help out. I'm exploring all avenues, just keep digging and digging until we have something that works. Right now I'm just saying this and I'm not too sure how far it will go. The Minister has brought up some examples and I certainly agree with him. I haven't even

thought about them, so I want this type of discussion where some of these things could help in our small communities to get the people out there and start taking pride in their units. If they are in arrears, there are ways to help them get out of arrears, not only by having cash in hand. That's what I wanted to ask the Minister to see if he could look at some of these other ways that we can help. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I appreciate the Member's desire to help. It is, as I responded a couple of times before, an option we are looking at. It has been tried in the past. There are opportunities there for some of our LHOs to get creative. We need to start getting creative in situations.

One of the things we are looking at and I can point out right now, is having people with arrears maybe work with a community group and some of it would count towards their arrears. That way they are more involved with the community. So we are being creative and we are looking at different options. We go back to liabilities. We can work through that and come up with a pretty solid plan. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. The Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have one question here and it's a follow-up to my comments about the homelessness coordinator and the evaluation of the current programs. I don't believe I heard anywhere when the Housing Corp expects to have the results of their evaluation of the current programs and when they'll have some info for Members on what they might do with the money if they change the programs. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first step is we want to staff that position and then do an evaluation of the work they're going to be doing. We have two different programs right now. So one of the first duties of the new homelessness coordinator will be to do an evaluation of programs and see how we can enhance them or make some changes that might be fairly effective. We're committed to coming back in the fall when we go through the business plans and share that with committee. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Ms. Bisaro. Next on the list I have Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I was just doing some of the budget considerations and I notice in there, with the committee's indulgence, in an earlier page there's a reduction in job positions in the regional allocations in the Sahtu and the Deh Cho. Could I get the Minister to explain that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Before we go, Mr. Menicoche, can you please indicate which page? We did conclude, by agreement. Which page is that, Mr. Menicoche?

MR. MENICOCHÉ: As a general question, yes.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): We'll allow a general question. I'll put that question to Minister McLeod. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These positions were just brought on board because of the federal investment we had. We had to bring a few more people on board. All that investment, the money is gone now. So there's really no longer a need for these positions so they're sunsetted.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Members, again, page 5-47, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, the executive. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Being none, thank you. Page 5-49, NWT Housing Corporation, information item. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to first follow up on the procurement and the administration of suitable land for the delivery of housing programs and services mentioned under the infrastructure services division. I wonder if I could get a concise description of the issue with respect to IAB lands and our challenges on providing housing there. What has been done to resolve the issue and what is our current approach to deal with it? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is one that we've had some struggles with in the last couple years. It's also one that we've actually made some progress on. We've worked with some of the communities that are sitting on IAB lands and we've had some band council resolutions and it's kind of complicated. I mean, we're working on one right now that's been going on for awhile. The community group has agreed to a request. We've brought the situation forward to Ottawa and we're still waiting to hear back from Ottawa on our request. So on IAB lands, because land tenures are an important part of our programs and they need to have land tenure, we'll take a BCR if they can provide their beneficiary with a lease. Because there's sometimes where they give them leases for 99 years. If they can provide that, then that would allow us to enter into a program with the tenant.

We've got a couple of instances where we've put infrastructure on IAB land and then now we're trying to sort out the one particular issue that I'd

mentioned to the Member. We're trying to sort that out now. We needed to use that infrastructure money that we got from Canada. The community actually did their part and Housing did their part. So we had an agreement, we put the infrastructure in. We're still waiting on the federal government. I think we've corresponded with him once or twice on this particular issue, because they need to get this resolved because those units have been sitting in that community for almost six years now.

So it is a bit of a challenge and it's one that we're going to have to try and work our way through if we want to work with some of the IAB land. Because if you look at it, it kind of makes it harder for the beneficiaries in that particular community to access any of our programs without access to land. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for those remarks. I can't say I'm that clear yet. I understand that this is IAB land typically or that it occurs in communities which are surrounded by IAB land and that apparently, if I heard correctly, the Housing Corporation requires a BCR that provides a 99-year lease to a potential tenant. Then what? That means the tenant can't get a mortgage? So I don't see that as a huge challenge, a BCR, and band councils are generally willing to help their members that way. So what are we waiting for? What's our ask of Ottawa that we're waiting for? What's the hiccup there? What are we still working on? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Member is right; it is a very simple process and we've done our part, the community has done their part. We're just waiting for federal government approval. Without land tenure, they can't get a mortgage. The banks won't touch it and it makes it awful difficult for us too. So, again, just waiting for approval from the federal government. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I think I understand the band can offer a BCR, but it has no authority without approval from Ottawa. Got ya. Okay, is this something that our government is taking to Ottawa? We're following up every chance we get and that sort of thing? I think that's important, Mr. Chair. There's just a comment there.

I'd like to move later in this same section here, infrastructure services division to the new housing technologies and perhaps get an update on, I don't remember the name of it in Inuvik, the super energy-efficient duplex there, where we're at with that. Are we learning lessons from it yet? Is it operational? Is it occupied? What's happening there and is there an opportunity for Members to look at that facility when we're in Inuvik? Can I get some information there? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Before we turn it over to Minister McLeod, your two previous questions, because the mics

weren't on, were yes from the Minister. So, Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The house in Inuvik is complete. It is occupied right now and we're starting to monitor it. We're going to monitor it starting this June for a full season, because they just moved in I believe it was in the fall time. So it is occupied and I haven't had a chance to go in there yet and have a look at it, but I'm looking forward to seeing the numbers that come out of that because it was a very expensive project, I might add.

MR. BROMLEY: Just to follow up a little bit, the Minister mentioned a very expensive project. These sort of demonstration projects typically are, and hopefully we learn how to do it more effectively and with our dollars. But as I understand it, it was an EGH 84 or something like that high efficiency, maybe higher. What's the goal with that project? Obviously, we're investing some serious dollars into it. Maybe I can get the cost too. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The house is 88, EG 88. It was a research project that's cost shared between us and CMHC and the goal was actually to see and test all these different components and that to see how they work. So it was a research project is basically what it is. Again, after looking at it in June of next year, we'll evaluate and see if it's cost effective to do more projects like this, how we can improve on it, if there's some things we can adapt from it.

Having worked in the housing field before, I know there are many occasions where they tried new technology and they just go put it into the housing packages in the communities without really giving it a good trial and we've had to learn by trial and error. I think this is a different way of doing business. We'll see if these components work, if they don't work, if they're good for up here. Basically it boils down to a research project and we're hoping to gather some good information out of this.

MR. BROMLEY: I hope maybe the Minister would be willing to update committee on this project. It sounds like an interesting one. Maybe after the fall when the data starts rolling in.

My last question is with regard to the debt repayment. We have a long-term debt of \$52.3 million to CMHC. I'm just wondering for my own background here what the source of that debt is. I know this is something we've been paying on a long time and we will be paying for it for awhile. Are we simply paying on it or are we also adding to the debt from time to time? Is it a balance that we're paying off as fast as we can but at the same time we're sometimes adding to it? Could I get a little description so I understand that debt a little better?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. For that question we'll go to Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation stopped providing resources to build new public housing units in 1992, that was the last date that the debt was accumulating. Since then it falls off on the same basis as the funding falls off to operate the public housing. When we get to year 2038, that debt will be totally paid off as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Moving on with questions I have the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to my general comments on the home ownership program, sometimes we find, well, in my constituency we've had some issues where we've had a single person trying to get into a unit but there were no units available for them. There's always just a two-person household or multiple and vice versa. Sometimes we'll have families but only have a two-bedroom available. They're told to come back and wait until there's an open unit for them. Meanwhile they get approved for the home ownership program. I just wanted to ask the Minister if he's got any action or any ways to look at addressing this issue at the moment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad the Member raised that because it is an issue that I've been dealing with on a number of occasions too. We follow the National Occupancy Standards and that's something that we're evaluating to see where we're at with that. In many cases we get people who are approved for a home but there's only a two-bedroom home available. They say they may be under-housed or over-housed so they're not able to access that unit, or there may be a three-bedroom and according to National Occupancy Standards they can only qualify for a two-bedroom.

We have to look at what works best for the Northwest Territories and that's something that I've asked the corporation to do. Because if you're a young family just starting out, they say you're qualified for a two-bedroom, your family may grow in a number of years. If you can get into a three, why not; because you will grow into it. It's something that is on our radar and something that I have talked to senior management about, because I feel this is an issue we really have to address, because we do have people that are happy as heck because they're approved for a home, only to be disappointed because they don't qualify for a three-bedroom even though they've got a young child and they're just starting out and they may have more children. Then they'll be coming and asking for

more money to build an addition onto their two-bedroom house so that their family can fit into it. So we need to look at that.

MR. MOSES: I'm glad to hear that the Minister wants to take a look into this. In this sense we get the young families who want to start out a family yet there's no investment for them. I know some of them say they'll take a two-bedroom house and even though they say they'll accept it, under the policy they're still not able to take it, even though they're willing to say they'll make do with what they have, just to get out of paying market rent and money just going into the rental area.

On the same side, we do get some singles where there are two-bedrooms available, but with some singles they say that they've got family members that would come over every once in awhile and a two-bedroom would fit.

I'm really glad to hear that it's something that the department's going to be looking into and hopefully we can maybe adjust some policies to look into that, because obviously we are in a housing shortage in some communities and in the North here.

Moving on, that was more of a comment to the answer the Minister gave. Under the maintenance management area and in terms of putting investment into these areas, how would the department look at which region's communities get the brunt end of the dollars for maintenance? We talk about climate change and how it affects infrastructure. I'd imagine that in the coastal communities we'd have more housing units, the infrastructure kind of dwindling or declining compared to maybe some from the South. How does the Minister decide how they divvy up the money in terms of maintenance management?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. For that response we'll go to Mr. Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess overall when we look at the capital plan that we have, we look at a variety of factors including the last needs survey, population change that's going on, investments we've made in recent years, those sorts of things. That's what we look at, as well as the condition ratings of our public housing stock to help define the overall investment in any given year. Then there's also the program side, like home ownership repair programs. Because we do our intake for our major repair programs in the fall of the previous year, we have a pretty good sense of where the budget is going to be needed based on the application process, so that helps us with the allocation of the overall budget as well.

MR. MOSES: With that said, the department kind of has an inventory of which communities need the most maintenance for the stock that they do have. There is an inventory out there. Based on the

inventory, do they also have a needs assessment in terms of, I guess you could say, public housing applications or home ownership applications? Where they're seeing the most applications, are they putting the funds towards those regions or communities?

MR. STEWART: I think the Member has it right. On the public housing side we have a really good tracking system of knowing the age of our stock, when it's scheduled for a retrofit, for example. We also have the condition ratings that are done on an annual basis, which helps us identify units that are most in need. That one I think we have a really good solid tracking system to know scheduling. The districts work closely with the communities to help finalize those plans to know which ones we're going to do and what our plans are going forward.

On the home ownership side, again, the Member has it right. It's the application process that helps us develop the allocation, if you like, of the programs, because we do the main application intake in September and October of the previous year, so we have a really good basis to know where those applicants are and where we need to allocate the money.

MR. MOSES: I'm trying to rephrase this one question here. No. No further questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): We're on page 5-49, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, finance and infrastructure services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Page 5-50, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, finance and infrastructure services. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just wondering what the term "fully targeted" means under federal and territorial funding. If I can get a brief explanation of that, that would be great.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These were a number of programs that we have taken over from CMHC, so the names, I guess, reflect what they had. The kinds of projects that are in here for the Member, I guess, would be things like the North Slave housing, the Avens Court, the contribution we made to that originally. There are a number of community-based organizations that support has been provided for housing-type projects. Mr. Anderson may want to add to that in terms of more specific detail, but those are the kinds of projects that are in there.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, these are the federal programs that were

transferred to the NWT Housing Corporation. Fully targeted really refers to households that have an identified need on a rent/income basis. It's similar to our Public Housing Program, the same type of criteria as that.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that explanation. My last question is on the housing for staff. I know it's been noted that we've knocked out that \$250,000 there. What is the current strategy for providing housing for staff? Recognizing I know the Minister is familiar with the situation and that may have been explained earlier. Maybe I can just get it from Hansard if I was out of the House or somehow missed it. No further questions.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll respond to that. I was just giving the Member a hard time. We do have as part of our new strategy looking at options of how we can help the communities with addressing some of the housing for staff needs.

As far as the \$250,000 goes, we were providing a \$25,000 incentive per door. We had 11 communities, I think, take us up on that. I don't think we've shut the \$25,000 door completely on this one. We're still willing to look at a case-by-case basis. As part of our new strategy – and I think we will be having that discussion with committee – we are looking at ways that we can provide housing for staff in some of the communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Page 5-50, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, finance and infrastructure services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 5-53, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, programs and district operations. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question on the North Slave funding under program delivery detail. There's quite a change between what was estimated and what was realized last fiscal year, and in an effort to thread the needle for this fiscal year, I'm just wondering what the challenges are there or what is the bump about there in the differences between years and estimates.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. For that we'll go to Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the North Slave, we did have some delays to get the work going on the apartment building that's currently under construction right now. There are some carry-over costs that are associated with that. We're also rolling over the funds that we've set aside for the Betty House, if we get that to a level

where we can advance those funds. That has resulted in less money spent during the previous year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this is where this question goes, I'm not absolutely sure. It's my understanding that the Housing Corporation has sort of indicated that one of the forced growth pressures that they have is the need to assist Inuvik and Norman Wells residents with some of the costs that will be associated with them as they change over from gas to some other heat source. I'm not sure where I read it, but I read a statement that the Housing Corporation is going to switch to oil burning, and there was no reference to any other potential method of producing heat. I just wanted to ask the Minister whether or not that's the plan, if there is any assistance provided to either of those communities. Is it the intent that they would only switch over to oil burning equipment, and is the Housing Corp at all considering biomass instead? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In Norman Wells we are switching over to diesel because they're obviously getting shut off. We're not doing anything in Inuvik just yet. There is obviously going to be quite a cost to the NWT Housing Corp if we had to switch all our assets in Inuvik back to diesel. We're waiting to see how things work out. They've been working awfully hard up there to try to find a solution. If that happens, then we won't have to switch back, which will be a good thing.

As far as biomass and in my response to Mr. Bromley's questions earlier in the day, I was talking about how we're looking at some of our multiplex units where we can take advantage of putting biomass fixtures in there, be it a central boiler that heats a number of units, is an option we'd have to look at. As I said to Mr. Bromley, it would have to be cost competitive, obviously, because in some of the communities where it's not readily accessible, especially a pellet boiler, for example, the cost is going to be quite high. We're exploring those options and it is one – again, I've used the term quite a few times today – that is on our radar and it's one that we're wanting to explore further especially when it comes to the multi-unit type configurations, which is going to be the way that we go as the Housing Corporation in the future. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. My apologies for making you repeat something twice, but I was referring specifically to Norman Wells and Inuvik, and I'm glad that the door is not closed on

other options. That was the point that I was trying to get at.

My other question has to do with Northlands residents. I'm extremely optimistic at this point. They are, I think, about two-thirds of the way to getting the votes that they need to get the approval and get on with the job. I know I've talked to the Minister before about this possibility, but I wanted to just ask again whether or not, as long as Northlands residents qualify, whether or not they can apply to be eligible for funding under the CARE program.

My second part of that question is if circumstances require it, and I don't really know at this point if it will, but will the Housing Corp give them an option to do an intake other than, sort of, once a year, which is what it is right now, I think. I'm looking for a little bit of flexibility for these guys. If the project requires it, and I don't know what's required yet, but just confirmation that this is an option for these guys. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We're quite pleased that there has been some progress as far as Northlands Trailer Park is concerned. We have, on the housing side of it if they do qualify, they would be eligible for some CARE money. I think we've discussed having a bit of a targeted intake so we can identify some of the potential clients out at Northlands, because the actual repairs, I believe, may not start until next summer or something like that. We wanted to maybe do a bit of a targeted intake just to see who we can get out there that qualifies. That's what our plan is for now. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. That's good to hear. That's all I have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Page 5-53, NWT Housing. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I noticed that just overall it looks like there's an increase over last year's mains of \$2 million. But when you go down to program delivery details, you see a reduction in expenditures in the Nahendeh district. Perhaps the Minister can explain what's going on here. Some other districts did not reduce by that much so I'd like an explanation.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's mostly due to some HELP units that we had built in Nahendeh that we have had trouble allocating and we're just not including those in this year's numbers because the money was spent last year. We just haven't been able to fill some of these units. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I wasn't too clear of the answer. As for this year's budget, because they had

problems last year, is that why they reduced our budget this year?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. For clarification we'll go to Mr. Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Last year we constructed a number of HELP units in Nahendeh that we haven't been able to allocate yet, so rather than build more, we're waiting until we were able to allocate those units before we start to build additional stuff for vacant units. We have some vacant units there that we're waiting for some program intake, and then we'll be able to go back and build some additional units. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Page 5-53, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, programs and district operations. Any questions? Page 5-54, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, programs and district operations. Any questions? Being none, page 5-57, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, local housing organizations. Any questions? Page 5-58, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, local housing organizations. Any questions? Page 5-59, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, lease commitments, infrastructure. Any questions? Page 5-60, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, infrastructure investment summary. Any questions? Does the committee agree that we have concluded final consideration for the NWT Housing Corporation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the Minister. I'd like to thank Mr. Stewart, Mr. Anderson, and if we can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort them out of the Chamber. Thank you very much.

Committee, we'll be continuing on with the next department, Municipal and Community Affairs. Does the Minister have any opening comments?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Please proceed, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' main estimates for the fiscal year 2012-13.

The department's main estimates propose an operations expenditure budget of \$95.5 million, an increase of \$2.1 million or 2 percent from the 2011-12 Main Estimates. The increase consists primarily of \$2.5 million in forced growth funding and \$647,000 initiatives funding, offset by funding that is sunseting this fiscal year.

MACA has a broad mandate, focusing on community governments but also providing a range of programs aimed at sport and recreation, youth and volunteers. Of the proposed 2012-13 budget, approximately 77 percent is provided to our key stakeholders: community governments. This includes \$45.6 million to provide for community government operation and maintenance costs and \$13 million to provide for water and sewer costs. MACA, with input from the NWT Association of Communities and the Local Government Administrators of the NWT, is currently undertaking reviews of both of these funding programs as a part of the New Deal review and the results of this review may result in changes to the budgets in future years.

MACA will also provide community governments with infrastructure acquisition funding of \$28 million in 2012-13, comprised entirely of capital formula funding. In addition, the Gas Tax Agreement will provide community governments with funding of \$15 million in 2012-13, unchanged from 2011-12.

In support of the 17th Legislative Assembly's goals, MACA will provide technical advice and assistance related to the implementation of integrated community sustainability plans in the areas of energy, capital, and human resources. The department will continue to implement the Public Service Capacity Initiative, and will implement an accountability framework to better support reporting requirements for public funding, and to support community governments' ability to be accountable to their residents. MACA will also complete the Recreational Leasing Policy Framework.

Through programs such as Active After School, Get Active NWT, traditional games tours and participation in the Healthy Choices Framework, MACA will continue to support the 17th Assembly's goal of healthy, educated people free from poverty and its priority of supporting the health care system through preventative measures such as physical activity.

Forced growth funding accounts for \$2.5 million of the year-over-year increase to MACA's budget reflected in the 2012-13 Main Estimates. This increase is to provide grants-in-lieu payments to tax-based communities; increased operations and maintenance funding and water and sewer funding due to population growth, cost in fuel and electricity; Property Tax Revenue Grant Program increases based on the amounts collected by the Department of Finance; insurance premiums to designated authority First Nations for the assets transferred by the GNWT to the designated authorities as part of the New Deal initiative; and to provide for northern allowance adjustments arising from the Collective Agreement.

Reported results confirm more communities have accumulated surpluses, and fewer communities

have accumulated deficits. These are strong performance indicators of improved financial management, and community governments should be acknowledged for the improvements they have achieved with the support of MACA staff and through the Public Service Capacity Initiative. MACA continues to support community governments in their capacity building initiatives, and funding first approved in 2010-11 for the public service capacity is again reflected in MACA's 2012-13 Main Estimates. There has been a great deal of work done on this program over the past year, and the input of our partners from the NWT Association of Communities, the Local Government Administrators of the NWT and the Department of Human Resources has been integral to the program design and implementation. Most of the programs under this initiative are started and the department is currently working to finalize an evaluation framework to use to measure results and to report on the program and its outcomes.

MACA is in the second year of implementing its strategic plan and will continue to report on the progress of implementation on an annual basis. Continued support of community capacity building, management initiatives, youth leadership development and healthy choices are some examples of how MCA is responding to the priorities of the 17th Assembly.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the department's 2012-13 Main Estimates. I look forward to discussing them with you in more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Does the Minister have any witnesses he wishes to bring into the House?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I would, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you. Can I get the Sergeant-at-Arms to bring our witnesses in, please?

Thank you, Minister McLeod. Would you like to take a moment to introduce your witnesses to the House, please?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me to my left Mr. Tom Williams, deputy minister of Municipal and Community Affairs; Ms. Eleanor Young, assistant deputy minister of Municipal and Community Affairs; and Mr. Gary Schauerte, director of corporate services, Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister. I welcome the delegation to the House today on negotiation with Municipal and Community Affairs.

We will open up our floor to general comments. Again, committee, by protocol, we have just been doing general comments and then having the Minister respond as one aggregate. I will open up the floor to general comments. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, in my previous work when I commend the department on their sport, recreation and youth, they are doing a good job in there. The initiatives that I have seen over the last couple of years working there, and the more money that is being put towards it, is truly an investment into our future generations and into our communities, healthier and safer communities. I do see the results time and time again in the communities and by e-mails and correspondence with the youth that I used to work with.

One concern that I do have, though, is in... There are community deficits. I have spoken in the past on how we can deal with those. Sometimes it is just mismanagement. I do understand that Human Resources does have a secondment program that can be utilized with some of the communities and possibly the bands for... I'm not sure if this department promotes that or not when they go into communities where they can second, possibly get finance workers into the communities to help them get their books up to date. I know, with certain communities that I have spoken with, the frustrations that do come along with it and the frustrations I am sure that the department sees working with communities who have run deficits and trying to get themselves back in good with the books.

We have spoken about this in some instances with the ground ambulance and highway rescue services and the decreased funding that is being proposed with this department. It is something that our communities do feel needs to be addressed and taken into consideration, considering that for quite a few of our communities the only access in is sometimes by highway, such as Tsiigehtchic and, I am not sure, I think Jean Marie. I am not too sure, but there are some communities that can only be accessed by road and more in the wintertime there. I didn't get a chance to go through it all, but just throwing out some general comments while my colleagues are getting ready here.

Something that has been brought up is the management of drinking water for my colleague in the Sahtu and things like the Peel watershed and making sure that we do adequate testing, proper testing and looking at our standards on how we collect the water samples and the returning and getting the results back to the communities so that they are able to ensure their residents that the water that they do have is adequate for drinking and that it is safe and healthy.

At this moment I don't have any more general comments, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to touch base on those and I look forward to hearing more on how the department is working with these community deficits, the ground ambulance services and also the management of the Drinking Water Program and the testing guidelines and standards. With that, Mr. Chair, I thank the Minister and his staff for coming and meeting with us this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Moving on, we'll go to Ms. Bromley... Sorry, Ms. Bisaro.

---Laughter

MS. BISARO: It's started again, Mr. Bromley. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few comments. I will have some questions later on, but maybe the Minister will answer some of my comments taking them as questions. We'll see.

In general, in terms of the funding we provide to our community governments, both the O and M funding and the infrastructure funding which the Minister mentions in his comments, there hasn't been an increase in those contributions. Whether it's operations and maintenance or whether it's infrastructure, there hasn't been an increase for a number of years. It's my understanding that the department is doing an evaluation of how our community governments are funded. I want to see the report, which hopefully is coming soon and I'm hoping there is going to be an increase. Our communities are struggling with increased costs the way everybody is. As individuals we are and as a territorial government we are. So we can't expect that they can continue to receive the same amount of funding and be able to provide all the services that we expect them to provide and that their residents expect. So I guess my concern there is when the...(inaudible)...will be done and hopefully that we're going to have an increase in what we are funding them.

I'm really pleased to see that the public service capacity in the program in conjunction with HR is seemingly successful and that it's continuing another year. I think it's addressing a deficit in capacity in our community governments and this is one way I think to try and address that. Certainly, what I hear from communities is that they lack the human resource capacity to do everything that they're being asked to do. I'm really glad to see that we're trying to provide the training that people need and we're also trying to make sure that the mentoring and the backfilling of positions is happening. I echo Mr. Moses' comment about... I totally lost my thought. I echo his comment, it was a great one.

---Laughter

It was really good. He also mentioned about the funding, \$200,000 sunset for ground ambulance. My understanding was that that was training money and there wasn't a great uptake on it, but I still believe that community governments that are on the highway system are bearing costs to provide emergency services on the highway that they should not have to. They are basically outside their municipal boundaries. They are attending to emergency scenes that are outside their community, and it is a community cost which they are not being reimbursed for. I feel really strongly that we have to put something in place that allows communities to get back the cost of providing services which they are doing on behalf of GNWT.

There is a reference to an accountability framework which is either being developed or has recently come out. I'm glad to see that. I think the Minister said in a statement last week or the week before – and I will want to hear from the Minister what he means by it – something about reporting. I'll try to find the document over supertime. I am a little concerned about the fact that we may be requiring communities to report.

A couple of other things. This is a broken record for the Minister and some of the Members of the department, but I still fail to understand why we have as many pots of funding for youth as we do. In looking through the budget this afternoon, we have three pots on one page, we have three pots on another page. Like, oh my, do we really want to administer six different pots of funds? So, you know, please, please, please put them together. Rewrite the criteria so we can still give the money to all the people we need to give it to, but it just seems like a waste of resources, not financial but human resources, in my mind.

I'm glad to see that we've got some sort of a solution for the Recreational Leasing Policy. I think the Minister knows I still have concerns about whether or not enough on-the-ground work has been done, but I think there's been a consensus reached. My understanding is we've had discussions with the people who have used the space. Again, I hope that in a year's time, if we add lots this year, that in a year's time we do an evaluation of the impact that it's had on the various lakes and the people who've used them. I hope we do go back to the users and ask them what kind of an impact it's had on them.

Lastly, there's no increase in any funding for volunteers. The volunteer contributions have stayed at the same level for the last number of years. This is something that I think we as a government need to put a greater focus on. Volunteers are the backbone of what much of what our people need and provide much of the services and programs, and we do recognize them in terms of awards, but we don't recognize them financially and give their

organizations the money they need to do a better job. So I would love to see that amount increase.

Other than that, I have nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Moving on, we'll have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My comments are similar to some of my colleagues who have spoken, so I won't stay too long on them.

Mr. Chair, the Minister's department, one of the main objectives, I believe, is to protect the consumers in our communities. I was back in Tulita and it was very disturbing to me to do business in the Northern Store and they use their LINK card in the Northern Store. If you don't really know the complexity of the LINK card and English is your second language – and these older people just use the LINK card to get in and out of the store or check their account – the Northern Store is robbing you without a mask because of the amount of money to use your LINK card. They charge you to check it, they charge you to take money out, they charge you to pay your bill. That is unreal what the elders are paying. The Northern Store is smiling and saying, have a good day; I guess they're going to have a good day. They're getting a lot of money from the people. We need some understanding with the Northern Store and the use of the LINK card.

Mr. Minister, the community is being literally financially robbed by the Northern Store. You wouldn't accept this in any other community. The community got so mad that it bought its own bank machine. The Northern Store is the only game in town using this system and they've got everybody by the scruff of the neck. This is our only store and you use our LINK card, use our system.

I want to ask the Minister and the staff, hopefully they will look at this situation in the small communities. This is a private industry, a private service. In our small communities we only have one store. Some have two stores, the Co-op. This is very serious for us in our communities, especially now where Tulita, Good Hope, Norman Wells is going to be very busy because of the oil and gas activities that are happening there right now. People are spending money. Money is floating around in those communities. I want to ask the Minister what type of initiatives he can look at on financial literacy, on handling these types of financial transactions with the LINK card and how they can educate the people. Like I said, a lot of my people in Tulita are probably about 85, Good Hope, older, they speak their own language. So they don't really know much about financial stuff that's attached to those LINK cards.

I want to ask the Minister also, with the ground ambulance, you know that Tulita and Norman Wells are going to be busy with oil and gas. Last year it

was estimated just over \$70 million being spent, close to \$80 million, lots of activity there. I know these ground ambulances are set for all-weather roads, but now it's getting busier between Tulita and Norman Wells, Tulita and Wrigley, and different communities and people have been telling me they've been having close calls. Thank God, knock on wood there's no serious accident. We need to ramp that up and say what type of services can we expect. Right now we don't know. If you call somebody right now that's on the winter road that will go and help that person, you will need the goodness of people's heart to jump in the pickup and go on the highway. There's no set ambulance or RCMP or health. Everybody really hasn't been coordinated that much on the ground ambulance.

I want to ask the Minister throughout the page by page what type of coordination is he working with his colleagues on the drinking water quality, Every department does their own thing. In Fort Good Hope this came up. MACA's doing one, Health is doing one, ENR is doing one. Everybody's doing their own part on ensuring that the water is safe, the testing is proper and that they are properly testing for the chemicals. They don't do all the testing. Is the Minister going to come forward with some kind of coordinated process? This is what we're doing with all the departments, just like they had the social programs coordinating committee, so they cannot coordinate what everybody else is doing.

Ms. Bisaro talked about the human capacity and I think MACA is doing a good job in that area. The Minister got a smile out of me here. I want to thank you. The School of Community Government is doing very good. I've seen people in my communities and regions who have taken this and they said they're doing well. I want to thank the Minister for that and I could continue to support you on this initiative.

I want to ask the Minister on the New Deal in the communities. Are you helping the communities implement the New Deal and to fully implement it to its capacity on the New Deal? I know the Minister of housing talked about the IAB lots. I know MACA is involved with the federal IAB lots. There have been some people in my region that have been saying that this is Indian Affairs' lot, why is MACA taking over? Who gave them authority? It becomes a collective property issue of rent and who pays the taxes and all that stuff. Some people still firmly believe that these lots that were given to them by the band, that these are their lots. Why is the territorial government, through MACA, taking these lots away from them? There is some confusion there, some difficulty. In and around Good Hope especially. That's where a lot of people still say that these lots belong to them and that they are band lots, so to speak. I guess that's some work that we have to do.

I've supported and continue to support the initiatives with the youth, the different games that they play, and the ones that are getting some good airtime now are the traditional games in our small communities. Especially with the hand games that are becoming more and more popular amongst other traditional games in the Northwest Territories. I'm starting to see that. I want to see how we can continue to support the traditional games.

Ms. Bisaro talked about the voluntary sector and their importance to our communities. We certainly appreciate the voluntary sector for coming out. Be it the Arctic Winter Games or any kind of games, you see in the regions all the volunteers that come out to support the children in the community. I guess I want to see continued strength in those areas.

The Municipal and Community Affairs do a lot of funding to the communities. I think the majority of their funding goes directly to the communities. I wish other departments would follow your lead so they could give the powers to the community. That's how it should be, with the support of the departments to the communities.

I just want to say that I appreciate that process there and I will have other questions for the Minister as we go through page by page.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next on my list is Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome to the Minister and delegation from MACA here today. I'd like to take a moment to commend the Minister and all the initiatives they do for sport in the Territories. Seeing with my own eyes, as Regular Members do, and seeing that the benefits that sport has done with the division of the department, I have to commend them.

With that said, I believe there's nothing in his opening address, nothing in this budget which tends to look at some of the bigger picture for sport and youth. I'm talking more about the layers of administration out there. There still tends to be some concern out there with respect to how the Sports and Recreation Council with its other members, a lot of people feel that we have a lot of duplication of authority. I would ask the Minister and his team to potentially take a look at this as many constituents far and wide, north, south, east, west, small, rural, urban, many have come forward to many Members and asked that maybe it could be reviewed and be more efficient so that at the end of the day monies are going to where they're intended to: back to the kids, back to the volunteers, back to the TSOs, so that they can perform to the best of their ability. We want that message to be taken in the right context not the wrong context.

Communities have expressed major interest in respect to delivering ground ambulance and highway rescue services. We obviously will talk a

little bit more later on today regarding one of the budget items. The NWTAC has come out looking for support. I believe the municipalities are looking for support. I believe the people of the Northwest Territories are looking for answers. Bar none, this is going to be a very expensive program. This has been discussed within a committee structure and I agree that this is a very complex issue, one in which, though, we need to discuss. One in which we need to have a better battle plan, so to speak, as we move forward.

I will be asking, with time as a Regular Member here, for this department to look at the feasibility of a business case model where we can bring in potentially private P3, or private enterprise to come in and work with third-party adjudicators like CMA, third-party agencies that have the ability to use insurance so that we can offset those type of costs. Not having a program in place puts us at a high risk. We have lots of roads. We have very challenging roads out there, especially Highway No. 7 where I've heard of sinkholes that can swallow vehicles whole. That said, I'm looking for the department to consider highway ambulance services high on the priority list for this. We don't see it in this budget, but I'm going to ask that it be looked at for future budgets.

Recreational Leasing Policy Framework. I've had the pleasure of working alongside many of your teammates during a lot of the public consultation and I was very moved by the acceptance of the new policy coming on stream. One of the cautions that I have and that I again wish to share with the department if you haven't already done so is people are looking for us for guidance and stewardship in terms of pushing this program along. I think the acceptance is there. We've heard loud and clear by many Members. I know Ms. Bisaro indicated about evaluation after a year to see how that works. We have an oversubscription of capacity for what we have on the table and I'm concerned that we have people who have been waiting for many, many years, some for decades, for the opportunity to acquire a lease in the legal format.

I challenge the department to foster an environment of completeness where we can move along this pathway a lot quicker than potentially is on the radar, just to get the capacity down so that we're meeting the needs of not only the Yellowknife area but throughout the Northwest Territories, and more so to look at the future expansion of the Recreational Leasing Program. That was very loud and clear. We are looking at a very microcosm program that's on the table right now, but I think people far and wide are looking for a broader approach to leases.

One of the other things that I know I brought up as a Regular Member in the House here are issues involving carbon monoxide detectors. I'm a very

staunch supporter who is very concerned that we need to put a lot more emphasis on that, not only in our public housing but awareness throughout the Northwest Territories, including our remote areas of the territory. I would be championing and asking the Minister and his team to look at acquiring the services of the fire marshals to work in conjunction with MACA to make sure inspections are high on the priority list for this fiscal year. The last thing we would want to see is any issues involving carbon monoxide and any future unwarranted fatalities for our people of the Northwest Territories.

You heard today many Members speaking about water, drinking water especially. If the Minister hasn't heard me speak about drinking water before, I'll reiterate. It's very, very high. You hear this from many Members, many concerns. Not so much that we don't believe ourselves that the quality of water is very good, I'm not going to deny that, and that's been brought up in the House and committee. You need to empirically validate that in a way that communities expect and the people of the Northwest Territories expect.

Stewardship of drinking water always falls under the roles of many departments and MACA is one of four departments here today. Unfortunately, guidelines are really what is the stewardship of the policy. Regulations are something, I think, we are in dire need of to make sure we can enforce that.

We need to have securities, knowing that the testing is done rigorously in all regions as part of the MACA results that have been brought forward in the House. Some of the MACA tabled results that we see in websites, some of them are incomplete. Some of the testing has not been done rigorously, especially in the Deh Cho area. We have some communities that weren't tested for 29 of the minerals and chemicals that they're supposed to be tested for, some that go back two to three years. This is a concern that needs to be rectified.

This cannot fall only on MACA's shoulders. This has to be a cross-department issue, and there has to be a commitment to making sure that drinking water and adherence to guidelines – and these are federal guidelines – territorial work alongside communities, but we have to be stewards. We have to show leadership. If we have communities that are not towing the line, we need to support them, be it expertise, help, whatever it takes. We have to make sure that drinking water is at the forefront.

We need to create a baseline of drinking water standards so that when we complete the Stewardship Watershed Strategy and transboundary agreements, that we have a baseline so that we know that we can move forward with faith that our testing is being done and our drinking water is safe.

You've heard from the Member for Sahtu that there's concern in the Fort Good Hope area with

cancer. The numbers are there. They're starting to show themselves. The issues that we have are not just on one. This is a lifetime of consumption that causes problems. We need to look not just at a moment in time, but we need those numbers moving forward.

My last comment is still dealing with water but it's dealing with the source water situation that we're dealing with here in the Yellowknife area, where we're going to be changing the access point from the Yellowknife River to the bay.

As a newer Member to the House, I find it odd that in other municipalities and communities across the Northwest Territories, the Government of the Northwest Territories is playing an active role in offsetting costs for source water or water treatment plants, yet it appears here in Yellowknife that that doesn't seem to be entirely the same case. I will be having questions later today as to why. Why is Yellowknife treated differently? We should be treated like any other community. We should be getting support. The municipality here should have access to equal support moving forward like any other community in the Northwest Territories.

That would be my opening general comments here for today. Thank you for your time. Thank you to the Minister and the team.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Further opening comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to have this opportunity again to comment on the Municipal and Community Affairs program. Thanks to the Minister for his opening remarks. Just going through them, I'm curious, in support of the 17th Assembly goals, MACA will provide technical advice and assistance related to the implementation of integrated community sustainability plans in the areas of energy, capital and human resources. I appreciate that. That is the role of MACA. Typically, we do provide advice. I'm wondering what the assistance is in this case.

Moving on to public service capacity initiatives mentioned three times in disparate places throughout the document, obviously getting some emphasis, which I appreciate. We did put exceptional dedicated funds into these initiatives, but I have not heard what those dollars have gained us in terms of results. And, you know, ongoing monitoring and evaluation assessment of the effectiveness of our dollars is an important role and responsibility, so I would like to hear what we are gaining with those dollars.

The Recreational Leasing Policy Framework has been more than adequately addressed by my colleague. This is important work. I've appreciated the department putting active leasing on hold until we get this policy firmed up and in place. That seems like a fair way to approach it. I know that

new problems in terms of trespassing or squatting have continued to develop and may be exacerbated as people off of Commissioner's land and onto federal land, something we will hopefully inherit soon. Recognizing the current limitations, which I think have been well demonstrated through this process of developing this policy, we need to be building our land management capacity and our enforcement capacity, especially as this other deadline approaches. I will look forward to any comments from the Minister on that.

The financial management in communities, it's a huge capacity issue, and a very important one. It seems like we might be making some progress there and perhaps resulting from the Public Service Capacity Initiative. We have, as the Minister reported, more communities, we don't know how many, but at least some have accumulated surpluses as opposed to deficits. That can also be seen in two ways. One is a capacity for delivering and spending the dollars. I have also seen that in communities. Maybe the Minister can assure me or provide some more information on that.

On the sports issue, I know there have been a couple of different comments on that. I fall into the area where we're not there yet. These are huge programs, important programs for the development of our children and the health of our adult people, as well. They're very important but I do see a large degree, I see, as do many people from across the NWT, as my colleague mentioned, expensive duplication and particularly in the area of administration. I think, especially for the top-heavy Sports and Recreation Council. I think we're not there yet. There's some work to be done there.

I guess my last one, and it will be no surprise to the Minister: Where is the NWT building standards act? Clearly, it's needed. The communities are calling for it. It used to be that the GNWT delivered that service and now we have this New Deal, or we've shrugged off those responsibilities onto communities, so I will be speaking to that during the detail, of course. I won't go on about it, but it's long overdue and more and more professionals in the field are calling for it and so on. I'll be talking to that later.

I'll stop there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Further to opening comments, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just some comments that I kind of find myself reiterating, but it's part of the process. I just wanted to speak in general terms on some of the aspirations of the communities that I represent; namely, the reserve, Kakisa and Fort Providence and, of course, Enterprise.

I think the communities there are very interested in trying to be more independent and trying to ensure

that they provide the services to their residents that make their homes in those communities and they want to raise their children as well. So they aspire to trying to provide the services that other communities take for granted. For example, in Enterprise they've always been interested in trying to at least establish a water treatment plant for themselves, and they've made it clear that it's something that they could do by themselves with the help of Municipal and Community Affairs. I think they've done some preliminary assessments and I think, if talks are ongoing, it's a positive sign that things are going good and, indeed, at some point they will realize at least being one step closer towards establishing a water treatment plant.

Similarly, in Kakisa they, of course, want the same thing. I know there are constraints in terms of budgets, but understanding in terms of capital plans, it is possible for at least...(inaudible)...in the long range. In the short-term range that they could really put some resources aside and ensure that the department is on board and helping them to achieve at least the realization of water treatment plants in their communities.

There have also been some expressed concerns in terms of the intake pipes in Fort Providence. There have been some concerns and perhaps some hiccups now and then. I know there have been some initiatives in the past to ensure that the intake pipe there is, of course, something that's workable and there have been efforts from all levels to ensure that it is, indeed, working to full capacity. I understand there are some issues that perhaps are kinks at the moment, but more likely could be worked out.

Of course, in Kakisa, as well, they talked about some ideas that they wanted to undertake, of course, with the assistance of the department. One of them is they periodically have family gatherings there or funeral services. They're quite restricted in terms of where they can have it. Their present little office sometimes is, you know, full capacity, especially when you have surrounding communities visit their community to try and pay their respects for a funeral service or weddings, like that, of that nature. They're very interested in trying to work with the department, and I believe the department is making gains to try and work with them and meet them halfway.

On some other stuff, in Fort Providence there are some ongoing discussions with the community in terms of how to remedy the situation of the swimming pool. I think I've raised that to ensure that we do follow up with the building. I know as it was constructed and it's intended awhile to provide at least a medium for our youth to use and it's been there sitting idle for the past two or three years. I think a concerted effort needs to be made from all sides, including the community, to ensure that it's

realized to its full capacity and it's used. Hopefully, the department will carry on with the work they've been doing thus far.

Another area of concern that has been brought to me is just in terms of lands available for residential purposes, whether it is ultimately going to be a lease through Commissioner's land or if it is going to be maybe owned privately, at least some provisions in terms of allowing people to have an option of purchasing land. It could be constrained by current negotiations of various tables happening, but I think people are aspiring to have a level of certainty so that if they buy a house, the land is theirs as well. This is just an aspiration that people have at the community level.

Finally, I think sport and recreation are key in terms of trying to bolster the advances of our youth. I always believed that the youth are the spirit of our community. If we can provide very good recreational services, then by all means our youth develop themselves to their full capacity. I think thus far we have seen some very positive indications in some communities. Hopefully, the department will continue to work with our communities in trying to realize some recreational initiatives that they would like to undertake.

Finally, perhaps I have raised it before, but I see it as an opportunity to maybe try to build at least an understanding of how it is that this department could play a role in trying to help out communities. I know down the road, the biggest community is Fort Providence, the realization of the bridge happening to be completed at some point is more likely going to increase traffic in the vicinity. There is going to be a need, most likely, for a timely communication system so that if you have an emergency situation, then it is right now that an ambulance could be made available or planes dispatched. I would like to suggest or at least recommend to the department if perhaps they could work with communities, small communities especially that are interested in establishing similar services if perhaps there could be at least an assessment or a feasibility study on how that could be done, at what cost and whether it is really a matter of the private industry that really decides the fate of whether they provide those services. It would be helpful if at least one department could step up to the plate and assist small communities if they aspire to or to establish cellular service in their communities. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Opening comments. I have no one further on my list. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is just one of the items that haven't been mentioned as I listened to my colleagues. I won't spend a lot of time repeating the other items already mentioned, but there were some pretty good ones.

The issue that I noticed had been missed – and if it had been spoken on, I apologize for that description – is hotel tax. We all know it goes through this department. The Hotel Association has been working quite diligently to bring this initiative to the forefront. The fact is the hotel tax, if implemented properly through our Municipal and Community Affairs in partnership with communities at large, that would enable communities, if they felt it necessary and it meets their objectives, some flexibility on raising some money for tourism or added value services in their community.

Quite often, as we all know, communities will put in requests for recreational coordinators, event coordinators, et cetera. There never seems to be enough money, but the Hotel Association, from the Yellowknife point of view, has articulated a concern and said, well, whoa, we would like to do some conference planning and some development over the long haul. This would enable source money to be able to do something like this.

There are other communities such as, if I understand it correctly, Fort Smith. I think there has been talk now, muttering around the idea of a community event planner. It is meant to be a dynamic way of allowing communities to meet some of their objectives and certainly their goals, which again, enabled through MACA legislation, that would allow a particular community to choose to take on a type of authority and implement it.

The important key element of this hotel tax is it becomes a situation where a community itself may want to decide, well, this is what we want. This is not prescribed. Every community wouldn't have to follow suit. They would be allowed to do it at their will.

The only particular issue, as I mentioned, that I think has been missed is the hotel tax issue. I think that we have now progressed to a point where the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should be working its hardest to help enable our communities to do the work that they want to do and not find ways to restrict them.

Madam Chair, that is the only issue I plan to raise at this particular time. However, I may be stirred to raise concern on other issues as we approach those pages. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Opening comments. There are no further. I will go to the Minister for a response if he so chooses. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am sure we appreciate the comments of a lot of the Members. Obviously, the issues are the same right across the Territories, because we have heard the same issues from practically every Member.

We appreciate some of the positive comments we have had surrounding the youth funding and the sports and recreation. That is always a good thing. We will continue to invest in our youth. That was a huge priority of the 16th Assembly. I think we have seen that in a lot of the money making it into the mains. We saw this as a huge priority of the 17th Assembly. We are looking forward to carrying on with some of the good work in that regard.

Again, the Rec Policy Framework was mentioned a couple of times. We have been really pleased at the input that we had in that. Our lands department has done excellent work as far as that goes. They have done a lot of on-the-ground exercises.

I think one of the Members talked about going further down the road and taking over all the federal land when devolution does happen. We recognize that. I think the lands department is proposing to do some re-profiling and possibly bring in some enforcement people to help with that. We are trying to meet with certain people and get their input as to some of the uses of the land and some of their traditional uses so we can incorporate that and help us finish it and get a real good quality product out there, but I am really pleased with the work that has been done.

We did have an opportunity to brief committee. I think committee has seen a lot of advice that they were giving and advice that we were taking from outside and all the work that we did was incorporated into this particular one. We had committed to taking it out one more time, taking the last little bit of feedback before we roll out the final product. That is where we are at right now. A lot of really good work has been done. I commend the lands department. I have to commend the people out there for the input that they put in, not only here in Yellowknife but up in Inuvik. We just recently signed an MOU with the Town of Inuvik and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Nihtat Gwich'in, because they have all expressed interest around Airport Lake in Inuvik. I think all their boundaries border Airport Lake, so we have a Land Use Management Plan Working Group which is huge. I am looking forward to some of the good work that is coming out of there.

The ground ambulance, we have heard committee and then we have seen the motion from NWTAC, so I think you will see coming forward in the supp that we are asking for that \$200,000 to be reinstated into the budget. That I think responds well to the wishes of the committee and to NWTAC.

Funding to communities, community capacity building, we have seen some really good work. Obviously, we are still faced with some challenges, but I think overall we have seen a lot of good work that has been done by the communities with the responsibilities they have.

I mentioned that we have communities with surpluses now actually, but they are doing some really good work. They are actually able to get product on the ground probably cheaper than we could as a Government of the Northwest Territories because they have that ability and flexibility to shop around and get the best prices possible. We are seeing some good results. Of course, it is to the community's benefit to incorporate some of the best energy practices that are out there. I think we have seen a few examples of that where, in Detah, they used pellet heat to heat their new community complex and some of the other communities.

I think I made a commitment to Mr. Bromley to do some exploring as far as the Standards Act. I remain committed to that. I am trying to line up a few meetings and get some input from a few parties out there that have a vested interest in this. Of course, I want to hear from the communities, because if we make adjustments to the Standards Act, that's obviously going to have a huge financial impact on them.

I believe they're building all their buildings according to the National Building Code, which is the right thing to do. If we have to have our own building standards on top of that, say two by twelve walls instead of two by six, which is standard across the country, then you know we may have to look at that. I have committed that I would explore that.

I do know that the MACA building code had been open for some public consultation for the last few months. They were looking for some feedback for people across the country because they were hoping to make some amendments to the current building code, so I'm looking forward to some of the results of that. I've been following that quite closely. My understanding is they are looking at later on in 2012, more likely closer to fall, to come out with some proposed amendments. So I will wait to see how that rolls out. Hopefully, it will take into consideration some of the challenges that are faced in some of the colder climates across the country.

Drinking water is another big one that's been mentioned a few times by practically every Member. Of course, we continue to monitor that. We have a very good training program and the Member for Sahtu mentioned the good work of the School of Community Government, and that's another area where they've done some really good work. I didn't realize they had so many different courses in the School of Community Government which helps communities with their capacity and does really good work with HR, LGANT and...(inaudible)...as far as community capacity goes. We're always looking for mentors or retired SAOs that we can use their expertise and maybe put them in a community for a few months and they can work with that community. We've had some

fairly good success with that. If there's any retired SAOs that are really good that are out there listening, we can always use your expertise, but we are looking at all options possible to work with our communities and try to help them build capacity.

We've had some good uptake. We have people from the community and are going to be from the community more than likely for the rest of their life, unless they move on. They are taking a really good interest in this and I think it's a good investment as far as we're concerned, because they are committed to their community and they'll do the best job possible, but we still continue to seek professional advice from where we can get it.

I strayed off from drinking water. We continue to work with communities. I've been doing some checking after Mr. Dolynny raised this in the House here a couple of weeks back earlier in the session. He talked about the drinking water and the testing and that, so I've been doing some follow-up on that and working with my colleagues, four departments. We actually just had a meeting last week. It's probably one of the first meetings of all four departments that are involved in the drinking water part of it. So we're looking at trying to get some work done there.

I think I basically covered most of the issues that were raised again. They were a common theme right across all Members and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this in detail. I'm sure we'll have more questions and I'm not going to take up too much more of committee's time. I'll have more responses when we get into detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I'm sure there will be more questions. We will resume after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Welcome back, committee. We will come to order. We are done with opening comments. We are on page 6-7. We'll defer page 6-7 until we have considered detail. Does committee agree? Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sure I must have missed the Minister's response to my question about hotel tax. I'm just wondering if we can get that on the record what I asked during opening comments. What's interesting is it's the only subject I talked about. I'd hate to think that 100 percent of my comments were ignored.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): We could cover that in detail when we get to the page.

MR. HAWKINS: There is no page for hotel tax.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. I apologize to the Member for overlooking that. We are looking to the hotel tax. We need to develop an option

paper for consideration. We're not quite clear of all municipalities' and hotel operators' support. So we are looking at it, Mr. Hawkins. It's one that if we get the opportunity, we'll develop an option paper and go from there.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Anything further, Mr. Hawkins? Okay. Thank you. We'll try this again. Page 6-7, Municipal and Community Affairs, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$95.533 million. We'll defer until we're done with detail. Turn to page 6-8, information item, Municipal and Community Affairs, infrastructure investment summary. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-9, information item, Municipal and Community Affairs, revenue summary. Any questions here?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-10, Municipal and Community Affairs, information item, active positions summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Okay, hearing no questions, we move on to pages 6-12 and 6-13, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$4.358 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Page 6-14, Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate summary, directorate, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$168,000, contributions, total contributions, \$470,000, total grants and contributions, \$638,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Page 6-15, Municipal and Community Affairs, information item, directorate, active positions. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Seeing none, page 6-16, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, public safety, operations expenditure summary, \$1.407 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Seeing no questions, page 6-18, activity summary, Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, grants and contributions, contributions, zero.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-19, Municipal and Community Affairs, information item, public safety, active positions. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-21, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, community operations, operations expenditure summary, \$2.437 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-22, activity summary, Municipal and Community Affairs, community operations, grants and contributions, grants, zero, contributions, total contributions, \$185,000, total grants and contributions, \$185,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-23, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, information item, community operations, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-25, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, School of Community Government, operations expenditure summary, \$3.051 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-26, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, School of Community Government, grants and contributions, contributions, total contributions, \$680,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-27, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, information item, School of Community Government, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-29, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, lands administration, operations expenditure summary, \$3.433 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-30, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, information item, lands administration, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-33, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, sport, recreation, and youth, operations expenditure summary, \$5.180 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-34 and page 6-35, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, sport, recreation, and youth, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$100,000, contributions, total contributions, \$3.357

million, total grants and contributions, \$3.457 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-36, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, information item, sport, recreation, and youth, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-39, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, \$75.667 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-40, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, regional operations, grants and contributions, community government grants and contributions, grants, \$54.089 million, contributions, \$13.838 million, total grants and contributions, \$67.927 million,

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-41, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, regional operations, grants and contributions, other grants and contributions, total other contributions, \$1.125 million, total other grants and contributions, \$69.052.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-42, Municipal and Community Affairs, activity summary, information item, regional operations, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-44 and page 6-45, Municipal and Community Affairs, information item, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 6-7, Municipal and Community Affairs, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$95.533 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. Are we agreed that we have concluded the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. My goodness. I should have not been in the chair. Thank you to the Minister. Thank you to his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses from the Chamber?

Okay, committee, we will now move on to the Department of Justice. Section 9. I'll go to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Abernethy. Do you have opening remarks?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present the main estimates for the fiscal year 2012-2013 for the Department of Justice.

The department's main estimates propose an operations expenditure budget of \$113.674 million. This represents an increase of 6.6 percent over the 2011-2012 Main Estimates, with just over \$6.7 million for net forced growth to ensure core programs and services have sufficient resources to operate. These main estimates also propose \$613,000 for strategic initiatives to enhance and expand service delivery to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

The bulk of our resources go towards maintaining core programs and services the people of the Northwest Territories rely on. These programs are efficient and effective. We support this Assembly's vision of strong, independent people who are safe and secure in both their communities and in their homes. We provide safe and secure custody of offenders and community supervision to support rehabilitation and reintegration into communities.

The department's mandate is to ensure all residents have access to justice, including legal aid, the courts, and their alternatives. We are working to build a system of justice that is open, accessible and responsive to the needs of the people that we serve. We support families when they are in conflict or personal crisis and help them as they work toward successful resolutions. The department is also responsible for serving and supporting the administration of the courts.

Whether it is a youth in trouble with the law, a victim who has been assaulted, people who need lawyers, families who need help working through separation or divorce, or an offender who needs the proper support to make better choices, we are there to assist. With almost 88 percent of our staff located in regional offices, we are close to the people we serve. However, we don't do this alone. We have strong partnerships with NGOs, community justice committees, community and Aboriginal governments and our colleagues within the GNWT to ensure our services are integrated.

Later this week I will be tabling the Department of Justice's 10-year strategic plan. In this plan we outline three broad strategic directions for future focus. These include:

- improving the justice system's response to crime;
- improving access to justice programs and services, particularly in communities; and

- building and maintaining a strong foundation of financial, human, and technology resources to support the delivery of these programs and services.

These are broad directions with more refinement and detail to be outlined in a five-year implementation plan. We will be sharing this strategic plan with our partners and stakeholders, and bring forward the implementation plan this fall, but I can assure Members we will be working with you during this process.

In addition to our program and service work, the Department of Justice meets the needs of residents through our services to government. These include the provision of legal advice for all departments and legislative drafting, the provision of policy advice and support on ATIPP matters, and the services provided by the Aboriginal consultation unit. While these areas may not be clearly visible to most, they provide the backbone to a strong and effective government.

To provide these services and programs during times of fiscal restraint is not easy. The justice system is experiencing challenges similar to those confronting other departments. Socio-economic pressures are contributing to our crime rate that exceeds the national average by a factor of eight. In a time where there aren't a lot of resources, it is vital that we not simply react to these statistics, but instead take the time to fully investigate them and make sound policy decisions that are also fiscally responsible.

We are working towards this by proposing investments in areas to support this Assembly's priorities, as outlined in *Believing in People and Building Strengths of Northerners*, for example.

To continue to support children's voices during child custody cases and child protection actions, \$150,000 will be used to finalize the children's lawyer office.

We will enhance family violence work with the funding of an RCMP family violence coordinator. The investment of \$137,000 establishes a dedicated liaison with the RCMP to assist members and front-line workers with training and consistent information to help the most vulnerable.

Community safety is a shared responsibility. Through the Community Safety Strategy we look to invest \$276,000 to work with the RCMP and each community, to share their strengths and develop the individual community policing plans to best meet their needs. We want our communities to thrive.

The department's programs and services also provide the GNWT with modest revenue of \$14.557 million or 12.8 percent of Justice's expenditure budgets. These revenues are generated through cost-sharing agreements with the Government of

Canada for access to justice and youth justice services, exchange of services agreements for housing federal and Nunavut offenders, or through the collection of fees and fines in land titles and legal registries, and Territorial and Supreme Courts.

I am optimistic we can work with the budget we have and I look forward to continue to work with Members to make a difference to the people that we serve. With this first budget of the 17th Assembly we will start to build a solid base in order to move forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the department's 2012-2013 Main Estimates. I look forward to discussing it with you in more detail.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Do you have witnesses that you would like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. Is committee agreed to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Welcome, witnesses. Mr. Abernethy, would you please introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. With me today are Kim Schofield, who is the director of finance, and Bronwyn Watters, the deputy minister with the Department of Justice.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments. Any Members wish to make general comments? Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at your statements that were made. I know the community of Tsiigehtchic, for many years, has been pursuing the need for RCMP. I'm hoping within the next year here we can see the community constable position sort of geared towards communities that don't have policing. I know it's pretty well open to the whole Northwest Territories at this time, but I think we need to work with the communities that do not have police present in the communities. It's quite clear that the communities want something in place to make the people feel safe. I feel that a community constable would be suitable. It's possible to have something worked out where they're working with the local bylaw. It's something I'd like to see in the near future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Next on my list, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Madam Chair. The comments are something that I've reiterated before and I think it's worth just noting at this point. I don't really have any other concerns but this point that I wanted to make. Of course, it's regarding the pending legislation on what's coming down from the federal government and its implication in terms of our capacity to house people that are incarcerated, and whether that's going to put a constraint on our resources as it is. Are there going to be efforts, maybe down the road, to look at a joint initiative with the federal government, in terms of trying to access more resources, so that we don't end up with additional costs that we can't really afford? Incarceration rates are pretty high, especially for the Aboriginal population. I think it's a safe fact that could be said for across Canada. That's the only point that I wanted to make is that it's going to be challenging and how the department deals with it. More likely there are some initiatives in the works and hopefully things will be absorbed with the department and at the same time maybe some possible joint initiatives with the federal government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Opening comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister made some good comments in his opening presentation. I wanted to highlight a few that would seek more clarification as we go through the details.

The Minister talked about, in the second paragraph on page one of four, the programs and supporting the Assembly's vision of a strong, independent people who are safe and secure in both communities and their homes. I wanted to raise the point here again, as I've been doing for the last nine years, similar to my colleague from the Mackenzie Delta, on RCMP in the communities. The Minister has heard the people of Colville Lake on this issue here and how do we keep people safe, how we give people a feeling of security in their communities. The Minister has talked about his willingness and his openness to go into Colville Lake to talk to people on looking at some alternatives to some sense of security in the community. It costs a lot of money to bring in RCMP, especially with the two-member detachment now. With the financial restraints that we have on this government, it's highly unlikely that this will even make the cut because there are so many other needs out there. We're open to some suggestions, and the Minister has agreed to work with the people in Colville Lake.

One of them is to look at a community-based safety program or something that would work maybe with the extra attention by the Fort Good Hope detachment to do some patrolling. Some other things like that. Colville also talked about the reintegration of their people coming back from the

facilities in Yellowknife or in Hay River and looking at a unique program where these inmates would come back to the community. They would not just go right into Colville Lake. They would go to an outpost camp or a bush camp where they would slowly reintegrate back into the community if they've been out for a long period of time. They go back in and they go back into learning what it's like to go back into a community and learn some hard lessons of community wellness and respect for the community.

The Minister is a supporter of the on-the-land programs, and we know we want to do them. I look forward to seeing how we could get some of these programs looked at again in the Sahtu region. I know he talked to the people in Fort Good Hope and he's actually asked them to sit down and talk with me, let's look at some of these programs and see how we could work it out, so I'm hoping that some of this bureaucratic red tape can be softened up and work with the people on the needs of the people they serve.

As the Minister says in this paper, that they want to build a justice system, so it means being open not only to the western concept of justice but also to the Aboriginal point of view of justice. I hope that's what he looks forward to when he says the needs of the people they serve. The people that he mostly serves in the Sahtu are Aboriginal people, so we have different needs and sometimes it's very difficult to explain. But I think the Minister got a sense of what we're talking about in that sense.

The Minister, under this 10 year, on page 2 of 4 is the justice, 10 years to teach a plan, plan the outline, three broad strategic directions for future and they include improving the justice system response to crime. I wanted to look at that. I'm not too sure if that has to do with something with the federal government's recent crime bill that is going to have significant impact on the Northwest Territories. Our funding is very, very sensitive right now because there are so many needs and we want to get our projects on the books, we want to get them on the go, and yet we have some more that are still waiting in line to be approved by this Assembly.

I heard in the news that the impact of Bill C-10 is significant. If we were ever to get the federal government to say, well, this is what you shall do, it's going to cost us dollars, a significant amount of dollars. Sometimes we may need to kiss some of our projects goodbye or put them on hold. I want to ask the Minister, in his statement, one line, improving the justice system response to crime, shouldn't our justice system respond to prevention. Maybe he could give some clarification on that. I'd appreciate that.

I look forward to the Minister talk about partners and stakeholders. What does he mean by partners?

Who are the partners? Who are the stakeholders? Where do we need to work (inaudible) and get some clarification on that?

The Minister talked about the legal aid and I'd like to see the access to justice including legal aid, the courts or the alternatives. My question is on the access. It's the quality of access for our people, because we only have sometimes one lawyer travelling the court circuit and they go into a community and they have the on-the-fly, sort of like McDonald's style, justice system. Go in and do it fast. You know, you get served fast and it doesn't serve anybody any justice. We have, sort of, I call it the McDonald's model of justice. You go in there and you serve a lot of people quick and in a short time and then you leave. People are complaining that they only have five minutes with their lawyer and either they're going to go a plea they don't agree to or you just don't have the time.

Even with the child custody situations, the justice, with our Health department and our Justice here, a lot of parents are saying that the access to the justice is not correct because sometimes they have to do a conference call over the phone with the court, and that's not good access. You know, the lines go down, sometimes the connections are not there. Sometimes on rulings they're not in favour to a family.

I really want to look at the quality of the access for the people within our justice system. I know that's going to be a monumental task just to get the proper access, because our communities are far apart and we don't have much support because of the budget we are operating under, but it seems like it is really tough for people to get good quality access to legal aid, justice or even to the courts.

A lot of us fly in, even Colville Lake. People are complaining that they have to fly to Good Hope to go to court. On top of that, to add insult to injury, they have to pay for their own ticket and they have to pay it back. If they don't pay for a ticket to attend court, they get charged for... I don't know what the charge is, but pretty soon the RCMP is out looking for them. Colville Lake is really complaining about that. That is not fair. The cost of living is high but when you break the law, there are consequences. That is just alleged. It doesn't mean they are guilty; until they go to court, then they are found guilty. That is the assumption. People in Colville Lake have been telling me that they are ready to look at this issue to see if the justice system could actually have the court system going to Colville Lake. Maybe somewhere in Justice they could cut some funding so that they can have the service.

I am asking the Minister for this. I am not too sure what he is going to say, but that is what we are looking for: access to good quality justice in our community. I thank the Minister for his visit to the Sahtu and I'm glad that we had a good time visiting

people there. Those are my comments, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next on my list is Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Minister and the delegation here today. I was very impressed that we have a new RCMP position that deals with family violence as a coordinator. Knowing full well that spousal violence in the NWT is almost 10 times the national average and 85 percent of those, women are usually the victim, so it is nice to see that happening. We will be looking forward to seeing the fruits of that newly installed position. I do caution the Minister, though, that we need to make sure to move forward with this new position, that we get the proper measuring tools and communication platform that Regular Members as well as, I am sure, the general public would be able to follow up with that newly created position. I do applaud the Minister and the department for coming up with that.

In your opening address you talked about all residents should have access to justice, including legal aid. I just want to spend a little time here talking about legal aid. When we get into the budget line, we may want to question that. It's unchanged this year. I do have some concerns. Normally I am one of those Members who will actually tell you to maybe take things out of the budget to save money. It's rare that I will say now maybe it is time to look at putting money into something to make program services better.

Applications for legal aid rose 14 percent from 2009 to 2011. Applications for legal aid have increased 60 percent since the beginning of this millennium of 2000-2001. When you see a flood budget, it does raise suspicions. Are we catering to the need for legal aid with case backlog as high as four months? I think all Members here are sometimes a bit concerned. Are we really serving the needs of people who can access legal aid? Are we modernizing legal aid enough? Are we making it cost effective? With a flood budget, it just is not compelling enough to know we are addressing those issues.

The courts themselves, from a physical layout perspective, anyone who has gone in and seen the operation in action, there definitely needs to be upgrades from the telecommunication or videoconferencing point of view. I believe that the budget is potentially lacking in that. Again, this is more of a physical opportunity to improve services by modernizing videoconferencing. It has been in the budget for a number of years now. I am still surprised to see that we are not focusing more time and attention in that area. The investment that we require to bring our physical layout of the courts up to par, I think it might be slightly overlooked.

On the aspect of the court system themselves, you talked in your opening address about families who need help on working through separation and divorce. It's no denial to anyone that the divorce rate is relatively high, not only in the Territories but as well as in Canada or the world, for that matter. Parents need help and parents need support to work around the child. I know you created a child service lawyer in the last 16th Assembly which is a good initiative, but I know the Minister and myself and some other Members have talked about the concept of equal parenting. This is something that I know has been brought up in the House a couple of times. I would be remiss if I didn't say that this is something potentially that could be looked at piloting to look at aiding all parents through the parenting process during a very difficult time in the family so that all parents can have the ability to see their kids.

Next on my list, having had the ability to tour some of the correction facilities and looking at the lack of alcohol treatment, alcohol is prevalent. It is probably the most prevalent drug in the community as well as in the Northwest Territories, for that matter. Offenders most likely in a lot of cases are trying to wean themselves off alcohol. We find that, and this is coming a lot from the Social Programs committee, that alcohol treatment needs to be a more program response in our dealings with inmates. We would like to see the department focus more time and attention on such programming and developing models of success that can be implemented in all of our facilities and correction facilities in the Northwest Territories.

Finally, the issue again, not mentioned in the opening address, is the issue of those who do reoffend. The issue of reoffending is very high in the Territories. I don't have the statistics. I'm sure the Minister has more access to those types of numbers. Reoffenders are the ones in which sometimes the result of the system not providing enough corrective measures through either community justice, through corrections or through diversion courts. We have a very hard time as a government measuring how we deal with reoffenders. We need those measurables to make sure that we are keeping the pulse and making sure that our corrective behaviour for dealing with these reoffenders are being dealt with. Currently, as I said, in your opening address and even in the budget, you don't see a lot of areas where we can make improvements for reoffenders and help with the family violence and probably some of the hard crimes that deal with reoffending.

Madam Chair, that's all the opening comments that I have for today. I will have probably some more as we open up into detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Opening comments. I go now to Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I realize the department has a lot of work to do in the area of dealing with those who commit crime and deal both on the corrections side and the rehab side and working with communities, youth justice and so on. I am wondering if I can get the Minister to talk a little bit about the preventative role that the department plays in how they play that beyond the Youth Justice Committee and community justice committees. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Further opening comments, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are some areas of concern obviously with the omnibus crime bill coming down, the path in front of us and the Minister tabling the effects of that bill of the NWT, we are going to see an increase in a lot of areas. Nothing was addressed in these main estimates, but hopefully in the next business planning session, budget session, we'll get to look at those.

I think not only is it a concern for us, but on the news lately it's a concern for the Government of Nunavut because they have an MOU where they have 20 spaces in our facilities. Whether or not the Minister will look into getting into another MOU with the Government of Nunavut for those spaces, knowing that we might be needing them in the years to come. With that said, it would possibly save us money rather than sending some of our clients down south for the same type of services they would get up here. That's one concern.

Like Mr. Bromley, I wanted to get more information on the prevention side of things as well as something we discussed previously and that's mental health court and his stance on that and where we can go with that, whether it's something this government wants to proceed with and the commitment he has from his department as well as other departments that are associated with such a course of action.

Of course, legal aid services are being exhausted with the crime bill coming down. I feel it's going to get even higher. In some cases the communities having legal aid services fly into the communities, it does put a strain not only on the system, but also for the person in question who might be incarcerated to get them moved through the system a lot faster. That just takes me to people who go into remand until they do get their court hearings and ensuring that it's cost effective to get them in the court system, through their cases when it's supposed to go through, it would be cost-savings to this government. I've had constituents come up to me and tell me about some of the deficiencies associated with this department and how much

money is being spent when if things were done right away, it would have saved thousands of dollars.

All other comments were pretty well addressed by my other colleagues here today. Obviously, with this omnibus crime bill coming down, it's going to really affect our justice system and I think we have to start preparing for that sooner or later.

On the positive side, I was really pleased to see that later this week there's going to be a tabling of a 10-year strategic plan. So I know it's looking into the future to decrease our costs, not only within two years, four years, but it's a 10-year plan. I am really glad to see that. It really gives direction to the government, to the department, over the next 10 years.

The family violence worker, it is one position and if it's being utilized throughout the Northwest Territories, that is a position that might get exhausted, considering all the cases that person would be encountering, as well as the children's lawyer's office is something that is very positive and taking it to the right direction.

The socio-economic pressures that are contributing to the crime rates are something possibly the department should work with. If the appropriate department, whoever is negotiating our socio-economic agreements with the industries, the mining companies, the oil and gas companies, should try to get a better contribution from these industries whose impact is both positive and negative in the communities. I think we've got to get a better deal out of that so our government isn't footing the bill of the work that's being done in some of our regions.

Other than that, I'll have more questions in detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Moses. I'll go now to Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to reiterate my colleagues from the smaller communities who are certainly supportive of policing the smaller communities. I know initiatives of getting safety officers into the community of Wrigley have been supported by this government and I look forward to continued support of maintaining those positions in Fort Simpson.

I did speak with the Minister earlier this year about a continuation of plan to have a full operating detachment in Wrigley. It's interesting. I spoke in the House earlier about how I raised the issue of getting RCMP policing into Wrigley. It was all because I was trying to get nursing into Wrigley. I did get the police, but I never did get the nurses. That's another initiative that I will continue to pursue in this House.

I think part of the strategy is getting that detachment. I spoke to the Minister about funding the detachment and now there was a recent agreement. The Minister indicates funding of the detachment will be I don't know what percentage the burden of our GNWT in developing the detachment there. I know they're quite expensive, but the federal plan was talking about portable detachments that we can use to house RCMP officers, as well as room for cells. I don't know if the Minister has looked at that yet, has planned to engage with his federal counterparts in getting an actual floor plan of that detachment unit and the cost of it. I'd certainly like to pursue it in the upcoming capital plan and the long-term capital plan as well. As long as we are moving forward, it is the wish of the community of Wrigley to see a return of a nurse and it's a bonus that the RCMP are there. With that, those are my opening comments, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Are there any further opening comments? Does committee agree we go into detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Yes, we will first let the Minister respond. Mr. Minister, would you care to respond to the opening comments you've heard?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will go through the notes that I've heard from my colleagues. A number of my colleagues repeated similar things, so I'll try to lump them into groups and then I'll talk about some of them individually.

One of the things that came up a number of times is obviously Bill C-10. That's something we are hearing a lot about right now and we have just completed the review, which has been shared with Members and has been tabled in the House. That report clearly shows there's going to be what equates to about an 11-person increase in our male facilities.

We are concerned. We are planning around that, but we know that we have some space to last some time to help us plan our way through this. We do have opportunities within the facilities to double up to some degree, so we'll manage within. At the same time, we're going to look for opportunities to find ways to get low-risk offenders into alternatives, other methods of incarceration, which may include wilderness camps and those types of things. That's part of the partnership stuff we were talking about or Mr. Yakeleya was talking about.

In the past we've done wilderness camps. When I was in Fort Good Hope, I had an opportunity to meet with the residents of Fort Good Hope who indicated they'd really like to get back into the world of doing these camps. We're very interested in it.

We have to work with the community. We've indicated that we want to work. In fact, we've already begun that relationship, if you will, and we will find a way. But we do have to make sure we meet certain security standards.

The next option for us in the facilities is obviously to look at possibly sending inmates to other jurisdictions or stop accepting inmates from other jurisdictions. Now, I did have a conversation with the Minister of Justice yesterday and we talked about the challenges we expect we will face. Right now you will notice there's no increased money in the budget because, quite frankly, it isn't going to hit us this fiscal year. We don't see that. The bill isn't even going to come into full effect this year, so we have some planning time. But given that it's 11, given that we are projecting 11 worst-case scenarios, which will grow over time, we don't actually see having to end a relationship with Nunavut at this point. We believe we will be able to take both Nunavut inmates and federal inmates over an extended period of time as long as we manage and plan accordingly and, once again, finding ways to get some of the low-risk offenders into alternatives.

So there's work to be done. It's not going to be easy, but we know with a little bit of focus and a little determination, we can get it done.

Bill C-10 does put on some long-term pressures and one of the things that we're very interested in pursuing is diversions. Whether that's at the front end with the RCMP or in the court system or with our community justice committees, there are opportunities and we continue to pursue those. Yes, Bill C-10 is going to be a challenge but we think we have a good grasp of what's coming. There will be some surprises because we don't know how the judges are necessarily going to interpret every piece of legislation, but we've done a pretty good analysis that's been shared with you and we're looking forward to continuing to work on that.

A number of the Members talked about RCMP, in particular in small communities. We fully recognize the challenge that we have there. I personally have had an opportunity to get out to a couple of the small communities, Colville Lake and Tsiigehtchic, to talk with the people in the communities about creative solutions. In all those trips I did go with the commanding officer of "G" Division, who has agreed and will be working with the communities to try and find those creative solutions. There were a number of ideas that came up in Tsiigehtchic that the RCMP is pursuing. In Colville Lake we had a number of good conversations and Wade Blake, the commanding officer, did spend some time with the chief and council in Colville Lake to start talking about those opportunities.

Mr. Menicoche's situation is a little bit different given that Wrigley, the community he identified, does have a detachment, it just doesn't have an on-site detachment. It has the staff compliment but it lacks a building or infrastructure. Infrastructure is now a responsibility of the Government of the Northwest Territories for RCMP infrastructure, 70 percent of the cost and 70 percent of the build, which is a slightly new relationship. Some money was built into the contract to cover some of the builds, but we have some priority areas and things that are kind of falling down, like the Inuvik detachment, that need to be dealt with right away. We need, and I need, to go to places like Wrigley and I am committing to go to Wrigley with the commanding officer to talk about some interim measures, some creative solutions to help make sure that Wrigley has policing coverage that they're happy with and satisfied with until such a time as we can take that larger step down the road. Work is required there.

With respect to Legal Aid, I think we've even done first and second reading. Have we not done first and second reading of the Legal Aid Act? Okay. We will be doing first and second reading of the Legal Aid bill, which is basically a new Legal Aid Act, very shortly. That act will be coming to you, the Regular Members, to do a comprehensive review. We know that there's a lot of people interested. This is a great opportunity for all of us to work together to get this Legal Aid Act right, so that we can meet the needs of our residents. We've all heard problems and concerns. I travelled with social programming in the last government where we reviewed the Child and Family Services Act and we heard a lot of concerns about the Legal Aid Act. So this is our opportunity to dig in and get it right. That's not going to address everything. Workload and backlog is something that we heard an awful lot about. In fact, I have had that discussion with committee and as a result of that discussion and important work with the committee, we will be putting forward a supp to create or increase the legal aid division by one position, once this particular budget is concluded. So we are adding a position, assuming it will get through this process. I'm both hopeful and optimistic that it will.

Mr. Yakeleya talked about strong, independent people in Colville Lake. Some creative things are happening. This is the type of thing that we're talking about when it comes to partners and stakeholders. They've approached us and asked us about opportunities to do things like reintegration programs, inmates who have been in the facilities – whether it's federal, territorial, or whatnot – for a long time and come back to the communities. One of the residents of the community talked about how long or how difficult it is for them to reintegrate when they come back and they're kind of lost. They've approached us with some options. We're

very excited. We don't fully know what it means yet, but we're approaching with open ears and open minds to see if we can find something that works out for both.

On the Land Program I already touched a little bit. We are looking to continue to do those types of things and Fort Good Hope has expressed a desire.

The one issue that Mr. Yakeleya brought up which is a little bit more complicated, is the travel long distance for court. From time to time, depending on whether juries are required or whatnot, this is a requirement from time to time. Obviously, we want to try to get into communities as much as we can. We can't get into every community. If an inmate comes from Colville Lake and they're set for a trial in Fort Good Hope and we have to bring them out, it's my understanding that they shouldn't have to pay, that we would cover those costs. I did hear people say that they did have to pay when we were there, and I need to work with Mr. Yakeleya and my department to figure out what was the situation there. Was it an oddball sort of situation or was it the norm, because they shouldn't have to pay when we have to bring them out for trial. I will commit to looking at that for Mr. Yakeleya.

Mr. Dolynny talked about the family violence RCMP officer. This is something we're excited about. It is actually a position in the RCMP. It isn't in the Department of Justice. We have a new relationship with them as a result of the contract. We have a little bit more cooperation, for lack of a better word, on setting some direction. We don't tell them how to be RCMP but we talk about the types of services. This is a position we're excited about. I want to know about it. I want to keep informed about it. I will make sure that Members are informed and up to date on this one as well.

Courts. If you go to the Yellowknife courthouse, as an example, we actually have a downstairs courtroom that actually is fully set up with videoconferencing and that technology and we are trying to push out of Yellowknife to create opportunities to create some efficiencies, so you're bang on correct. This is something that continues to need work, but it is something that we have been working on and we are going to continue working on it.

Corrections. We do have treatment programs in pretty much every facility that we have. They differ depending on the type of facility that we do have. By way of example, the youth facility that we have here in Yellowknife has a fantastic program called Healing and Learning Together, the HALT program, which we just managed to obtain some additional federal money so that that program can continue to live and continue to be delivered over time. It's a great program. I will be talking about it in more detail in a Minister's statement in the next couple of days. It's a good, good program. We do provide

programming. There are obviously shortfalls. Everybody can probably identify where they think there needs to be some more.

We have had some discussions with committee over the last couple of weeks, and it was identified or suggested that we needed to put a little more attention on some programs at SMCC. We are coming forward with a supp on that for \$250,000 this year and \$339,000 ongoing so that we can enhance that particular program in the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. We're excited about that. Obviously, we hope that goes through the Assembly and passes.

Can we do more? Of course we can. We always can. Money is always a challenge. We need to set some priorities. We want to make sure that we're providing quality rehabilitation to the inmates because, as Mr. Dolynny said, we want to fight against recidivism. I believe we have some statistics that give us a little bit of the recidivism sort of statistics over time, and I will look for that and I will share that with the Members when we do get that.

Mr. Bromley talked about prevention and our prevention role is also partially a partnership. A number of the things related to prevention that have to happen are going to have to happen in other departments like Health and Social Services. We are an active partner trying to find some solutions, but there are some important things that we do. You can't knock the value of the community justice committees when it comes to prevention. They play an incredible awareness role and I've had an opportunity to get out and meet some of these people and talk about the types of things that they're doing. Quite frankly, it's amazing some of the things that they're doing. We would like to continue to work with them. We would like to continue to enhance their role. We would like to give them more opportunities to do diversion with both youth and adults, where appropriate. It's exciting and we want to grow that so it's even more effective than it is.

There are some other things like our Not Us campaign which we're very proud of. It's a program that we actually give the money to the community and they decide how they're going to spend it. They design their own programs that suit their needs and meet their styles. We're excited about that and we'll keep working on that and keep getting that money out there so that lots of individuals can take advantage of it.

I've already talked about Bill C-10. I believe I've touched on legal aid. I've addressed, I hope, some of the concerns about the RCMP. I really look forward to getting out to the small communities with the RCMP, with the commanding officer to talk about some solutions, some interim measures. I think I got everything.

The one thing that I've left here now, let's go back on, is divorce. Divorce is very challenging to people who happen to be living through it. We've actually put in a program of mediation which is actually quite good. When you've got two healthy parents that are both healthy, well, and capable of providing support and love to their child in a safe manner, they can utilize these programs.

We've had really fantastic success with this Mediation Program. There have been a lot of people talking about equal parenting. I see why some people talk about equal parenting but I do have my concerns about equal parenting because, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many, many people and research, we always have to err on the side of safety of the child. In many situations it's possible that a child will get positive benefits from equal access to both parents, assuming that both parents are healthy, well adjusted, and aren't a danger to the child. If we were to change to presumption of assessment to equal and shared parenting, we would actually be putting our children in danger, because the presumption of equal and shared parenting would override the condition of safe child. That has to be paramount. The safety of the child has to be paramount above everything.

We will continue to work with parents to find opportunities to give them access, shared access to children when they're both healthy and safe and the safety of the child is absolutely paramount. I hear what the Member is saying. We have a slight disagreement even though I do understand the value of equal and shared parenting when both parents are healthy. Assuming that we don't get rid of the presumption of child safety.

That's it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Committee, we are on section 9. Page 9-7 is the department summary. We will defer that until we are done with detail. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. We will move to page 9-8, Justice, department summary, information item, infrastructure investment summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-9, Justice, department summary, information item, revenue summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-10, Justice, department summary, information item, active position summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-13, Justice, activity summary, services to government, operations expenditure summary, \$10.866 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-14, Justice, activity summary, services to government, grants and contributions, grants, \$49,000. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a short question here. The Aboriginal Court Challenges, has that been a good uptake? Are we getting a good uptake on that program? If not, why? Is it because it's too difficult or there are too many roadblocks in place? I know there are some people who were really interested in it but they said it was just difficult obtaining that kind of funding. I'm not too sure if that's true or not.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The uptake on this program is sporadic at best. As you see, in 2010-2011 we had no expenditures under this program. In 2011-2012 I believe it was the same where there were minimal expenditures, possibly \$10,000. This year I think there's a case that we funded for approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Ms. Schofield. I've heard his own people come and talk to me and say that's quite difficult, that the process is long or bureaucratic just to help out. I don't know. I'm not going to be the one to make a judgment on this here. I'm glad it's here and I look forward to maybe if the Minister could get me some information on this program and then I could bring it back to my region.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are some very specific criteria. I am happy to share that information with Mr. Yakeleya. If once looking at that we can see if there's any way to make sure that it's easier for people to understand, we'll absolutely work with you, but there are some pretty specific criteria. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Any further questions? Activity summary, justice, services to government, grants and contributions, grants, \$49,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-15, information item, services to government, Justice, active positions. Questions? Page 9-17, Justice, activity summary, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary, \$39.469 million. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is probably a question where, really, the dollars are starting to hit the road here on this budget where we see probably the largest increase. Can we get, maybe, a little bit of a breakdown as to what comprised that large increase of the \$39.469 million? If they can just break that down a little bit in the proper categories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is absolutely correct. This is probably the area where the department saw its greatest growth. A number of the items are forced growth: radio replacements, \$105,000; RCMP contract renewal, \$2.8 million; isolated post and government housing allowance, \$328,000; Commissioner's contracts, \$312,000; police reporting operations, \$33,000; operational readiness and availability, \$245,000; aviation fuel, \$72,000; RCMP compensation and benefits, \$207,000; and then some strategic initiatives from the RCMP, \$137,000 for the family violence coordinator and \$110,000 for the Mackenzie Gas Project.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thanks to the Minister for the breakdown. One of the things that we did not talk about in the opening comments or in the exchange was RCMP complaints, especially in small communities, and how are they handled. I guess I'll pose that question first here for the Minister. Is there a methodology used and, if so, what is it? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm going to go to Ms. Schofield for some specifics on that, but I believe that there is a process, yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The process is that if there's a concern or a complaint in the community, that they deal with the community detachment commander in its first instance to try and resolve it. If they can't resolve or reach a resolution in the communities, there is a very formal complaint process through the RCMP Complaints Commission. So a formal complaint can be filed and it gets registered and then the process of reviewing those files and complaints sets in place. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the response. From a Member's perspective, being able to measure effectiveness or efficiency of any organization is vital. With this complaint process, the Members here on this side are at a bit of a disadvantage. We don't have any measurable reporting on complaints. Would the Minister commit to looking at that as part of the future process? As we go through the business planning process, that that could be

provided in terms of providing a better wholesome view of the RCMP services that we receive.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As a result of this new contract that we have with the RCMP, it does change the relationship a little bit between us and them. One of the good items of that is the fact that there is more of a reporting relationship, more of a data relationship where they have to provide us with some of this type of information that Mr. Dolyunny is talking about.

What I will do is I will commit to working with the department and the RCMP to figure out a way to get that information into our process, so that it's at least there as an information so that people can see it. I can't tell you what it's going to look like today. It's going to take a bit of work to figure it out, but we will try to get it in there for the next one. If not, we'll at least be able to have something as, sort of, an attachment or whatnot until such time as we can find a way to build it in as an information item.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the Minister's commitment to that. One of the things that the Minister heard today here is there is obviously concern in the smaller communities that don't have a regular detachment but there's potentially regular patrols to those communities without detachments. With this budget, and again I didn't hear it in that breakdown that we heard earlier, is there a greater focus with this new contract now to look at implementing more patrol days in those communities that do not have detachments?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It does give us more of a planning cooperation relationship with the RCMP. One of the things that we've been doing is the RCMP has been going in to actually set up individualized policing plans for every community, and we've been working with the individual communities. For instance, when we went to Tsiigehtchic and Colville, we actually sat down with the leadership, the commanding officer and I, and then the commanding officer continued after I left. We had conversations about exactly how we can provide, or how they can provide coverage that meets their needs. Even after having some of those discussions, I heard the chief in Tsiigehtchic say we don't necessarily want a full-time RCMP officer but we want to make sure that we have coverage that we're comfortable with, and they started working out the details and this is what we need to do. We need to go into each of the communities and work out individual solutions, community-driven solutions.

We need to work with the communities, and the RCMP and the commanding officer are committed to doing so, and we will continue to work with them to create the opportunities to start developing these relationships and find community-based solutions with the RCMP and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

MR. DOLYNNY: What I heard from that is we'll be looking at community-based solutions and opportunities. I think my question was: Will we be seeing more patrol days in those communities that do not have detachments? I would like less of a soliloquy but more response to the number. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I could do that but it would be different for every community. In some communities that may be true. Other communities it may not be true. Depends what we negotiate in cooperation with the communities and the RCMP. It's hard to say.

MR. DOLYNNY: Again, not that I want to be tongue-in-cheek here, but the question is obviously very, very important to a lot of the communities that do not have regular patrol days or very few patrol days. What we're hearing from communities is the fact that they're looking for more police presence, more patrol days, and I'm hoping that this budget for this fiscal year will be addressing that. It sounds like you've got a new contract in place, which is congratulations to the department for doing that, but I think from this side of the House we need to see that translating into more presence, more effective presence and more visualization of our RCMP in those communities that are needing it most.

I'll leave it at that. I think that the Minister, when time permits, could really relay that type of information to all Members of the House, in terms of are we going to be seeing an increase in patrol days over the next fiscal year as a result of this new agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. I'll take that as a comment. Question asked and answered, if the Minister wishes to respond. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just sort of building upon the last response, as part of their planning with these community policing strategies they do set targets in cooperation with the communities, targets that are measurable and that they will try to attain. They do that with the communities. The Member is right. I mean, we want to see more RCMP in as much as possible, but it may be not necessarily more days. It might be more appropriate days or better timing or working with the communities on which times they feel that they truly need coverage as opposed to more. It may be more. That was the point I was trying to make, is it's really hard to say per community that it's going to result in exactly more. It may be more efficient and better use of that time and a better choice of time. We need to have the flexibility. The RCMP need to have the flexibility. The communities need to have the flexibility.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Chair, my first question has to do with the RCMP family violence coordinator, a couple of questions there. Where do you envision this being based? Do you envision this as an RCMP officer or a social programs expert that would be working with the RCMP to enhance their understanding? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, it is an RCMP officer located in headquarters providing services to the entire Northwest Territories reporting to the commanding officer or very close to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: Again, would we expect that there would be specialized training in the area of family violence from the social program side as opposed to the important side that provides that liaison, or what is our concept here? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is exactly what the position is about. It is not about a street on-the-ground enforcement officer. It is about the types of things Mr. Bromley is talking about.

MR. BROMLEY: That's great. It's good to hear. Will the department play a role in making knowledge about this available throughout our communities? Will there be a helpline for NGOs? How does that work? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Watters.

MS. WATTERS: Madam Chair, the primary role of this position will be to work with the detachment members to ensure that they are meeting their obligations under the Family Violence Prevention Act. They will be liaising with our department, with Health and Social Services, so they will be trained. They will be providing services primarily to the members, and the reason for this position is to ensure we do get better response from all RCMP.

MR. BROMLEY: That I think helps me understand this position. My second question I have is with respect to the law enforcement programs. I believe \$128,000 has been identified for work related to the Mackenzie Gas Project. Obviously, that project has been shelved in the immediate future. I am wondering how we are reallocating those dollars in this fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, the position is currently vacant, from what I understand. From my understanding, the RCMP is hoping to utilize that position to help them with other industrial initiative-type things that are happening, like the play in the Sahtu. There is going to be a significant amount of challenges in the Sahtu with all the additional work coming in there. The position is going to be utilized to help address some of the

social impacts on the RCMP of major developments.

MR. BROMLEY: I just have a question with the process. Is that normally a decision that would be brought to committee for some input, or is that sort of a contract obligation and here is the money, you can do what you want with it to the RCMP? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, it is a contract obligation. It is an RCMP position. We fund 70 percent of all RCMP positions.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Chair, I guess I am reaching a bit here. Had it been the Minister's responsibility, I would be bringing accountability into the equation. Now I am asking the Minister to bring accountability with a third party. How many years have we funded this position? How many years has it been empty? How many other positions are there that are empty that they are choosing to use the money as they would see fit rather than asking us how we would like to see it directed? I am presuming that it is our money, our taxpayers' money that we are providing them here. This is just a general attempt to understand this and bring some accountability. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It is a strategic initiative-type position. It is new this year. It is brand new. It hadn't been utilized in previous years.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Chair, I guess that's good to hear. Maybe we could indicate that this is a Sahtu commitment or something like that rather than an MGP commitment, that would clarify. That's just an administrative suggestion there. Thank you. That's all the questions I have on this page.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's a resource development position. I'm happy to have that conversation with the RCMP to see where is the appropriate place for that position to be located. I couldn't tell you right now. I'll have to have that conversation.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. To questions, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I was going to ask some of those questions. I will follow up to some of those questions Mr. Bromley was asking the Minister regarding the resource development RCMP, I guess you can call it.

There is family violence RCMP and now we have resource development RCMP. I hope this position can somehow make its way into where the Sahtu is having some oil and gas activity that increases a whole bunch of other things that RCMP only can deal with.

One of them is that the Norman Wells liquor store restriction has been lifted since February 1st. We have been getting a lot of calls from communities.

The Minister and I did a tour and the Minister heard also the impacts of the lifting of the liquor sales in Norman Wells and the impacts on the communities, the families and the need for more RCMP presence. Actually, we heard some horror stories in Colville Lake, where bootlegging has gotten quite profitable. It is hitting our younger population. That is very sad. I'm hoping the Minister would have a good discussion with the future plans on how to look at those situations. Colville Lake, God bless their heart, have come up with very strong how they want to tackle in their community, and that is community leadership. They have come forward with saying this is what we want to do. They have taken the Minister to task and said this is what we want to do, can you help us out here. They come with some very strong positions.

The law enforcement, again, we need to look it up, beef it up. I would ask if the Minister sometime in this Assembly, this House here, if he would just provide again a list of communities without RCMP detachments. I don't know if we did it every year. I just want to see if it increases to the better.

It's more of a comment that we are looking for enforcement in our communities without RCMP. Sometimes the weather plays a role in the response to communities without members. It happened in Colville Lake because the weather was bad. They couldn't drive. It was just a bad time. It was real bad timing. However, crime doesn't know any time. It just does it, especially in small communities. The people are wondering what can they do, especially in very serious incidents. Sometimes the RCMP can't get there for a day or two or three days. They are sort of held ransom. It is just through leadership that they could hold the community together and we get the phone call.

I just want to again remind the Minister about RCMP that are not in our communities. We are starting to think that's the norm, which it isn't. The communities that do have RCMP sort of take that for granted, the appreciation of members being there. I want to remind the Minister that we will do our part. Hopefully, the Department of Justice will do theirs. It's more of a comment to the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, I've had a lot of conversations with the Member, especially when we are travelling through the Sahtu, and we know the challenges that they're facing with alcohol in the small communities and we are looking to work with the communities.

Once again, I go back to the community policing strategies or the community policing plans that are done between the RCMP and the community. It's a great opportunity for the communities to make sure that their voice is being heard with respect to

policing. It's going to continue to happen and we look forward to the partnerships. The Member is right; Colville Lake is a great example of a community who is standing up and saying no to alcohol use in their community, and if we can get those kind of relationships going with other communities, we can really start to see some change.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make one quick comment before I get into my question, that we're very fortunate in Inuvik that we do have a pretty good police force and they are actually proactive doing a lot of patrols and they do our road checks and they're very proactive. It's really great.

The Minister mentioned the RCMP Complaints Commission. Does he have stats on how many complaints they receive for a year? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not with me, but I will talk to the detachment and see if we can get some statistics for the Member.

MR. MOSES: When he gets the stats, I was wondering if he could give us a breakdown of the types of complaints that he does receive, the regions that the complaints come from and, even more specifically, which communities those complaints come from. It allows us to offer a little bit more insight on policing in the communities as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I believe we can provide it by community, but we have to be careful that the statistics are not so small that they're self-identifying. So as they get smaller, we may not be able to provide them by community, we may have to provide them by region. But we will provide you everything that we can legally provide you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. No one further on my list. We are on page 9-17, activity summary, Justice, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary, \$39.469 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Could I have some order please? Thank you, committee. Page 9-19, activity summary, Justice, legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, \$5.905 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I may not be on the right area, but I wanted to ask the Minister is there any work being done with the legal interpreters, translators that sometimes need to be used in the court services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thanks, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. It may touch in this area, but it would also touch in courts. We do utilize interpreters. We have a list of interpreters that we can go to to provide services when we need them. We provide translation when asked, for sure. Thanks, Madam Chair.

MR. YAKELEYA: Madam Chair, I appreciate the Minister's flexibility on taking this question, because sometimes it gets into the courts and to legal services. So I just wanted to know if there is some legal aid training for the interpreters or translators. Sometimes we just pick them off the streets in our communities and we tell them to translate, and sometimes they're hearing some pretty detailed, sensitive descriptions of some of the crimes, and sometimes they're traumatized or sometimes they internalize some of the stuff. Sometimes they just don't have that proper training to interpret properly what the lawyer or the judge is saying. So it gets very complicated and sometimes they make mistakes. So I just want to give support to those translators and interpreters who we do ask. Sometimes we pull them off the streets in our communities and say, well, you're probably the best of the translators/interpreters, can you do this for us?

Is there any type of program in the future with the funding that you have, Mr. Minister, to look at some type of interpreters' court training for the region? We have some pretty good interpreters that could be trained in the region that can go with the circuit. We have a couple in the Sahtu that would be just awesome, because they didn't train before the government. So I'm looking for that type of initiative from this Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Member has certainly hit an area that we know there are some weaknesses, without question. We don't provide medical terminology training to the interpreters. It's an area that we need to find a way to find some improvements on. It's going to take money, money we don't happen to have, which is one of our biggest challenges.

As far as how interpreters travel with us, we tend to pick interpreters up at site at the location we're going to, rather than necessarily having them travel with us. We try to find people who have had experience over time, coming back, coming back, coming back, coming back, but those individuals are becoming harder to find. So the Member is right; we need to do something, but it's going to cost money and that's one of our challenges.

MR. YAKELEYA: The Minister is correct on this issue. I'm just glad the Minister is well aware of the issue. He knows it's out there, he knows it's going to cost some money to get this issue here.

However, I'd like to ask the Minister that when you look at this, you are serving Aboriginal people. We have rights, we have everything in there that needs to be honoured and be respected, and if our people can't have that type of service by this government, then somewhere we're failing to uphold those rights and to strengthen and protect those rights. So we are actually not living up to our obligations as a government and that is not right.

If the Minister continues to look at where we can find money, possibly down the road there might be more money coming out of this government to pay for things that the Aboriginal people are one day going to say that's enough, that's enough, let's do the court challenge and let's take the government to task on this, just like the French people. So I'm saying this to the Minister and this government that pretty soon enough is going to be enough. So I just wanted to let the Minister know and he's well aware of it and he has to convince his Cabinet colleagues that we'd better pay attention, otherwise we're going to face a lawsuit. So I appreciate the Minister giving me his previous response and I'll take that to heart. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Member is right; we need to do more work, we need to do better work, we need to make sure that the service is there and I will absolutely work with my colleague, Minister Lafferty, on this language issue to see if we can find a solution in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. Next on my list is Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. By just the name justice, the name itself implies the need for assistance, the need for intervention and my questions obviously are going to be revolving around the legal aid accessibility to our clients and to our residents.

With applications rising as high as they have in the last number of years, and we went in our business planning preparation phase to address this with the Minister and his team, and I know that I'm very pleased to hear that the Minister will be bringing forward a supp and I appreciate that. But even by doing that, by virtue of adding that one extra position, I have a hard time, and I think a lot of Members here have a hard time believing will that deal with backlog, will that deal with accessibility within a reasonable amount of time. And by reasonable, is four months reasonable? Is three months reasonable? Is 30 days reasonable? Can the Minister clarify have they done the studies as to what that one extra person will do in legal aid to mitigate the backlog so that maybe we can get some timelines in terms of what efficiencies we're going to see with just maybe one more position? Or maybe we should be looking at two, maybe three. So I will start with that question first, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. In addition to the obvious review of the Legal Aid Act, which is going to hopefully give us some new direction on how to provide these types of services, the department did actually increase the legal aid division in both 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 to a total of three lawyers. It took a bit longer to fill those positions than anybody would have liked to have had. Really, those lawyers are really only getting up to speed now, compared to what existed before when much of the backlog had occurred.

We're optimistic with these three new lawyers, plus the new one that will hopefully come in by way of supps, that we will start to see some of the improvement that you're talking about. Because you're absolutely right; there's a backlog and it's inappropriate and it's unfortunate for our residents. So between the three and the one new one, the three are now up to speed and we're starting to see some results.

MR. DOLYNNY: I guess the question I have, as well is accessibility for these lawyers. Is it the fact that we as a government, are we paying adequately to attract lawyers to come here to work or are we at a disadvantage? Are other jurisdictions doing more to attract this professional person to come this far north?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We were able to fill our three positions and we're optimistic that we'll be able to fill our fourth one, should it be passed by way of supp. We have been able to fill our positions. One of our biggest challenges here in the Northwest Territories is a shortage of the local Bar. There's not enough lawyers here that are private, independent lawyers. Not government lawyers. We've filled ours. There is definitely a shortage of local Bar.

MR. DOLYNNY: I agree with the Minister. Talking to the number of lawyers that I have, we don't have enough lawyers even to serve the needs of the residents who don't use legal aid in the Northwest Territories. That could open up another set of questions as to do we need to rethink where you're indicating that there's going to be new update to the act. That's just framework. We still need bodies. Are we going to have to look at opening up the doors to changing drastically enough so that we can actually have more government payrolled lawyers? I'll start with that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The government lawyers are all... Their positions and pay are evaluated the same as all other positions within the government. It's difficult for legal aid or anybody hiring or trying to attract lawyers if we

wanted to pay them more, because we are bound by the overall government's position evaluation system. However, we have had, like the Minister had said, not any significant problems hiring staff lawyers, so that would assume that we have a competitive salary for our lawyers.

MR. DOLYNNY: It does sound like there is potentially an impetus for us to look at wages for our... I know it's about classifications and I don't want to get into the legalese in terms of the criteria for pay. My question was purely are we in the ballpark to attract these people.

My next question will have to deal more with the aspect of poverty law and poverty law services. Poverty law services is helping the needs of the elderly to do wills and those types of things. Is that eating up a lot of our legal aid time? Should we be looking at a different vehicle to deal with poverty law?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have a full-time lawyer, a poverty lawyer, what is referred to as a poverty lawyer within our facility. This isn't one of our legal aid lawyers. This was a different position. They are doing a significant amount of work and doing a lot of important work for residents all over the Northwest Territories. Some pretty basic things to some more complicated things. Every ounce of feedback that we get back from this position that this person is in, is that they are adding significant value to people who can't afford these types of services.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thanks to the Minister for the response. My last question really is about benchmarks and what does the Minister and the department have as a benchmark to really evaluate the efficiencies of legal aid accessibility. Are they using caseload backlog? Are they using time of waiting for cases? What is the criteria that the department is using to justify so that when we're going to the next budget, we don't need to bring that up again? We know what the criteria are from our side of the House.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Ms. Watters.

MS. WATTERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The criteria we use are based primarily on national standards. We try to meet or beat national standards. They are based primarily on wait time because that seems to be a very critical factor. We also get informal feedback in terms of satisfaction. We have not done a formal satisfaction survey but we certainly get the feedback. The critical one is, as you suggested, the wait times.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is also on the Legal Services Act aspect here. Given the availability of lawyers relative to workload, the high degree of need for legal aid, and I include both court workers and lawyers here, and that legal aid is typically not based in small and remote communities, and obviously there's the cost factor. What are we expecting and how would a new Legal Aid Act help out with those issues?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Watters.

MS. WATTERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The new act is not necessarily going to address all these issues. Most of these issues are more administrative rather than legislative and I think that is the way that we really need to look at resolving the issues. Certainly, having to resort to solving some of these issues by a legislation would be prohibitive and unfortunate, because they can be more easily dealt with through policy and practice guidelines.

MR. BROMLEY: I realize that it's a tough question and we'll have to wait and see to some degree. Primarily this is administrative stuff. The role of the court workers, obviously, is regarded by some to be quite important. Especially in our communities. Does the Minister see that as continuing to be an important part or will he play an enhanced role under new direction?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the court workers are an incredibly important role. I definitely want to see them continue. We will be looking for ways to utilize them more effectively and enhance their role.

MR. BROMLEY: There is a word to explore someday. Just with respect to my colleagues bringing up the issue of translation and whatnot, I know that in the past, court workers have played an important role there when they happen to have that talent. Is there an attempt to hire court workers that have more than one language to help deal with that issue, which I believe is a real one I'm sure the Minister would agree.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We wouldn't want to discriminate anybody because they didn't have a language, but it is certainly an asset if they have it. If they do have it, it's something that we can provide bilingual bonuses for. If we can find people who can do the work and have the capacity that speak the language, obviously that's a real asset.

MR. BROMLEY: I guess on that, where do they come from? Do we provide training? Does Aurora College provide training to a court worker? What are the qualifications that they require?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Quite honestly, the vast majority of the knowledge, skills, and ability these people have is on-the-job training. Whether they started in a law firm or whether they started working in a community where they had an opportunity to deal with legal issues, we take people who have the capacity and desire and we train them on the job, to be quite honest.

MR. BROMLEY: From that I conclude that obviously there is a high potential for hiring people with more than one language, if that was the interest of the department. I see that as an opportunity and I'm sure the Minister is aware of that.

My last question is just in follow up to my colleague Mr. Dolynny. What is our benchmark in terms of waiting period? Is there a number of months? Do we aim for three months or two months or four months? It sounds like there might be a national standard for that. Some details there would be good.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Before I go to Kim Schofield here, just to the Member's last question, many of the individuals providing the court worker services can speak multiple languages. That is obviously something that is important to us. It's just that we would never discriminate anybody if they couldn't. I'd go to Ms. Schofield for specifics on the last question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the review of our business plan and the response from standing committee was that the standing committee would like us to have a 60-day or less waiting period for family law cases. As a result, we have put forward, through supplementary appropriation, the addition of one position which, if all our positions are filed and the addition of that position, it is expected that we would be able to maintain a 60-day waiting period within the family law portion of legal aid.

MR. BROMLEY: That's great and fast work on the benchmark there. Thank you for that.

With regard to the earlier one, I hope the Minister doesn't think I was accusing him of discrimination or anything here. I certainly wasn't. I think, in terms of the languages, I did see that as an opportunity. I guess my last on that front might be, I think it's important, if the Minister agrees, that it would be good to have some statistics and monitor that over time. Provide some updates on committee of what our capacity is in the department from the standpoint of court workers with potential language services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I didn't mean to suggest anything. I wouldn't believe that. I know it's not true. Absolutely, we will keep the Members posted on the types of individuals who are coming and providing these types of services and the types of skills they bring.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Bromley, anything further? Okay. Thank you. I have no one else on my list. We are on page 9-19, Justice, activity summary, legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, \$5.905 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-20, Justice, activity summary, information item, legal aid services, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-23, Justice, activity summary, court services, operations expenditure summary, \$11.446 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess quickly, would this be where specialized courts would be housed? I guess, just by way of working up gradually and changing the subject, the compensation for judges is an exercise that, I think, we've been going through at arm's length and whatnot. Have some decisions been made? Has that been reported? Is that all done and being implemented and are the results public? Is that something we can hear about? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The process is independent. We don't actually get to decide on it. It's decided for us. I tabled the report, I think, in the first week of this particular sitting and it's done and official. I can't remember the exact totals. I think it was a \$6,000 increase in year one and CPI for three.

MR. BROMLEY: That's good. I'll look that report up. Thank you to the Minister.

Just moving on to the specialized courts here, I know the Minister and staff are very curious and intent on learning more about the potential here by way of prevention and that it's seen as a real interest because of the crime bill and so on. I'm just wondering if we can really hear where the Minister is at in that process. I know other departments, have I heard ECE, Executive, no, Health and Social Services might be involved in these things too, and I want to know how that process is going generally. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I did speak to this in the House the other day and gave some of the deadlines that we're now faced with. This is a cooperative project between the Department of

Health and Social Services, Education, Culture and Employment, Housing Corporation and Justice. It's been taking a little longer than I think any of us would have liked, but it is continuing to move forward. Right now we hope to have a work plan in place by August 2012, like I said the other day.

Obviously, we'd like to be moving faster, but there is a significant amount of research that needs to be done, and the original project has broadened in its scope so that it actually has some additional focus on things such as crime prevention, community justice... Nope, this isn't the right one. Sorry. Integrated case management. We want to, as part of this project, we're looking more in depth into integrated case management across the departments. Diversion from court. Rather than just specialized courts, we want to be looking at things like having people exit before they even enter the court system, so there's some more focus on diversion courts. Specialized courts is obviously one of the main focuses on this, and we obviously need the ability to identify and respond to systemic barriers for individuals seeking some sufficiency. It broadened a little bit.

The terms of reference are done. The work plan should be available in August and we hope to have something forward for some decision-making by committee on helping us decide where we want to go once that data is pulled together.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for those additional details or repeated details. I'm wondering, the terms of reference, is that something that gets provided to committee. Has that been provided to committee for input or where are we at on that? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Sorry, I didn't catch all of that. One of the things that we can tell you is the director of court services has recently got back from the Yukon and she has actually compiled a really comprehensive, sort of, report on that particular type of court, and I'd be happy to come and present that information to committee sooner than later. It's going to obviously form just one piece of the building block to help us make an informed decision on how to move forward.

As far as the final decision point, we do need to pull all that information together. I think the timeline now starts talking in the winter. Obviously, we want to make sure we get as much of it done as soon as we can, and I'm trying to push a little faster than that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister. I believe the question was whether or not the terms of reference could be provided to committee. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Sorry about that. I missed that part. Absolutely, we can share those.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Chair, could you repeat it? I missed that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): I believe the Minister said yes, he would provide terms of reference to the committee. Anything further, Mr. Bromley?

MR. BROMLEY: How do you spell that? No, I'm just kidding. No, that's great, Madam Chair. This is an area that I think committee is very keen on. Obviously, we're looking at the impacts of the crime bill coming down the pipe. I understand it's already started and will continue to build, so I'm with the Minister in wanting to get things done a little quicker than the current timeline suggested, but more on that anon. That's all I have for this page. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Page 9-23, activity summary, justice, court services, operations expenditure summary, \$11.496 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-24, information item, justice, court services, active positions. Any questions? Hearing none, committee, we move to page 9-27, community justice and corrections, operations expenditure summary, \$40.616 million. Are we agreed? Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly for committee here, I know there's a broad net cast here in terms of support, and we provide support to youth programs and so on. Given what we're learning, the very exciting research and the massive amount of information that's coming on board now about early childhood and the implications for investment in those early years for the full and proper development of the human being, and the consequences to a healthy life that avoids the sorts of issues that the Minister has to deal with here, is that an area that the department funds community groups or would contemplate funding? I'm thinking of things like parenthood during the early years and community events that support the young families and so on. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not specifically. This isn't one of the areas that this particular division is working on. This division has a lot more involvement with things like the community justice committees, who happen to be doing sort of on-the-land initiatives from time to time, which clearly, young families can participate in and benefit that way. But there's nothing specifically being done necessarily for early childhood and development. This is about reintegration and trying to get people back on the right path.

MR. BROMLEY: That's to be expected. Recognizing that this really is about crime prevention first of all, and then early correction second of all, I suppose, I'd say this is a real opportunity, based on what we are learning, and it might be something the department could look into and consider. That's all I had. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We will absolutely work with other departments to see what opportunities exist for our partnership and our involvement in this area.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one quick question in terms of community justice. I still see it's relatively the same, but there is, I think, about a \$170,000 decrease into the community justice from last year, under community justice, the line items. Anyhow, seeing the importance of community justice programs in our communities and the diversion programs, on-the-land programs that they do and the intervention work that they do, is the Minister willing to take a look and add those dollars again, possibly next business plan? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the areas that unfortunately sunsetted for us is the Aboriginal Justice Strategy, which is probably where you see the significant amount of this decrease, but we understand that that money is coming back. If it comes back, we will see it added back in.

MR. MOSES: I have no further questions. I just wanted to see if there was a commitment that that funding did come back because of all the good work of that program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Moses. I have nobody further on my list. Page 9-27, activity summary, Justice, community justice and corrections, operations expenditure summary, \$40.616 million. Are we agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Page 9-28, activity summary, Justice, community justice and corrections, grants and contributions, contributions, total contributions, \$2.075 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to follow up on my colleague's question there. Here on this page, the first item we have a decrease of \$316,000 to community justice committees and projects. I wonder if we can get an explanation of that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is the money I just mentioned, the federal money that sunsetted and we hope, we believe it is going to be coming back. If it comes back, you will see it come back by way of a supp.

MR. BROMLEY: Madam Chair, I'm trying to compare the two. On page 27 there's a reduction of about \$170,000 and here there is a reduction of about \$316,000 in community justice. I'm just wondering, for clarity, are those territorial dollars on page 27 and federal dollars on 28, or do dollars on page 28 compose part of the effort under community justice at the bottom on page 27?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: Madam Chair, on page 9-28, which sees the \$316,000 reduction in grants and contributions is in relation to the Aboriginal Justice Strategy. On page 9-27 there is a combination of additions and subtractions, so we had added in additional funds for the Community Safety Strategy so it is the net effect. That is why it doesn't match up with the \$316,000. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Committee, page 9-28, activity summary, Justice, community justice and corrections, grants and contributions, contributions, total contributions, \$2.075 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you. Page 9-29, information item, Justice, community justice and corrections, active positions. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-31, Justice, activity summary, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, \$5.372 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm wondering if this is where the program for men who use violence is housed and also the early intervention for non-violent offenders. There is a program that I believe was being tried out last year. Are those relevant on this page? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, that was in the community justice section. This is more legal services, coroner services, childrens lawyer, public trustee, those types of things. The services he is talking about are in the previous section.

MR. BROMLEY: Son of a gun. I'll skip those questions.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Family Violence Action Plan funding. I assume that is

relevant on this page. At least I see a reference on the next page of this subtext to this. I'm assuming family violence funding is indeed in this. What is the department doing in response to the 19 recommendations for phase 3 of the Family Violence Action Plan? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, the Member is correct. I am wrong. The protection of family violence falls under this section. This is where the money is housed.

With respect to those 19 recommendations, I actually had an opportunity to meet with the coalition last week. We had an opportunity to sit down and look at the 19 recommendations. Without minimizing the importance of the 19 recommendations, they indicated they are all important. They have indicated to me and others that they want a priority put on three, particularly a social media campaign, a program for men who use violence, and community outreach. I believe we will be moving forward with a supp. I know we will be moving forward with a supp that will actually bring some money into the program, for men who abuse or use violence, this sitting to increase the funding to that program as Members and the coalition have requested.

We will continue to work with Members and the coalition, trying to find some solutions. We heard a lot of talk about phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3. During that conversation, it became clear that we really need to stop talking about phases and we need to start talking about core funding. These moves will move that funding for program for men who use violence into a core funding avenue, if you will. It will become a program that we will be delivering ongoing.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for those comments. I couldn't write fast enough. If you could just repeat the three priorities that the coalition identified and maybe I will squeeze in a question at the same time. I wonder if there are any results on the courses offered for men who use violence. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm just going to make a couple of comments for Mr. Bromley and then I'll just go to Kim for some of the specifics.

The three key messages and priorities from the coalition building upon the 19 are social media campaign – I'm happy to sit down with the Member and share the document that I had – the program for men who use violence, which is a 24-week program; and community outreach. Quite frankly, I asked them for some additional information on what they mean by a social media campaign and what they would like to envision seeing. I haven't got that back from them yet. I'm happy to have a conversation with you and committee afterwards, once we get that information back from them. From a Justice point of view, the one that really obviously

hit home was the program for men who use violence and we have brought it forward by way of supp to increase the funding. For specifics, I'll go to Ms. Schofield.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Ms. Schofield.

MS. SCHOFIELD: The program isn't actually implemented yet. There weren't enough resources to fully implement the program. At the end of this Legislative Assembly, if the supplementary funding is approved, we'll have appropriate funding to fully implement the abuser program. At that time, when it's fully operational, we'll have results in and measures to report back to committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Ms. Schofield. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: I think there is another one that is early intervention for nonviolent and the divorce proceedings towards the best options for the children. I think those things are really great programs. I am very happy to see them going forward. I think committee remains very interested in any results as those accumulate on all of those. I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Member is right; there have been some other courses as part of that. There is an eight-week course that's been delivered three times for men who use violence through the DVTO court. If the Member wishes, I'm happy to share the information with him on a bit of an analysis of the programs, how many we have run, what kind of results, what kind of turnout we had, and I will share that with committee as well.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. We will move on to Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. In our quest to always improve services and I guess professionalism to our public, can the Minister indicate when will corporate registries, the system itself, be accessible on-line?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't know. I'm happy to get that information for you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I look forward to that information. Seeing the Public Utilities Board is now part of the Department of Justice operations and it finds itself here in the services to public category and we have a fairly heavy year, Madam Chair, with the new NWT Power rate application, has the Minister or the department – and I know there's no change in budget here – is there any rationale that this potentially could add a lot of workload or a lot of

hidden cost in relationship to this new rate application? Maybe the Minister can elaborate on that, please, Madam Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That change doesn't take effect until July 1st. We're sure it will come with some workload, but it's minimal. The board is an independent board that is responsible for their own operations and administration. We appoint the board and we provide some general administrative direction as far as keeping things affordable, but we don't interfere with their rulings or their decisions.

MR. DOLYNNY: So I'm sensing that we're not pre-empting that there's going to be a heavier workload for this Public Utilities Board given the fact that this is going to be a fairly elaborate rate application that's going to be brought down to the people of the Northwest Territories.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Sorry. I misunderstood. I thought he was questioning the Department of Justice experiencing a greater workload as a result of having the PUB ultimately report there. This is going to be busy here for the Public Utilities Board. General rate applications have been done before. This isn't anything new. The budget is set. We are confident that they are professionals and will get the work done like any other general rate application that has occurred.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Nothing further on my list. We are on page 9-31, activity summary, Justice, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, \$5.372 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-32, activity summary, Justice, services to the public, grants and contributions, contributions, \$105,000. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think harking back to the Minister's comments earlier, this is core funding to enable this non-government organization to do their work. I'm wondering how long they've been stuck at \$105,000 a year while we've been enhancing our budgets every year, and whether they can anticipate enhanced funding in recognition of the realities that they do face. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thanks, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thanks, Madam Chair. It's my understanding that they haven't asked for any additional funding. When they do, we'll certainly have that conversation with them.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bromley): We are on page 9-32, activity summary, Justice, services to the public, grants and contributions, contributions, \$105,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Page 9-33, information item, Justice, services to the public, active positions. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Page 9-34, information item, Justice, lease commitments - infrastructure. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Pages 9-35, 36, 37 and 38, information item, Justice, work performed on behalf of others. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Page 36, the NWT/Nunavut study, I see we spent a quarter of a million dollars on a design for the delivery of justice services in remote and northern communities. I'm wondering what the results were on that and what we've learned and are putting into practice there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't know. It was before my time. I'm happy to pull some information together and provide it to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Bromley. We are on pages 9-35 to 9-38, information item, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Okay. We will return to page 9-7, department summary, Justice, operations expenditures summary, \$113.674 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Are we agreed? Are we agreed, committee, that we have concluded the Department of Justice?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, committee. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, witnesses. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I get up and leave, I'd just like to point out that this is probably the last time that Deputy Minister Bronwyn Watters is sitting in this Assembly in front of the House, so I'd just like to congratulate her for all the hard work she's done over the years and her dedication to the people of the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): We will miss Ms. Watters. Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the

witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you would escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Okay, committee, the next department is Health and Social Services, section eight. Minister Beaulieu, do you have opening remarks?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Please carry on.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present the Department of Health and Social Services main estimates for the fiscal year 2012-2013.

The department's main estimates propose an operations expenditure budget of \$349.9 million which is \$5.4 million more than the 2011-2012 Main Estimates. This increase of 1.6 percent consists primarily of forced growth increases for existing core programs.

The Caucus of the 17th Legislative Assembly set as one of its five key priorities "to ensure a fair and sustainable health care system by investing in prevention, education and awareness and early childhood development, enhancing addictions treatment programs using existing infrastructure, and addressing our health facilities deficit."

Since I was appointed Minister of Health and Social Services, I have travelled to as many communities as possible and met with stakeholder groups to hear their concerns and priorities. I am committed to work together with our residents, communities, governments and agencies. This collaboration will ensure that we can meet the health and social services challenges that we face to ensure we have a sustainable health and social services system in the future.

Through the proposed budget, we will continue to support initiatives that will ensure residents have access to high quality programs and services when they need them.

We are continuing to invest in and support staff in communities to take advantage of e-health, using modern communications technology to bring services to people in their home communities. We have already had great success in sending X-rays from communities to Yellowknife; in providing speech and language therapy to children in community schools; and in providing psychiatric and family counselling by videoconference. Expanding e-health can help to minimize the need for medical travel, resulting in cost savings and providing faster and more convenient care to patients.

In response to the review of the Child and Family Services Act by the Standing Committee on Social Programs, this budget includes funding to support establishment of child and family services committees, to allow communities to make a more

active role in supporting children and families in a culturally appropriate manner.

As outlined by the Minister of Finance in his budget address, we will also invest in our health care facilities, which are at the top of the government's list of critical infrastructure needs. The GNWT will be spending \$36 million this year on facility replacements and renovations, such as the new Hay River Health Centre, renovations to the Fort Smith Health Centre and a planning study for the Stanton Territorial Hospital, which provides critical health care services to residents from across the territory. These investments complement and support our efforts to provide our residents access to a range of health and social services and other programs.

We continue to rely on a combination of federal funding and GNWT revenues to finance the system. Based on the continued operating deficits in the health and social services authorities, we know that current funding levels are insufficient to continue providing programs and services at current levels. But we also know that there are many opportunities in our system to improve efficiency and sustainability, and to manage cost increases.

In 2012-2013 we plan to address growing concerns and challenges faced by all health care systems in Canada, while building on the commitments made in the department's strategic plan, tabled in August 2011. For example:

- To improve sustainability, the department intends to streamline governance of the system. Based on analysis of where there is potential to be more efficient, we will begin to implement shared services among all the health and social services authorities. This will be done only where it makes sense to do so and without taking jobs away from regional centres and communities.
- To improve the quality of services, and to ensure that all residents have access to quality care, we will continue our focus on connecting patients to services in the timeliest manner. This includes modernizing our Medical Travel Policy, but it also includes taking advantage of the full potential of electronic communications, including new technologies like the electronic medical record, EMR, system and telehealth, to link clients and care providers.

We will also continue to improve the range of supports and services available for our elders, by having services that help them remain in their homes as long as possible. In addition to expanding the availability of long-term care beds in the NWT as part of our capital planning process, we will also work with our partners to see if we can improve assisted living services in communities where there is the potential.

I will be presenting our latest Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan during this session of the Legislative Assembly. This plan will not have all the answers, but it will define a number of steps that we can take as a government and as a territory over the next three years to ensure that our system is equipped to respond and support those in need with appropriate programs and services. Part of this plan will be the appointment of the Mental Health and Addictions Forum, mandated to provide advice on effective community-based solutions. I have already asked my fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly to nominate individuals who they feel would be an asset to this forum.

As indicated by the Commissioner in his opening address, prevention is the most effective way to ensure our residents lead healthy lives. As I have said before, prevention is about making positive, healthy choices in the way we live our lives. We need to support residents to make positive choices, such as eating healthy foods, exercising, not smoking and drinking in moderation, or not at all. We need to make sure that communities do not condone family violence and take actions to support those who are victims. But as I have heard from our elders and our youth as I have visited communities over the past few months, we need to involve communities in designing and delivering programs that speak to local issues and priorities.

Ensuring sustainability and addressing the challenges in our health and social services system will not be easy and I look forward to working with Members to achieve the priorities of the 17th Assembly.

This concludes my opening marks. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the department's 2012-2013 Main Estimates. I look forward to discussing them with you in more detail. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Could I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 3-17(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2012-2013, and would like to report progress. I

move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Is there a seconder to the motion? Mr. Abernethy.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF COMMITTEES (Ms. Knowlan): Orders of the day for Wednesday, June 6, 2012, 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
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 2-17(3), Commissioner's Opening Address: Creating the Conditions for Success
 - Tabled Document 3-17(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2012-2013
 - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
 - Committee Report 1-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories
 - Committee Report 2-17(3), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011

Annual Report of the Northwest Territories
Human Rights Commission Annual Report

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk.
Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until
Wednesday, June 6, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 9:06 p.m.