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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 18, 2014****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, 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 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 27-17(5):
CANADA'S OUTSTANDING PRINCIPALS –
SIMONE GESSLER

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Ms. Simone Gessler, principal of Weledeh Catholic School in Yellowknife, on being recognized as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2014.

The Learning Partnership recently announced Ms. Gessler as one of 40 exceptional educators from across Canada. Through her leadership at Weledeh Catholic School since 2010, literacy rates have improved substantially, with 100 percent of students now demonstrating significant improvements in reading, sense of confidence and self-efficacy, and 70 percent are reading at or above grade level.

To achieve this, Ms. Gessler adapted the "Response to Intervention" approach to create a program aimed at improving literacy for all students. This program addresses the needs of students who struggle with reading and challenges the entire student body in a relevant and interactive three-tiered approach. The International Reading Association has recognized the program's success and I presented Ms. Gessler with a Ministerial Award for Literacy in 2013 for her achievement.

Ms. Gessler now has the opportunity to attend a five-day Executive Leadership Training Program delivered by the internationally renowned Rotman School of Management later this month. Once complete, she joins some 300 exceptional educators that comprise the National Academy of Canada's Outstanding Principals.

Ms. Gessler graciously attributes the successes of her school to the hard work and dedication of each of her staff. Under her leadership, teachers and

students work purposefully and her school is a place for learning directed at success for all.

Please join me in congratulating Ms. Simone Gessler for her passion and dedication to excellence in education. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR
OPERATING MINES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With devolution implementation in less than six weeks, GNWT assumes responsibility for mines, oil and gas installations set up under "modern environmental review processes." Already an enormous responsibility, if we are unprepared, this could become an enormous liability.

Under today's system, each project, mine or whatever is required to post financial securities as part of the review process. This is meant to provide money that protects the public and the environment from closure and clean-up costs even if the operator goes bankrupt. Until April 1st, this financial security will be held by Canada, presumably with immediate transfer to GNWT on that date.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has not collected all the financial securities approved by our management structures. I found one example of financial security where \$263 million was approved by the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board for a mine, but the federal government holds only \$127 million in security leaving a gap of \$136 million, greater than 50 percent.

Just recently a diamond mine in Nunavut shut down. Guess what. They have not paid their security deposit, so the federal government – i.e., the public – is paying the bill.

This raises a number of questions. How many sites? What is the total gap between approved financial security versus that actually held by the federal government for transfer? The Commissioner for Sustainable Development notes that Canada is

already liable for \$8 billion in mine clean-up costs because of previous failures to hold security.

Will they hand over to us the financial securities held on the 1st of April? Will the GNWT and the public be left on the hook for the substantial liability gap that exists?

Oil and gas operations also present a sticky problem. As of April 1st we will be the oil and gas regulator, yet financial securities are apparently held by the National Energy Board in an office in Calgary. Is there a gap in the holdings there and how can we understand the level of liability we are assuming when we don't even have a functioning oil and gas regulatory office?

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: While Cabinet proposes to roll out even more subsidies to the resource extraction industry, are they secretly deciding that fully paid security deposits are an unnecessary burden on industry that hinders our competitiveness?

We have spent the last week insisting we leave a positive heritage for future generations. This potential liability could do the exact opposite. I will have questions. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON KAKISA FISH PLANT

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like all Aboriginal people of the NWT, the people of Kakisa have fished for generations. Kakisa was established in 1962 when the Dene living at Tathlina Lake moved to the east side of Kakisa Lake to be close to the Mackenzie Highway.

Fishing is integral to their way of life. In late 2012, Noda Enterprises, the business arm of Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation, opened a fish plant in Kakisa. This basic fish processing and holding facility allows local fishermen to prepare pickerel for sale in the region as an alternative to selling to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

In 2011 and 2012, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment made valuable contributions to the establishment of a fish plant through a funding arrangement that has now become the Northern Food Development Program.

There's an increasing demand for fresh fish. The Northwest Territories has some of the highest quality fish in the country. It is a popular menu item at local restaurants. MLAs have long waited to see fish served in seniors homes, hospitals and other facilities. Operations like the Kakisa fish plant is an

important step towards developing local and regional markets.

It would be good for the community if the fish plant in Kakisa could stay open longer and serve more customers. Commercial fishery is a priority in the implementation of the Economic Opportunities Strategy. I support the government's initiative to increase commercial fishing and want to see benefits extend throughout the Northwest Territories. We need to encourage people to work in the local fishing industry.

The fish plant in Kakisa is an example of how communities can work using traditional skills and a renewable resource. I encourage the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to work closely with fishermen and all interested communities to ensure the best use of public funds and help the commercial fishing industry in the NWT reach its potential. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING SERVICES IN TSIIGHEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On paper, this government provides quality health care to all residents no matter where they live, yet a select group of NWT communities does not have year-round nurses. Tsiighehtchic is one of them and it's a stressful situation not to have reliable access to care, Mr. Speaker. Residents are fed up.

Being without a nurse in Tsiighehtchic isn't for lack of trying. For years the community has been petitioning the Department of Health and Social Services for a year-round licenced practical nurse. The idea made it into the Health and Social Services 2010-11 Business Plan, but the Minister of Health eventually renege on that commitment.

In the House on February 7, 2013, another promise was made. The former Minister of Health, the Honourable Tom Beaulieu, stated the department plans to continue to work with community leaders in the Beaufort-Delta Health Authority to try to provide nursing services in Tsiighehtchic. When I asked the Minister if he would commit to an interim measure, a pilot project to hire a licenced practical nurse, he gave an unequivocal yes. That was more than a year ago. Once again, nothing materialized.

Now, I have discovered that the new Minister of Health retracted his predecessor's commitment. A meeting took place a few weeks ago in which the Minister informed the chief and a few others that an LPN would not be hired because of limitations posed by the service delivery policy.

Mr. Speaker, what doesn't make sense to me is that the service delivery policy hasn't changed since the Honourable Tom Beaulieu was in charge.

The lack of housing had been mentioned as a barrier, but that's no longer a problem. The community has set aside housing specifically for nursing staff.

For far too long Tsiigehtchic residents have not had reliable access to health care. This government has to do better. The Minister of Health appears to be someone who can't follow through on commitment.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Blake, the time for your Member's statement has expired.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BLAKE: For far too long Tsiigehtchic residents have not had reliable access to health care. This government has to do better. The Minister of Health appears to be someone who can't follow through on commitments. He will have an opportunity to repair his reputation during oral questions today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING SERVICES IN WRIGLEY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand here today on our micro theme day on community nursing.

In theory, this government provides high quality health care to all residents regardless of where they live. In reality, there's a two-tiered system. A handful of small communities don't have year-round fully accredited health providers. Wrigley is one of them.

When the nurse isn't there, except on a fly-in basis, residents don't have reliable access to health care like the larger centres. This creates a scary situation when a serious medical emergency arises.

For years I've been pressing the government to staff empty nursing stations in Wrigley. We were told full-time nurses couldn't be hired unless police officers were on site. In 2010 we seemed to be making progress by securing policing services. However, that is where everything came to a halt.

Although the former Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Sandy Lee, approached the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority with a plan to enhance services in Wrigley, it was never implemented. It seems there was a peculiar disconnect as the regional authority disregarded the Minister's recommendations.

Regrettably, the succeeding Minister of Health and Social Services withdrew the plans, stating that Wrigley didn't meet the minimum threshold under the department's service delivery model. The

reason given was the community has to have 250 people to warrant full-time nursing staff.

This delivery model must be revamped. I should not have to provide a report of the statistics on the rise of cancer, diabetes and heart disease in the communities. Health care shouldn't be reduced to numbers. People's lives hang in the balance. Who says because you live in a smaller centre, you can't enjoy the same level of health care as the larger centres do?

Nurses play a critical role in the lives of people every day because there are no doctors in the communities. Often it is the nurses who help diagnose conditions such as cancer and diabetes at the earliest opportunity. Nurses providing preventative measures should be our goal in health care.

There's another element. With the new oil and gas exploration in the Sahtu region, Wrigley is experiencing more traffic visitors and activity. Due to these changes, the community's needs have begun to escalate.

At this time I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, colleagues, for being content with me concluding my statement. Due to these changes, the community needs have begun to escalate. It is the only community on the winter road from the Sahtu to the Mackenzie Highway. It's about halfway between Tulita and Fort Simpson. There are no services in between.

We have been told in the House that the Department of Health and Social Services is currently reviewing options and creative ways to provide health care. I would like a report from the current Minister on plans to enhance nursing services in Wrigley and other small communities within Nahendeh.

It's no secret that governments across this nation struggle to provide high-quality health care in small Aboriginal communities. Given that 50 percent of our Aboriginal population is smack dab in the midst of that statistic, I say it's time for us to lead the way and refuse to accept the status quo by developing a plan that meets the community needs within the 17th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REGULATION OF SUGAR CONSUMPTION

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the eve of National Nutritional Month in March, we recently were reminded of the nine-year success of the Drop the Pop campaign in the NWT, which I

want to commend all stakeholders for upholding and supporting all these years.

This campaign, which is part of the Healthy Choices framework, has done wonders to support the reduction and sometimes elimination of sugary beverages in our schools, promoting healthier eating and lifestyle management.

However, recently Canada has come under fire since the publication of a study in the journal of JAMA Internal Medicine that concluded people who get 25 percent or more of their daily calories from added sugar are three times more likely to die of heart disease. According to Statistics Canada, the average Canadian consumes upward of 26 teaspoons of sugar a day, which accounts for more than 20 percent of total calories, and further estimates that more than one-third of sugar Canadians consume is added by manufacturers to foods.

I can only assume, based on NWT's eating habits and lack of affordable healthy food choices, our sugar consumption is much higher. The political spin on this is that our related health costs due to caloric obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular and diabetes are many times higher than the rest of Canada and, thus, we should be paying attention.

These national statistics are so alarming that the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada is planning to unveil new guidelines on sugar consumption sometime this spring and urging all levels of government to get involved. We are already seeing such organizations like the American Heart Association recommending a sugar limit of 5 percent of daily calories for women and 7.5 percent for men. Given all the data, it's clear that we need to collectively toughen our stance on sugar, like our previous governments did with the Drop the Pop campaign.

Not wanting to leave things to chance, I will be proposing an action on sugar awareness program for the Minister of Health and Social Services and seeking his support on NWT promoting a less sugary world for our residents. Let's see if his taste buds are up for the challenge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS' PRESCRIPTION ABILITIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to discuss the need to allow naturopathic doctors in the NWT to write prescriptions and order tests for their patients.

Recently Ontario became the second province in Canada to give the green light for increased prescribing rights for naturopathic doctors. Their

announcement followed the granting of more powers to other health professionals in Ontario, such as midwives and registered nurses.

The leader in this area is British Columbia, who granted its naturopaths the right to prescribe a greater number of medications as well as high-dose vitamins, amino acid hormones, botanicals and herbs in April of 2009.

Though Ontario and BC's naturopathic doctors are restricted in the types of drugs that they can prescribe, they will be able to provide patients with medication they would otherwise have had to seek at walk-in clinics, emergency rooms or by appointment with a medical doctor, a duplication of services wasting both time and money. This decision will decrease emergency room wait times and clear the way for speedier treatment of those who really do need to be treated in emergency rooms in Ontario.

Right now in the NWT, the patients of a naturopathic doctor must also have a medical physician to prescribe any required tests, a blood test for instance, and to prescribe any pharmaceuticals that they need, blood pressure medication for instance. They cannot get all their needs dealt with in one place at one time. It requires at least two different appointments with two different practitioners.

The number of naturopathic doctors in the NWT has increased considerably in the last couple of years and it continues to increase. We will soon have seven naturopaths to serve our needs.

It's obvious that more and more Northerners are seeking naturopathic doctors and liking the services that they receive. It only makes sense for the NWT to recognize this increased demand and to accommodate our residents' needs. We are behind the eight ball, not in front where we should be.

The Minister of Health must reconsider the department's stance regarding naturopaths, embrace them as the professionals that they are, and make life so much easier for residents who like and want the service provided by their naturopathic doctor to be combined with the ability to prescribe tests and drugs. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON 2014 NORTHERN AND DENE GAMES SUMMIT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak to a great event that combines both sport and the strong cultures, traditions and skills of people of the North, an event that brings our youth in connection with our elders and the leaders of the Beaufort-Delta. The opening ceremonies for the 2014 Northern and Dene Games Summit happened

yesterday at East 3 Secondary School in Inuvik, which was followed by a community feast.

Over the next couple of days, 245 students from all of the Beaufort-Delta communities ranging from grades 6 to 12 will participate in activities that will test their speed, their strength and their agility. Some of the activities they will be participating in are such things as the one foot high kick, the bench reach, the stick pull and Dene hand games.

The summit was established a couple of years ago by the Beaufort-Delta Education Council and staff at the East 3 Secondary School with the number one goal in mind to instill greater pride in heritage. The summit allows for the carrying on of our great teachings, our great stories and the legacy of our traditional lifestyles. The event will also promote friendly competition, learning traditional skills from elders, fair play, sportsmanship and storytelling.

I would like to wish all of the participants the best of luck and be safe, but most of all have fun. I'd also like to say a big thank you to the organizers, the sponsors, teachers, chaperones, coaches and volunteers who continue to make this summit an ongoing success. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to join my colleagues here on asking for nurses in our small communities. I think of this as a P3 project and in the departmental mission we are to promote, protect and provide healthy well-being to the people of the Northwest Territories, and certainly our small communities fit under that criteria as people of the Northwest Territories.

How long have our small communities done without any type of full-time nurses on a full-time basis? How many communities right now can truly say we do not have a full-time nurse in our community? We do have fly-ins, if the weather is good. We do have that, but we do not have full-time nurses in our communities and our communities are getting fed up, the haves and have nots. How can we sit here and still allow a community like Tsiigehtchic or Wrigley or Colville Lake not to have nurses while we enjoy them ourselves in our own communities? We take it for granted. We hire local people to dispense medicine, to fix up sores, cuts or bruises, but we don't have the security or the certainty of a nurse there. Those days are gone. The little house on the prairie is gone. We've got to have full-time nurses now, and I am looking for it from this government here, hoping that this government would set down a plan and say in the next 10 years this is what we are going to do, not reasons why we can't do it. Reasons why we could do it and we

should do it and it must get done. Not yet, in my 10 years that I have been standing here and talking, has the government shown me a plan as thick as this that will tell us we're going to be putting nurses in your communities each year. That's what the people want.

I'm going to ask the Minister of Health some questions on why Colville Lake does not yet have a full-time nurse like all the communities in the North.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT TO SENIORS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I stood up in this House and talked about all the wonderful programs and services available in the Northwest Territories. Today I'd like to focus on one area. That is the area of support to seniors.

People are living longer in the Northwest Territories and we want to keep our population from declining by seniors thinking about having to retire in the South because of the challenges here in the North. In spite of all of our good programs, that's something that we have to be concerned about. I listed some of the support we do have for seniors, such as Pharmacare, vision care, driver's licence cost relief, property tax relief, seniors emergency home repair programs, and then when you get into residential facilities owned by the GNWT, of course, we know that if a senior is over 60 and living in public housing or government housing that the rent is still very, very low. It's not zero anymore, but it is certainly not means or income tested, and it is still very, very low. I forgot to mention the fossil fuel subsidy as well. That is another benefit to seniors living in their own home.

But I still think that we need to be very proactive as a government in assessing the needs of seniors coming up. We need to anticipate. Now, I know that the Department of Health and Social Services keeps a lot of statistics, and I'm sure that Housing has some statistics, as well, but in the interests of ensuring the comfort and well-being and the continuance of our seniors living in the Northwest Territories, I would like to know if there is a central census database of any kind which is a proactive measure and contact means to stay in touch with seniors no matter whether they are living in a care facility, living in their own independent home, living in supported housing such as what the Housing Corporation provides. I think that if we do not have a central database like that. We need one, because we need to anticipate the needs of seniors going forward and we need to be very proactive as a government.

I also think that the level of support to seniors, the degree of support to seniors needs to be more

level. I hear from a lot of constituents who are under extreme pressure right now with the cost of living. I can only imagine what it is like for people who are on fixed incomes and do not have the ability to go out and make more money. How much of their income, their fixed income goes towards those costs?

Later today I will have questions, I'm not sure if it's for the Minister of Health or the Minister of Housing, about how we are anticipating the continuing and growing needs of seniors in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT TO SENIORS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to work with my colleagues on a micro theme on seniors. We know in the Northwest Territories that the population of the Northwest Territories is getting older and older and we are seeing a lot of forced expenses with that. We need to support our seniors whether they stay at home or whether they stay in facilities.

In this House over the last few years, you've heard us talking about the extended care beds in the H.H. Williams and the new health centre that's going into Hay River and the fact that they're not there. We've been able to get them in the budget, but the concern is what is the status of the future of Hay River seniors. How many seniors are going to be there, how much demand are we going to see in the future? The government has indicated that they are going to do a study, but we still haven't seen anything about that study which was supposed to be completed by this year.

I will have specific questions to the Minister of Health about where that study is and what is the outcome for a regional centre like Hay River on the demands for seniors facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use today's occasion to return to the northern jobs issue that I, as well as many of my good colleagues, have been raising over the past several days.

We all know very well that we pass compensation dollars here every single year and in every single budget, and we certainly expected that money to be used for the reason it's passed. It's difficult for me to go back to the taxpayer to say the government

needs more money and they're not spending it the way we've appropriated it. They look and ask what are we really doing here.

Since I've been discussing this issue – and I, as well, extend credit to my colleagues here on this side of the House – I've been receiving calls and e-mails from across the Northwest Territories and even in small communities, asking where are those jobs as promised. How can the government stand up and say we have all these jobs that are sitting empty? They'll fill them with casuals for short term, but why aren't we employing them properly like we really should? How many vacancies are truly on the books in these small communities where every single job makes a huge difference?

I can't tell you or anyone in this room who doesn't already know how important a job is, because those jobs feed families, they buy Christmas presents, they even pay mortgages and rents in many cases.

As Members, we know very well human resource dollars were intended for human resources dollars, not to be used as O and M or capital. But as we all know, these job dollars sometimes find their way to cover O and M requirements and sometimes that's millions and millions of dollars. Sometimes the human resource dollars aren't being used and applied properly and they're used as casual dollars instead of hiring people as we originally intended. Or even worse, if you have a small community maintainer position and you can't fill it, why aren't we using it as a transition work development type of opportunity? But, no, we'd rather leave it empty and use that money for other things.

Everything I'm talking about is things like human resources that aren't properly spent, in my view and certainly the view of many others. If we just take simple facts, the rolling vacancy of the Government of the Northwest Territories is somewhere between 16 and 17 percent and that's about \$15 million. That's a rolling vacancy.

Everything I'm talking about simply adds to this: the government deputy ministers and Ministers want the flexibility to do what they want to meet their objectives. They call this micromanagement; the public calls it accountability.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Mr. Blake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 120-17(5): NURSING SERVICES IN TSIIGHEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement today, I've been told by my constituents that the Minister of Health and Social Services informed the chief of Tsiighehtchic

and others that a nurse would not be hired for Tsiigehtchic. The Minister did not even have the common courtesy to inform me of this.

I'd like to ask the Minister, why is the Minister of Health retracting the commitment made by the former Minister of Health and Social Services on February 7, 2013? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Health and Social Services, my priority is going to be on the client, to providing the best services that we possibly can to the client. This includes residents of all communities throughout the Northwest Territories, including Tsiigehtchic.

In follow-up to the Member's question, the department has agreed that we would start looking at alternatives and solutions for the small communities like Tsiigehtchic, Colville Lake and Wrigley and we will continue to do that, but we are limited by a number of things.

The current ISDM indicates service levels for communities and that there won't be nurses in communities of less than 250 people. I can say that we do have regular visits to communities like Tsiigehtchic. On a regular basis, a nurse from the public health unit in Inuvik visits at least one day a week, and during freeze-up and breakup a nurse will actually reside in the community. We also have one CHR and one home support worker in the community.

I understand that more needs to be done. I am committed to working with the Member as well as residents of the community to find solutions that work.

I have directed the department to begin reviewing the ISDM to ensure that the right health services and the right mix are identified for our communities. Work needs to be done on that and I'm happy to work with the Member, with the residents of the community and with committee. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: The Minister actually brought up a good point and that point is that the community has a full-time nurse there five and a half months out of the year. So why is it so difficult for the Minister to ensure that we have a nurse in Tsiigehtchic for 12 months out of the year? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I know the Member doesn't want to hear the same old same old, but the truth is we can't put a nurse in the community on a permanent basis unless there's an RCMP in the community, but I am interested in finding solutions and I'm sure there are solutions. If we work with the community, I'm sure we could find a balance that will give them the support and the coverage they need.

I have had an opportunity to talk to the public health nurse who goes in there on a regular basis and she talks about her interactions in the community and the good work that's happening there, and I am interested in meeting and having further conversations with the community. In the meantime, we are going to look at our ISDM to make sure that we are finding the right balance for our small rural and remote communities throughout the Northwest Territories. Of course Tsiigehtchic is on that list. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: Just so the Minister is up to date with what happens in the community through breakup and freeze-up there's also no RCMP in the community. So I don't think that that's a valid excuse.

As I mentioned in my statement, the community has done the work to set aside housing for a nurse in our community. Will the Minister work with the community leaders to find a way to put a nurse in that house? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The other challenge obviously is the fact that under our ISDM we don't have one-nurse stations, so we would have a challenge there as well. I will not commit to putting a nurse in that house at this time, but I will commit to working with the community, with the committee, as well as the health authority to find solutions that work for all communities, including Tsiigehtchic. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From what I understand, the policy doesn't actually affect the licenced practical nurse as it does a full-time nurse. So will the Minister ensure that we make adjustments to the policy to make sure that communities like Tsiigehtchic have a proper nurse? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's a very complex issue and I know the Member knows this. I mean, there are health and safety issues for our staff, we have to make sure that we're meeting certain standards, but there are also the health and safety issues of the community and we have to find that balance. As I've indicated, I've directed the department to look at their ISDM to ensure that the right balance exists within all of our communities throughout the Northwest Territories, including the small and rural and remote as well as the isolated communities.

We have to think outside the box, we have to look at other options, emergency response, we have to look at maybe expanding community health workers or community health representatives. We have to find a way that the residents have that seamless care that we've been talking about from their community into other centres. We are

committed to improving the system. We want better health, better care and better results for all our residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 121-17(5):
SUPPORT TO SENIORS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I'm not exactly certain who is the Minister responsible for Seniors in this government. Whoever it is, that's who I'm directing my questions to.

What kind of proactive work is this government doing to establish a survey or a database of information on the up and coming needs of seniors? We say we want to keep seniors healthy, we want to keep them independent, we want to keep them in the North and I would like to ask, how are we anticipating the needs of seniors as our population ages? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department has a good relationship with the NWT Seniors' Society. We also have statistics on the ages of all residents of the Northwest Territories. We work closely with the local seniors' societies, as well, to make sure that we're aware of what's going on in the communities, and we are doing a number of things to make sure that seniors throughout the Northwest Territories are informed. We did work closely with the NWT Seniors' Society on the development of a Seniors' Handbook, which basically outlines a lot of the different types of programs and services that are offered by the GNWT as well as other partners and NGOs. We are working to make sure that seniors are informed as much as possible, and we do collect statistics on population rates in the Northwest Territories on a regular basis.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I do recognize the department does do a lot of good work with the seniors and for seniors in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to ask the Minister, how does that information they have on the age, health status, housing conditions, how does that translate, that information, into a plan to ensure that we continue to support seniors in the appropriate levels?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: All the information that comes in helps inform decisions that we, in this House, make on both sides of the House. One of the things that we're using some of that data for within the Department of Health and Social Services is the developing of an Aging in Place Strategy for the support of all of our elders in the Northwest Territories. This Aging in Place Strategy

was intended to be ready I believe it was October or November, but we didn't have it done at that time. I wanted to see a few additional things put in there and have a few more conversations with committee, but I will have something to present to committee in short order with respect to the Aging in Place Strategy.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That is also good news. I would also like to ask the Minister what the government's position is or strategy is with respect to the sustainability of the support for seniors given that some seniors do receive an extraordinary amount of support, basically living without having to worry about the cost of fuel or they're living in government accommodation and they don't have to worry about the cost of fuel or the cost of power. They don't have to worry about who they're going to pay to shovel the snow off their driveway. That cost, as compared to the cost of seniors who are much more supported, I think that would be a good way to describe it, what is the government's plan to ensure the sustainability and fairness of the delivery of programs to seniors?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The bottom line is we know we have an aging population. We know that with an aging population we have additional challenges on our health care system, as well, on the supports that we do provide to seniors throughout the Northwest Territories. As the population ages, the costs will go up. We have to find ways to control our costs within the system. One of the ways we're proposing is to support more aging in place and providing mechanisms to help seniors stay in their own homes for as long as they can before they have to transition into independent living or extended care or something like a dementia facility. We collect the data and we're developing plans that will help us control our costs, recognizing that we will likely see increased costs over time.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this one step forward. Does the government or the Minister know of any program that provides for reaching out to seniors who are currently living in their own accommodation to see how they are doing health-wise, expense-wise?

You go into buildings and you read in newspapers now and it says if you're renting accommodation and you're spending more than 30 percent of your household income on rent, come to the Housing Corporation and we'll give you a subsidy. I'm not saying that's a bad program; I'm saying that's a very a proactive program.

I'd like to know what is our government doing to ensure that we actually know what's going on with seniors who may not be coming to the local health centre, may not be coming to the local clinic or may

not be members of the local seniors' society. What are we doing to reach out to those who may be in their own homes and who are suffering under the weight of either health challenges or cost of living challenges?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That's an interesting question and interesting concept. One of the things we are doing is the Seniors' Handbook, that I already mentioned, that identifies the different types of programs. That is distributed to seniors in the territory and they have access to it through their local and territorial seniors' societies. But with respect to any other push-type activity, I will talk to the department to see what we have and I will get back to the Member.

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

QUESTION 122-17(5):
NURSING SERVICES IN WRIGLEY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up, as well, on nursing in small communities. The issue in Wrigley was they had the services there. They had policing and they had nursing. That was consequently withdrawn. So there are examples of nursing in small communities previously. We are asking again, let's get these nurses back in the communities.

What progress has the department made towards hiring full-time nurses in Wrigley and other smaller communities? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Wrigley falls under the Tlicho Health and Social Services Authority, so the department has obviously been working with them to try to find a... Sorry, Dehcho Health and Social Services. Everyone looked at me all of a sudden. That can't be a good thing, right?

It falls under the responsibility of the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority. We have been working with them in the same way that we've been working with the Beaufort-Delta to try to find solutions for the small communities, Wrigley being one of them.

I can say that right now a community health nurse from Simpson visits the community three to four days a month, so there are people in there, nurses, on a regular basis. In addition, during freeze-up and breakup for four weeks twice a year we do locate the nurse in the community. So two out of 12 months there is somebody there and, on top of that, three to four days a month otherwise.

As I indicated previously, the department is reviewing the ISDM to ensure that the right health

service and the right mix of staff is available in all communities. I will work with the Member, I will work with committee and I will work with the communities to find solutions. At the end of the day we want the same thing, which is better health, better care and a better future for all of our residents.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: That's exactly what the constituents want; they want better service.

The Minister brings up the Integrated Service Delivery Model. When the report came out in 2004, it was a step forward in moving towards enhancing services in our regions and communities. Has that model been re-examined since? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There hasn't been what I would call or consider a fully comprehensive review, but it has been tweaked over time and will continue to be so. We will continue to do that in order to meet the needs of our residents.

I hear the Member, I hear all the Members. We need to do more to improve our services in those communities. I am willing to work with committee, Members and communities to find solutions that work, recognizing that not all communities are the same and not all solutions are going to be the same. We are going to review the ISDM with respect to the matrix or mix of staff that's available in communities and I will certainly have discussions with my colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: It's important and I've been making the case that with the increase in development in the Sahtu, the services of Wrigley are being impacted. There are needs there and I would like the Minister to review the Wrigley situation and say, yes, there is a definite need for an increase in services and work on that aspect, much like what happened in 1973 when they got a hospital in Fort Simpson, and policing and nursing in Simpson, because of increased development. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, we will do a review; yes, we will work with our Members; yes, we will work with the community and try to find solutions that work for them, recognizing that we do have some limitations in place or limitations affecting our ability to get actual nurses permanently located in the communities.

We are focused on and we believe in better health, better care and better results for our residents. We will do a review of the ISDM. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An additional point is we are already paying for nursing salaries, so it's a matter of

getting them to the communities. Can you review that as well? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As we look at the ISDM with respect to the mix of staff that's available in small communities, we will look at all options and we will consider all opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

QUESTION 123-17(5):

REGULATION OF SUGAR CONSUMPTION

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I spoke of some alarming statistics involving our daily intake of sugar and some of the national guidelines that will be forthcoming from the National Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

People, more than ever, are naturally hardwired to sugar and some have even coined sugar as a new tobacco of our generation. In the wake of the NWT's successful Drop the Pop campaign, now, more than ever, the premise of an awareness campaign dedicated to sugar is highly warranted.

My questions will be for today's Sugar Daddy, the Minister of Health and Social Services.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, the statistics quoted today were Canadian national averages from Statistics Canada. Does the Minister have any relevant NWT statistics on how much sugar is consumed daily by NWT residents? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Based on the reality that we have high rates of diabetes in the Northwest Territories, I would say our rate is high. I'm agreeing with the Member. Unfortunately, I don't have any statistics available on hand to indicate what the consumption of sugar is in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYUNNY: I was hoping for a sweeter answer than that. I will challenge the Minister and his department to research this a little bit more thoroughly.

That said, can the Minister indicate, with the pending guidelines on sugar consumption coming soon from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, what is his department doing in preparation of this announcement? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Department of Health and Social Services is obviously doing a number of things to try to curb the intake of sugar and other things such as tobacco. We do have the Drop the Pop, which the Member so clearly

articulated. We do have dieticians and nutritionists available throughout the Northwest Territories to provide advice and guidance to our residents.

The Medical Association deals with patients on a regular basis. We have nurses in our communities who have well men and well women clinics encouraging people to eat healthy, live healthy, be healthy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Sugar is an addiction of sorts, and like all addictions, one needs to understand the root cause of its abuse.

Can the Minister indicate what he's doing to deal with the root cause of more affordable, healthy eating choices in all communities and specifically what is he doing with daily sugar consumption for our residents? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: A number of the health promotion activities that we are undertaking indirectly address some of the consumption of sugar. I'm not sure and I can really speak to the specifics of whether we have programs aimed just purely at sugar, but I will get that information for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: I appreciate the Minister for his contribution. One only has to look at some quick Internet searches to see all the worldwide initiatives and awareness programs around the reducing of our sugar intake. One such initiative, called Action on Sugar, aims to help people avoid hidden sugars and tackles awareness.

Given the call for obesity in the Northwest Territories, will this Minister commit to a concerted effort to reduce NWT sugar intake by mirroring a similar campaign made for the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm not familiar with the particular campaign that the Member is talking about, but I like the premise and I like the concept. I would certainly like to sit down with committee and discuss how we can reduce sugar intake in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 124-17(5):

NURSING SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are in line with Mr. Blake and Mr. Menicoche. I want to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services how many communities are without a full-time nurse in their communities. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that number is 10: Sachs Harbour, Tsiigehtchic, Colville Lake, Jean Marie River, Kakisa, Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake, Wrigley, Wekweeti and Enterprise. So 10, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: So think about it, 10 communities do not have full-time nurses. They have a layperson, CHR, they have nurses come in once a month, if the weather is good, providing the plane is there, the winter road. There are 10 communities that day in and day out have no health centres. I would appreciate the Minister willing to go to bat to look at the model. We need to change the model. He says, "think outside the box." I think I want to tell the Minister, rather than think outside the box, we need to get out of the box and see what we can do.

I want to ask the Minister, is he willing to commit to the House and to the people in the 10 communities, to this side of the government and this Cabinet here to say we have a plan, we're willing to do this and we are going to put nurses in one of those communities so that next time it will be nine communities or eight communities? Can the Minister do that?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'd like to just correct my last remark; it is nine communities. Sachs Harbour does have a nurse in charge and a CHN, so it is nine communities, so good progress there.

Mr. Speaker, it's a similar response that I've had before. We are going to look at the ISDM; we are going to work with the Members and the communities to try and find solutions that work. I can't commit to putting nurses in those communities at this time because we haven't done the work. We need to figure out what will work to provide the residents the best care, the best health and the best results that we can. So, I will do that work; we will do that work and we will have those discussions with committee and Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, this Minister works pretty fast. Now he's down from 10 to nine. I wish he could be the speed of light and then next week we could think about how we could get nurses into our communities and drop those numbers.

Given these nine communities without a permanent nurse, is there any type of analyses done across the communities where there are unique approaches to having full-time nurses and different types of programs that can bring a full-time nurse into the communities, given that the safety and health concern is a balance that this government – we have about a year, or just about 500 days – can put a plan together? I've seen magic work in this government. Where they can put a plan together, a business case and say, let's start on this plan, is that something the Minister is willing to commit to?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I've committed to having the department do a review of the ISDM with respect to the mix of professionals in our smaller, more remote communities and I'll do that. We do need to be clear: all these communities do receive support and do receive health care services from the Department of Health and Social Services and its associated health and social services authorities. Colville Lake, by way of example, has a CHN in there for three days a month from Norman Wells and they do have community health workers, so there is some level of support there.

We are trying to enhance our ability to provide emergency response in those communities, and one of the ways we're addressing some of those issues is through Med-Response, where the individuals in the community, the CHW, nurses and whatnot, will have a direct link to a doctor or physician, nurse practitioner or nurse who can help them through challenging situations.

We want to do more emergency training in the communities so that people and residents are prepared and ready for emergency response. Those things are going to continue and we need to do those, but we will do a review of the ISDM with respect to the matrix and mix of professionals in the communities and I will share that with Members as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes the Minister and some of the Ministers have gone to the Sahtu to realize what it's like to live in the small communities. We can talk about it, but once you get into the small communities, then you really understand, because not everything is in books and written down; you have to experience it. So going into Colville Lake or Tsiigehtchic or Wrigley, the Minister then understands what people have to do on a 24/7 basis.

I want to ask the Minister again, we are talking about a \$700 million business case to bring the hydro down south. Let's look at our folks and look at serving our people first. Let's put a business case together. You can do it. I know it can be done. That's why we have you guys over there to put something like this to give us safety and security in our communities and to go back and say for another year we still have nine communities without nurses. I want to ask the Minister, with this commitment within the life of this government, put a nurse in our communities. That's what we're asking for. Look at the model and change the model.

I want to ask the Minister, will he do this for the communities that do not have nurses today as we stand here?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, we will work with communities; we will work with Members; we will work with committees to find ways to enhance and improve services for all residents of the Northwest Territories, including those in the small communities of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 125-17(5):

EXTENDED CARE FACILITIES FOR SENIORS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement about the extended care beds in Hay River, I forgot to mention those valuable elders in our extended care facility, especially my mom.

My question today is for the Minister of Health. When will the study be completed on the extended bed facility in Hay River?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to have to go back to the department because I'm not 100 percent sure what study the Member is talking about. I can say that Woodland Manor expansion was approved as part of the '13-14 GNWT capital estimates during the fall 2013 session. We are moving forward with an expansion to Woodland Manor, which will include eight long-term care rooms, one palliative care room and one respite care room. Those rooms are available for long-term care as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOUCHARD: Mr. Speaker, my understanding was that they were going to do a study on the needs of the community. Being a regional centre, there would be a study seeing what the demands are for that type of facility and what the future requirements for that type of facility are. I'm just wondering if the Minister would get back to me on when that type of study would be completed.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, Hay River currently provides accommodation for 25 long-term care residents. The Woodland Manor currently operates at 15 and the hospital there currently has 10. We are taking the 10 out of what is the old hospital. We are putting the addition onto Woodland and we're increasing capacity, or maintaining capacity at 25 in Hay River.

As far as future facilities, we are doing the Aging in Place Strategy, which is going to help inform where we go from here with respect to care facilities in the Northwest Territories, and we will continue to work with the Housing Corp, who has done a significant amount of good work with respect to independent living facilities throughout the Northwest Territories.

With respect to the plan, I'll get back to the Member.

MR. BOUCHARD: Mr. Speaker, obviously I'm concerned about the seniors facility that's being built and the needs assessment that would be in the community of Hay River. We know the population is aging. We want to know what the demands are for five, 10, 15, 20 years from now. Obviously, the 10 beds in that facility are something that we're pleased that they actually put that back in the budget because it should have been there all along, but we also want to know what the demands are for the community in the years to come.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, a needs forecast for the entire Northwest Territories is going to help inform the Aging in Place Strategy. I will get back to the Member with that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: I have no more further questions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 126-17(5):
FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR
OPERATING MINES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier on aspects of our Devolution Agreement from my statement earlier today. I would like to note Schedule 7, Part E of the Devolution Agreement includes a list of potentially contaminated sites that will be transferred to the GNWT as of April 1st is my understanding.

Can the Premier confirm that we, the GNWT, will be receiving financial securities to cover all the liabilities accessed by our land and water boards when this transfer takes place on April 1st or what the schedule is? Mahsi.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his Member's statement the Member referred to the mine that was in Nunavut. Obviously, we're not going to take that one over, but currently, through the Mackenzie Valley resource management authority, the boards will continue to set securities. The GNWT will set some securities on lands, GNWT lands.

The process that we're following is those contaminated sites that were made under the Government of Canada's watch, they will stay with the Government of Canada, but those sites were cleaned up, we will accept some of those. Those securities that we have identified with the Government of Canada, we have a list of those that

will be transferred over to our Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Premier. Of course, I did refer to Schedule 7, Part E. Maybe the Premier is not aware that Nunavut is outside of that, but that wasn't in there.

It is clear that in many cases the securities have not been collected by the federal government. We're talking about the lists that are going to be transferred along with their liabilities to the GNWT. So it's hard to imagine how they will be transferred, these liabilities, these securities will be transferred to us in full. The Devolution Agreement allows Schedule 7 of the agreement to be amended before April 1st.

So, if we're not going to be able to collect securities for these sites that we will be responsible for, including securities, will the Premier commit to removing those sites from the list until the federal government has fully paid up security deposits and they have been transferred to us? Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The list that has been identified are those that have securities, proper securities. There are some sites that are very small in nature or have no identifiable contamination that are part of that list that the Member is referring to. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. I hope the Premier becomes more familiar with our agreement soon because in less than six weeks here we will be accepting operating mines that have been developed under modern environmental legislation and it's those that I'm talking about. In fact, the federal government has only managed to hold less than 50 percent of the financial securities, so these are major liabilities that can erode any of the good work that this Premier is doing.

So, again, the list of potential liabilities include the oil pipeline from Norman Wells to the NWT border. What is the amount of security deposit that would be transferred to the GNWT as we assume responsibility for that pipeline? Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: In the spirit of devolution, the Government of Canada has been involving us in these discussions on security deposits and the amount for security deposits for the pipelines have not been finalized as we speak and devolution doesn't occur until April 1, 2014. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say finally an answer, sort of. I appreciate that.

On behalf of our public, there are many sites that we're taking over and we will be taking on a lot of liability.

Will the Premier commit to providing the public and this House with a final list of the amount of security

deposits and the assessed liabilities for each potentially contaminated site? For example, operating mines that we're taking over that will be transferred to the GNWT as of April 1st and will he commit to doing this by March 1st so that we and the public have a full understanding of the liabilities, potentially substantial, that we will be assuming, indeed, on April 1, 2014? Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. The Member is quoting the list that he's holding in his hand as part of the Devolution Agreement was correct and it had a qualifier on there that this was not the finalized list that will be finalized before April 1, 2014. We're being very transparent, and subject to confidentiality requirements, we'll be as transparent as this government has always been. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 127-17(5):
KAKISA FISH PLANT

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Kakisa, of course, is a small community, but I'm very pleased to state that the community has been working together, especially to the benefit of the local fishermen. I think DFO has been involved with working with the First Nations community at the same time, and as a product of working together, a small building was constructed.

So my question to the Minister of ITI is: What resources are available for Kakisa to extend the operating season of its fish plant beyond the summer and fall? Mahsi.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're fully supportive of the initiative that the community of Kakisa has taken on in the development of a fishery there. We have the Northern Food Development Program that fishermen can apply for a marketing subsidy to get fish into the domestic market here in the Northwest Territories and that's certainly something that's available to the fishermen in Kakisa and something that, if they are interested in the program, I'd encourage them to talk to our staff in the South Slave about that program.

We've also had a great deal of success working with the community on the new building. We've provided some funding for that to happen and also the processing plant itself. It's been a real good fit for the community. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Minister for his reply. In the Economic Opportunities Strategy it's clearly outlined that this government is going to be supporting the fisheries industry in terms of at least bolstering the efforts of the Great Slave Lake area.

What resources are available in 2014-15 for communities that want to develop the commercial fisheries? Mahsi.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We're going to take a real good run at revitalizing the fishery on Great Slave Lake in the coming years and we have some money set aside through EOS to let us accomplish that and we are also very much interested in getting other products and fish around the territory into the domestic market. We have a number of programs run through ITI totalling about \$225,000 on an annual basis, so the programs that we do have available to community members and people that want to pursue fishing and pursue getting their product into the domestic market here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: The Minister has indicated that his staff at ITI should talk to the people of Kakisa to ensure that there is a possibility that beyond the summer and fall they could be operational.

Will the Minister work to ensure that that does indeed happen and that the carrier support from the GNWT will continue with the community? Mahsi.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: If there's a possibility to extend the fishery in Kakisa into the winter months and if there's a way that the department can help make that happen, that's certainly something that we're interested in seeing happen. I can also make a commitment today to the Member that we will have staff visit the community, talk to the community about the requirements to extend the fishery there. As well, according to my availability, I'd certainly like to accompany the Member to Kakisa for that visit by ITI officials. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 128-17(5):
NWT HELPLINE

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services in regard to some of the questions that I had posed yesterday. I go on to the website for the NWT Helpline and there's a reference right on the top that says, "When you call, we will listen." In fact, after I made questions in the House yesterday, I did get some correspondence from some of our community providers that work in counselling and they said they wanted to make a call to the NWT Helpline to see how helpful it is for some of the people that they might work with.

I'd like to ask the Minister, first of all, are the positions at the NWT Helpline, between the hours of 7 and 11 at night, a staffed position or is that a volunteer position?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will answer that question, but I just want to give a little bit of background first. The Canadian Mental Health Association, the NWT division, made a decision to discontinue the NWT Helpline as well as other services while reviewing their current operations. To avoid any disruptions, the Department of Health and Social Services has been working with the NWT division to transfer ownership of the NWT Helpline, the phone number and the website, to the department.

The Department of Health and Social Services has an interim contract in place with Sykes Assistance Services Corporation, or Sykes, to operate the NWT Helpline until July 31, 2014. Sykes offers a number of speciality telephone line services across Canada and other countries, including roadside assistance to quick lines. The contract is in place for six months from February 1, 2014, to July 31, 2014, so that requests for proposals can be advertised, so we will be going out to seek a contractor.

The current contract comes in two phases. Effective February 1st we will have and we will see an increase in operations from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. seven days a week. This is an increase from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. which we had previously. Services through individual people on the line include emotional support for crisis and non-crisis situations, referral to community-based services, engaging third-party services when required and support to concerned family members and friends.

We do have a second phase that is coming into place, which is going to increase the hours of service and operations to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that will be coming in on March 1st.

MR. MOSES: All the information is appreciated, especially when you heard around the table today the lack of nursing services that we have in some of our small communities that need to access this helpline. What we heard today just right now from the Minister was definitely news to me in terms of the contract and also that the services were down for a while when the contracts were being put over.

Can I ask the Minister how was this mentioned to people of the Northwest Territories and to the communities? When I look on the website, there's nothing that says that the services are going to be down at all, so how do people know that it's down? He did mention February 1st it was starting up again. I want to know if the services are actually in place right now as well.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Actually, interestingly enough, we had actually just approved the communications plan on this today and I was going to share all this information with the Members before I heard the Member make his statement today. We do have a communications plan. We are

going to share that. That will likely be to Members today, and that includes communicating this information to the public.

Just for the record, anyone requiring support for themselves or for their loved ones can call the NWT Helpline at 1-800-661-0844, and it has been operational since February 1st, and it operates from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. March 1st it will change.

MR. MOSES: It's February 18th today. He mentioned that the new contract takes effect February 1st.

Can I ask the Minister, in the contract layover, how many days was the phone operation not in effect? How many days was there nobody answering the phones at this service?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I did get a briefing this this morning and it's my understanding that there was no disruption in services.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: That begs to ask the question, why did I receive an e-mail from my questions based in the House the other day that when somebody tried to call there was nobody answering the phone? Not only that, when the phone continues to ring, there's not even an answering machine to say, you know, nobody's here to answer your phone, please call this number. There's not that service, and I have to ask the Minister, what is he going to do to rectify that problem, putting an answering machine on the phone when it's not being answered?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'd certainly like the Member to share the details with me so we can make sure that that doesn't happen again. That isn't consistent with my understanding. If it was prior to 7:00 a.m. or after 11:00 p.m. they wouldn't have got a response to their call. As of March 1st we will be going to 24 hours. But with respect to this particular situation, I'd certainly like the Member to come to me and we can sit down and discuss it and see if we can make sure that this doesn't happen again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 129-17(5):
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to return to the theme of jobs and, certainly, access to opportunities. We heard rightly from my colleagues, like Member Yakeleya, that, quite frankly, the average person wants to know why isn't there a nurse in Colville or why isn't there a community maintainer in Paulatuk or why isn't there these plumbers in Fort Simpson. Like, why? When they hear of 1,150 job vacancies on that last snapshot, it causes great concern.

My questions, obviously, are for the Minister of Human Resources, and I'm going to say this: We passed the budget and we know that many of the positions are funded and those position dollars are moved to other positions. We also know for a fact that some of this job funding that we pass in this House is used for O and M, so the question really lies down to simply this: How many of these positions are we talking about that are specifically targeted at moving their job dollars to O and M funding and how much is that in dollars so the public knows what's happening?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That number is a fluid number. As of October 31, 2013, 35 positions were used between the departments and the agencies to cover other O and M requirements.

MR. HAWKINS: I want to ask the Minister for, quite simply, a clear and simple answer. We have 35 positions, which probably roughly works out to about \$3.5 million, which were originally intended for human resource money that could actually put that nurse in Colville Lake, whether it can put that maintainer back in Paulatuk or other types of plumbers or those types of critical jobs that we always talk about.

My next question for the Minister of Human Resources is: We often hear about the fact that, for example, Stanton runs a deficit, the Beau-Del runs a deficit, all of these organizations run deficits because of unfunded positions. For the record, how many unfunded positions does the government run in the Northwest Territories and how do we come up with the funding of those types of positions, because I'm trying to grapple with how much money are we talking about?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We looked at the dormant positions with most of these positions. As an example, when the position is covered off by a casual, it's funded. When a position is covered off by a contractor, it's funded. If there's money to be moved from a position to O and M, it's funded. We looked at the other category where we're trying to staff. Those are funded positions, so we looked at the categories that were inactive, and we looked at the 161 inactive positions to see which one of those were not funded, and we've come up with the fact that 125 of those positions are not funded.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm not going to take the compliment back from the first one, but I can tell you the answer from the second question was not that clear. The simple question is we run a lot of unfunded positions in the government and often we hear about these could add up to several hundred positions in the government that are not specifically funded. I want to know how many positions are unfunded but operational, whereas we have a body

in them doing something that's meeting the goals and objectives of the government.

How many positions are we talking about and how do we pay for those? I want to know how much money is being diverted from other things to fund these positions this Legislature hasn't approved.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: On unfunded positions across the GNWT, there would be some positions that are unfunded and there are also vacant positions that are unfunded. We have been working with the departments, as the Department of Human Resources, to determine which positions in our system, whether they are filled by casual, contractor or indeterminate positions, which ones are funded and which ones are being carried by the department as an unfunded position. I don't have that information here with me, but we are very close to gathering all that information now from all departments. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister should resign himself to the fact that he should know this.

Next question. We know many times with historical values of vacant positions, which is approximately 14, 15, 16 percent, but if we use it as a rolling number, to be fair, that's approximately \$15 million passed in this House that are human resources compensation and benefits dollars each and every year.

So, what does the Department of Human Resources do to track that money, the \$15 million that nobody knows where it's going? How do we follow the money? The department may say that this is micro-management. I say it's public accountability.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The department follows the positions. It's a service department that provides a service to the departments in hiring, recruiting and retaining positions for the government. The departments make decisions on which ones to move forward with.

I'd like to give an example of positions. We have quite a few casuals for a variety of reasons. We have 208 casuals working as of October 31, 2013. For various reasons when we can't sometimes fill the position because of the requirements, we aren't able to find an individual that fits the requirements of that specific job title, but the job still has to be met. So we find a casual that can do the job with support from other staff because the job has to be done. That would be one of the examples in small communities where there are positions where the requirement could be of a university degree and we don't have the housing in the community to bring someone else with a university degree in from another area to live there, so we take a local

person, put them in a casual position and continue to try to do the job. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 130-17(5):
NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS'
PRESCRIPTION ABILITIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions today to address to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I'd like to follow up on my statement and ask the Minister some questions with regard to the abilities or lack of abilities of our naturopathic doctors in the NWT. I know that the naturopathic association has been talking to the department. I know that they have made some suggestions to the department to try to advance the naturopathic profession. I know they have met with some resistance to a certain extent, but specifically with the ability for naturopathic doctors to prescribe drugs and tests for their patients, I would like to know from the Minister, is there anything on the radar, anything in the works in the near future that will allow naturopath doctors to do prescriptions. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a letter from the NWT Association of Naturopathic Doctors and I have agreed to meet with them to discuss their concerns to see what kind of forward direction we can develop working together. Obviously our goals are the same. We are interested in the best interest and safety and well-being of our patients and residents. So I am going to have that meeting with the association. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I am very pleased to hear that the Minister is willing to meet with the association. I know there were some meetings held in the previous Assembly with naturopaths and they thought they were advancing somewhere, so I hope we can go back to moving forward.

I'd like to know from the Minister, in order to allow naturopathic doctors to prescribe medicine and tests, what kind of change do we need? Is it changes to regulations or is it change to legislation? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm not actually 100 percent sure. I believe it's changes to legislation, but I will confirm that for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for the commitment from the Minister. One of the concerns of the naturopathic doctors is that in the recently passed Health and Social Services Professions Act, there is no intention on the part of the department to include

naturopathic doctors in the near future. I think they are probably 19 or 20 on a list of 19. So I'd like to know from the Minister, in your discussions with naturopathic doctors and their association, are you willing to move up the regulation of naturopathic doctors from the bottom of the list to very close to the top. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We haven't passed the Health and Social Services Professions Act. We are doing that work now. Our focus to date has been completing and drafting the bill, as this is critical in advancing profession-specific regulations. This legislation will identify and include criteria for the development of regulations, which is what we are talking about here.

As the Member knows, the top priority for regulations under Health and Social Services Professions Act, which we will move forward immediately after conclusion of the bill, is emergency medical services providers, licenced practical nurses and psychologists here in the Northwest Territories. I have talked to the department and I have asked the department to move naturopathic doctors into the number four spot. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for correcting me. My brain is too full of information, obviously, so my apologies for thinking that was passed.

I am extremely glad to hear that there's a desire to move the priority of naturopathic doctors forward. The Minister said what the priorities are and listed a number of things. That may be the priority of the government or departments, but it's not necessarily the priority of all Members. Since the Minister knows more than I do, I will simply ask him whether or not naturopathic doctors are covered under insured services in the NWT. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: With respect to the priority, it may not be the Member's priority, but we do have financial and potential liability implications with the professions I have identified, which must be addressed for the safety and security of our residents. Therefore, they continue to be at the top of the list. I have directed the department to include naturopathic doctors into the fourth position, so that regulation will happen soon as opposed to later after the bill has been completed.

It should be noted that the lack of regulations does not prevent naturopathic doctors from practicing in the Northwest Territories and does not create any barriers for residents who want to seek their services. Just to be clear, licensing of naturopathic doctors does not mean they will become an insured service and they are not currently an insured

service in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The time for oral questions has expired. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 7 on the Order Paper.

---Unanimous consent granted

Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 131-17(5): FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR OPERATING MINES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. I wanted to follow up with my questions for the Premier on the liability and of very grave concern, obviously, if not managed properly. Again, I cite our final agreement where Appendix 7, Part E lists our operating sites that we will become responsible for, and as both the Premier and I mentioned, there's the opportunity to modify that list, but it's over 200 sites, so it's a very substantial list. We've mentioned the Norman Wells pipeline and the diamond mines and so on, we are taking those over as per our agreement.

All we have is this list of 200-plus. So I'm asking, will the Premier provide us with the updated list as of March 1st, recognizing that these are still possibly being modified? I can hardly believe that these are confidential. The list was fully revealed in the agreement; it's been made public, so I'm looking for an update on that list. Will the Premier commit to providing that? Mahsi.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in the previous questionings, this was information that was made public, and as soon as we have an updated list from the Government of Canada, we'll follow the same procedure. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Premier for that. As soon as possible will be great.

I will take the high road here. Will the Premier also be adding transparency – I'm not sure he and I have the same definition here – on what our liabilities are in relation to the securities that we hold to cover those as soon as he can on this list of operating sites that we are taking over as per Appendix 7, Part E? Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Our government has financial procedures for identifying environmental liabilities and I also know that the mining legislation

also has some provisions for confidentiality. We share information with the Regular Members, so we'll continue to do so, recognizing there's some confidentiality involved. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: You wouldn't happen to have a crowbar I could use, would you? Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm looking for maybe is a commitment from the Premier to provide to the public everything that is not confidential as it was provided in the final agreement, and will the Premier also assure the public at this time in this House that we will not be assuming substantial new liabilities without holding securities to cover them? Mahsi.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. I don't know how many times the Member wants me to assure him. I've already told him in a previous line of questioning that we would provide that information, subject to confidentiality requirements. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: I'm not asking for information here or details or any prior commitments. I'm asking the Premier to state unequivocally here in the House to our public and to this Assembly that we will not assume substantial new liabilities in this process without assuring that we have the financial securities to cover those liabilities. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I can assure the Member that that's what we're negotiating for and that's our ultimate objective. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 132-17(5):
MEDEVAC AIR AMBULANCE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to use this opportunity to ask some questions to the Minister of Health. Now, he may not be specifically aware of the typical issue, but I want to find out what his authorities are within his purview of being Minister.

Recently a constituent has approached me on the fact that they're applying on this medevac contract that's out right now for bids and tenders and the packages are just coming together. My understanding was their BIP was pulled with no discussion with that particular business. It was just a random hey, you no longer qualify for BIP. They had to step in, ask me, I talked to the Minister, the Minister talked to the constituent and it seemed to work out. Then they further did an audit on this business, wanting taxation and other things to still qualify for BIP. Finally, now that that's worked out, fortunately, from my understanding I should say. Now, apparently, they have an anonymous random

audit through the Nursing Association for their qualification, now again all linked to this medevac contract that they're trying to bid on, and I believe it closes in a few days. So, this all ties down to one focus.

What authority does the Minister of Health and Social Services have in working with the fairness commissioner on a type of contract bid like this to find out and investigate this type of problem, and what authority lies before them in dealing with this type of problem? Do they have the authority to dismiss this particular proponent? Do they have any types of understandings like that? That's the type of information I want to know, because this constituent is tired of being put through the ringier. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An RFP is currently out for air ambulance services in the Northwest Territories. It is being overseen by a fairness commissioner. As a result, I will not speak publicly about this tender at this time. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: There must be some authority that the Minister can answer in the House today that the fairness commissioner can do and investigate. It's not about deciding about the contract. I'm just saying when we've got corporate espionage in some form or fashion, if that really is the case, I don't know, and I want to give them the chance to review it properly because they are the experts.

What type of remedies and options lie before this person providing this? What's the point of having a fairness commissioner if they won't review the situation? I don't know; I'm trying to bring it to the Minister so we can get a solution, provide direction to this type of constituent who, in my opinion, is being taken to task. Why, I don't know.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The air ambulance contract is currently out for a request for proposal. It is being overseen by a fairness commissioner. That fairness commissioner has an obligation to make sure that all aspects of this process are fair, transparent and equal for all. As a result, I will not talk about this contract or this proposal at this time. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: So the Minister is unwilling to provide a solution in the public here. What use is having a fairness commissioner if we have no solution for a particular proponent who wants to bid on this potential contract and is being sandbagged behind the scenes?

Is the government willing to sit by and allow this without providing any options or remedies or just say let it play out? Are we going to hear the same answer, and you might as well just table the answer

if that's what he's going to do over there. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The services for air ambulance in the Northwest Territories are currently up for a request for proposal. It is being overseen by a fairness commissioner. The fairness commissioner will ensure that all aspects of this process are fair, transparent and equal to all. As a result, I will not talk about this contract or this proposal at this time. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, justice isn't being served.

What options lie before this particular proponent who wants to bid on this contract and yet they have people who go out there and sandbag their potential credibility on this, which could cause them not to be in a position to qualify as they bid for this.

You know, we can only hide behind the fairness commissioner answer so long. The fact is, what options lie before them, what authorities fall under the ability of the fairness commissioner, and again, why have a fairness commissioner if the Minister is just going to keep saying over and over again the same answer? Give us some answers and give us some options. That's what the public wants.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The air ambulance services for the Northwest Territories are currently out for RFP. They are being overseen by a fairness commissioner, who if individuals have concerns with the process can file complaints with. As this is being overseen by a fairness commissioner, I will not be talking about the current RFP. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 8, written questions. 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. Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 39-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO
MOTION 26-17(4), UNIVERSAL
AFFORDABLE DAYCARE

TABLED DOCUMENT 40-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO
MOTION 1-17(5), SAHTU INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY PLANNING STUDY

TABLED DOCUMENT 41-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO
MOTION 5-17(5), EDUCATIONAL
RENEWAL AND INNOVATION

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents, entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 26-17(4), Universal Affordable Daycare;" "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 1-17(5), Sahtu Institute of Technology Planning Study;" and "GNWT Response to Motion 5-17(5), Education Renewal and Innovation."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 15, notices of motion. Mr. Bromley.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 11-17(5):
CREATION OF REGIONAL
LAND AND WATER OFFICES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, February 20, 2014, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with our regional Aboriginal government partners to determine the desirability and feasibility of establishing and staffing regional offices as a basis for ensuring meaningful input into land and water management structures;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to seek support and resources towards this initiative;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories make a public commitment to work with future federal governments to delay the elimination of or reinstitute the regional land and water boards;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories report to the House on the results of such collaborative discussions with our Aboriginal partners and provide the results of

feasibility studies to implement actions resulting from this process within 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mr. Dolynny in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Good afternoon, committee. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have two items for consideration, committee: Tabled Document 4-17(5) and Tabled Document 22-17(5). What is the wish of the committee? Madam Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'd like to continue with Tabled Document 22-17(5). We would like to continue with Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, and then the NWT Housing Corporation and, time permitting, Health and Social Services.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Okay, committee. We will commence after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): I'll call Committee of the Whole to order. Mr. Premier, do you have witnesses for the House?

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witness into the Chamber.

I'll have you reintroduce your witnesses.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my right I have Martin Goldney, deputy minister of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations; to my left I have Richard Robertson, director of policy, planning and communications for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Welcome, gentlemen. Committee, yesterday we left off on page 4-25, activity summary, intergovernmental relations, operations expenditures, \$1.707 million. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome back to the Premier and staff. It's just more of a

question of curiosity, not really affecting the budget for 2014-15 but more for completion of the picture. I want to draw everyone's attention to the very last line of this activity summary to NWT Days in Ottawa. We all know the Premier has made comments in the House that this was funded within the department, but this activity deals with the expenditure and there is nothing indicated here under main or revised for expenses for NWT Days in Ottawa. Maybe we could get some clarity as to why it was not in this activity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are not planning to do another NWT Days in this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. DOLYNNY: Again, I'll rephrase my question. I realize there wouldn't be any expenses in the 2014-15 Main Estimates. I'm looking for a track record, which is a document that we have before us which indicates no expenses for NWT Days in Ottawa. We know it was funded within, but I guess for completion it should show up here as a reference point in this document. So if it's not in this document, if the Premier or staff could indicate where it was captured in preparing these main estimates. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It shows under 2013 actuals. Those were the amounts that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations spent on NWT Days. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. DOLYNNY: So, for clarity purposes, NWT Days that occurred last year around this time in 2013 were actually paid for and accrued in the main estimates of the 2012-2013 budget. Is that correct?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: That's correct.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regard to the intergovernmental relations, I just wanted to seek some clarification and information. As of April 1, 2014, as we proceed with devolution, I know the Premier has indicated there will be an Intergovernmental Council that will reside with the GNWT plus First Nations people sitting at one table. Is there a provision within the act that will clearly stipulate the role of the Intergovernmental Council? Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is the intention. We have sent a letter out to all the Aboriginal government partners that have signed on to devolution to sign on to the Intergovernmental Council Agreement. Once we have that legislation, the draft legislation will be finalized. Through you,

Mr. Chair, I will ask Mr. Goldney to go into the detail of what will be in the draft legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Deputy Minister Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The draft legislation will help give effect to the agreement and essentially include the agreement by reference, so the purpose of the council as described in the agreement itself will be included through that technique in the legislation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the ongoing and primary interests of aspirations of First Nations people is clearly understanding their role within the union of the NWT. I think for a long time there's been... (inaudible)... towards development of a Constitution of the NWT. I know right now, we work within a strong link to the federal government through the NWT Act. It's always been clearly stated by various tables that we should try to maybe spend some effort in developing a Constitution for the NWT in preparation for the ultimate road to provincehood. There are some building blocks that have been achieved. There have been efforts through the Western Constitutional Forum, the Bourque Commission, and the intergovernmental forums that had achieved at least some semblance of effort to begin the work of laying the Constitution. Would that be one of the functions of the Intergovernmental Council?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The answer is no. It will be strictly a function of land management/land administration and how we can work together to improve how we can both look after the lands. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. NADLI: If I could, Mr. Chair, why not?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We don't see that as in the purview of the Intergovernmental Council. This is what we worked out with our Aboriginal government partners. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Next on my list I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to pick up where I left off yesterday on some questions about the Intergovernmental Council on Land and Resource Management. I have appreciated the questions so far.

We talked about the role of this new structure. I wonder how Regular Members will have input into the terms of reference for this structure.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is something that has been negotiated with the Aboriginal governments and we've also provided regular briefings to the Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: I'm not quite sure that's relevant to my question. Obviously they will need a terms of reference, it's a pretty broad swath in the agreement. What is this? Is this government working with other governments? This government very legitimately needs a role to play and that role is not restricted to Cabinet. In fact, it's not restricted to half of our public; it includes all our public.

Again, I will ask how will Regular Members have input into how this council works and other aspects that would typically be covered in a terms of reference if it's going to be done without a terms of reference. I would hope that there would be a clear and transparent and public terms of reference.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: This will be an intergovernmental agreement. I would expect that it would be set up through legislation and terms of reference. We certainly can work with the Regular Members, but I'll ask, through you, for Mr. Goldney to go into more detail, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Deputy Minister Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The broad functioning and make-up of the council is described in the agreement itself, so there are some pretty clear expectations of how that council will work and it's not atypical with our other intergovernmental agreements. There's not a lot of precision in the agreement itself. It's really up to the council members to decide how they want to function and what works best for them.

So that is really a subject that has been left for the council members to determine and it's not a discussion that the GNWT sees in posing terms of reference on governing things like the operation of the council and how it works as a GNWT discussion alone, but really it is up to the council members as part of that intergovernmental agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that information. Obviously this has been referred to as constitutional development behind closed doors and clearly it is. So what I'm trying to get at is how the public and Regular Members can participate in this governance council and perhaps you'll have a toolbar in your tool kit I could borrow, Mr. Chair.

We do know, indeed, that Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal people have legal means with

respect to consultation and this government has chosen to not quite ignore, but almost ignore those that don't have Aboriginal and treaty rights in terms of meaningful consultation. Here we have another construct that I know there was a lot of public concern about how people and their representatives will have input into this council. So, we have people that have a legal assurance of consultation and those that don't. We have a construct made in secrecy behind closed doors and what we're looking for is transparency, a democratic opportunity for participation.

I'm sure we'll have the opportunity to debate this with development of legislation, I hope. That has not always proven to be the case here this session, but can the Premier assure us, can the Minister assure us that these opportunities and mechanisms will be provided for in the development in the operations of this council? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think setting up an Intergovernmental Council is going to change any constitution or any construct. Members here represent all of the people in the Northwest Territories and, as I said, with the legislation that would set up the Intergovernmental Council. I would welcome input from the Members as to providing input to us in terms of our participation with the Intergovernmental Council. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. That sounds great. I'm wondering how the public will participate and I'm wondering if the Minister can assure us that these meetings will be public and full transparency will be provided through the opportunity for anybody to look at them as people are welcome to attend during this House session. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. I have to recognize that there will be at least five other Aboriginal government partners. So that will be something that we would work out and I'm sure that we would want to be as transparent as possible. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for the Premier's reply there. I wonder if the Premier would take on the lead in suggesting that meetings be public and provide that transparency. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. I'd be pleased to do so.

MR. BROMLEY: That's all I have, Mr. Chair. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Committee, page 4-25, activity summary, intergovernmental relations, operations expenditure summary, \$1.707 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 4-26, activity summary, intergovernmental relations, grants and contributions, \$350,000. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are these meetings meant to continue, or will this Intergovernmental Council be fulfilling the roles of these intergovernmental meetings here? I guess, as well, how is the funding going to work for the Intergovernmental Council in relation to this? Perhaps they're the same thing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are two separate things. This is the deal with the Aboriginal governments themselves. The Intergovernmental Council is primarily a land administration body with which the federal government is providing up to \$3 million for funding it. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Committee, page 4-26, activity summary, intergovernmental relations, grants and contributions, \$350,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 4-27, information item, intergovernmental relations, active positions. Any questions? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Page 4-28, information item, lease commitments - infrastructure, \$27,000. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a brief question for the Minister. I know earlier we discussed having an office similar to this put in place in Ottawa with a position also to help fill the relationship with the federal government and lobby on our behalf. So I'd like to ask the Minister if those plans are still moving forward. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it's still our intention to do so. We presently have one person in the Ottawa office that we contract, a consultant to help us with intergovernmental relations and we've not come to the conclusion yet that we would staff it with a political person at this time, but we will continue to operate an office in Ottawa. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Committee, page 4-28, information item, lease commitments - infrastructure. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 4-29, information item, work performed on behalf of others. Any questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 4-30, information item, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Return to page 4-7. Department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$9.195 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Is committee agreed the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations is complete?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Thank you, witnesses. Please allow the witnesses to leave the Chamber.

Alright, committee, we have agreed to begin reviewing the NWT Housing Corporation. I will turn to the Minister of Housing for any opening comments.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2014-15 Main Estimates for the NWT Housing Corporation. The main estimates propose a budget of \$141.730 million, an increase of 25.7 percent from the 2013-14 Main Estimates. The budget includes a contribution of \$83.482 million from the GNWT for 2014-15.

As Members are aware, one of the five priorities identified by the 17th Legislative Assembly is to address housing needs. There are significant differences in housing between our market and non-market communities and there are needs along the entire housing continuum, from homelessness to homeownership. The actions of the NWT Housing Corporation are also being guided by Building for the Future, our strategic plan.

The activities reflected in the 2014-15 Main Estimates for the NWT Housing Corporation build on the work we have done over the first two years of the 17th Assembly, and some of the highlights include:

- We have made substantial investments to improve the quality of the public housing stock and will invest a further \$20.5 million in 2014-15 to replace 39 older public housing units and complete major retrofits to 216 units.
- We are expanding the availability of market rentals to support devolution, decentralization and service delivery in smaller NWT communities. We plan to build 34 new units and spend \$7.5 million in 2014-15 as part of the plan to add 100 market rentals over the next three years. We have also increased our budget for partnership arrangements to support developers that want to invest to add to the rental stock in smaller communities.

- In 2014-15 we will spend \$9 million to build new seniors independent living complexes in Fort Good Hope and Fort Liard and to replace the Joe Greenland Centre in Aklavik.
- We will build six new public housing units in Jean Marie River, Colville Lake and Wekweeti, which are communities currently underserved by the Public Housing Program.
- We are making significant changes to improve service delivery to community residents and strengthen our relationship with the local housing organizations. These changes will make it easier for residents to access our programs. They will also allow us to better balance overall roles and responsibilities and better support our community delivery agents.
- We also have initial plans to create new local housing organizations in Fort Liard, Whati and Gameti, which will improve service delivery in these communities and create new community employment.
- We are improving our homelessness supports and doing our part to support the Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework. This includes investing \$680,000 for four new transitional housing units to help address the "hard to house" in smaller NWT communities. We are also establishing a Shelter Capital Fund, which will be an application-based program to support shelters in the NWT that are operated by NGOs with repairs for their facilities and equipment.
- We are continuing to change and improve our programs to ensure consistency across the housing continuum and to support the objective of strengthening self-reliance and to support residents in meeting their own shelter needs.
- We will continue to make investments in alternative energy technologies and to take advantage of retrofits to improve energy efficiency. We are also improving our systems to better track and understand the impact of the energy investments on our operating costs.

Public Housing continues to be the largest program offered by the NWT Housing Corporation, with approximately 2,400 units. The change in the rent scale implemented on July 1, 2012, made rent simpler, more predictable and fairer, and addressed the disincentive to work. We have improved management of the program with the introduction of new information systems for tenant relations and maintenance activities. The investments planned for 2014-15 build on the more than \$140 million spent on the public housing stock over the past seven years.

The NWT Housing Corporation has also taken significant steps to support homeownership in the Northwest Territories. The NWT Housing

Corporation will spend approximately \$7.6 million in 2014-15 supporting homeownership and assisting homeowners in completing repairs to their houses. We have made changes to our Emergency Repair Program, our preventative maintenance program and will be making revisions to our major repair program in 2014-15.

Changes have been made to PATH, our subsidy to support the home purchases, which makes this program more effective in supporting homeownership in non-market communities and expands the potential pool of clients. Changes are being introduced to HELP in 2014-15 to make it more consistent with our approach to the public housing rent scale.

Late in 2012-13 steps were taken to provide homeownership clients that have a mortgage with the NWT Housing Corporation revised mortgage balances and affordable repayment options. I am pleased to report that most clients have taken advantage of this program, with mortgage collection rates of about 80 percent for the clients that have entered into these new agreements. Unfortunately, there are a number of clients that have not responded to the new program and mortgage collection continues to be quite low for those clients. Legal action is likely the next step in many of these cases.

The Transitional Rent Supplement Program, which provides support to reduce the affordability problems and core need among residents in market rentals, was introduced in late 2012. In total, about 100 households have received support through this program, although about 20 households have since left the program as their housing situation has changed. As a new program, the NWT Housing Corporation continues to promote awareness about the Transitional Rent Supplement Program as it fills a gap in our housing supports that has historically been a large contributor to our overall core housing need.

Finally, the NWT Housing Corporation continues to administer the Homelessness Assistance Fund and the Small Community Homelessness Fund. The \$325,000 for these two funds provides direct assistance to residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and funds projects in smaller NWT communities that address homelessness issues. In 2014-15 the Hard to House Initiative will see four communities supported in operating small transitional housing projects and the Shelter Capital Fund being added. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister. I'll ask the Minister if he has any witnesses to bring into the House.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Mr. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to general comments for the NWT Housing Corporation. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome the Minister and the NWT Housing Corporation staff here today. First and foremost, I want to say that I think, for the most part, Members were quite pleased with the direction NWTHC is taking. The review we did a number of months ago, we did not unveil a lot of earth-shattering issues, but there were certain things that I think we needed to look at and I wanted to basically echo some of those areas. Some of them were raised in today's opening comments by the Minister and others were not, so I will be dipping back and forth here just so you can capture some of the areas where I'd like to maybe get the Minister to give us a brief update.

First, and in no particular order, the Public Housing Purchase Program was introduced in 2013-2014 for rental clients with very good track records. I don't think it's captured in the opening comments. It would be nice to get a bit of an update as to where we are with that program.

One of the areas of concern that Members here have had for a number of years was the operating deficits that a number of the LHOs had from year to year. We know there was some great work done on rebalancing these deficits, but again because we haven't dealt with this department for a number of months, if we could just have an update as to what the situation is currently.

Again, we know that the rent collection rates have improved dramatically and I think that's shown in the rates from year to year, but maybe if we can get some latest figures. Today we received some information about mortgage collection rates, but it would also be nice to get some rent collect rates updates as well.

Within the opening comments we also heard about the Transitional Rent Supplement Program, about 100 households that have received support. We know this is a very worthwhile program that could probably be, or should be, 100 percent used every year. We're wondering what is the department doing, what is the Housing Corp doing to make sure that the message is loud and clear out there that there are monies available to residents. I think

we're able to do 150, I believe, if you can clarify that number. Really, we're only getting two-thirds update on a very worthwhile program.

Again, we did talk a little bit or we heard a little bit about the mortgage arrears and that they were going to seek, potentially, legal action. Can I maybe get some clarification if we have taken any legal action to date during the life of the 17th Assembly, and if not, if there are grave arrears pending, why haven't we taken this legal action? It sounds like within the body of today's opening comments that these would be the next steps. I believe these next steps have been there for some time, so I think getting an update as to where we are potentially in a legal action might shed some light on those people who haven't been living up to their obligation.

We know there was a substantial increase in a replacement of the electric hot water heaters in a number of our housing units in the last fiscal year, and we know that we did not capture 100 percent of this conversion of electric hot water heaters in all thermal communities. I just want to get an update here as to where we are with that priority. Will we see that completely finished within the fiscal 2014-2015 cycle here?

Utility costs for all residents of the Northwest Territories are obviously a concern. We know the Housing Corporation is not immune to increased costs for utilities and we know that there's a slight bump in the budget here for that. Maybe if the Housing Corporation can elaborate. What are they doing to track these utility costs? Is there any way we're able to modernize and maybe get some real time reporting that might be able to be shared with committee and the people of the Northwest Territories?

There are a lot of asks in these opening comments and I'm sorry for doing that, but I believe it captures, in essence, some of the areas committee was looking at. Because we didn't look at this for a number of months, a state of the union update as to how it is today would be very beneficial. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As part of the Member's first question on public housing purchase, that is going to be part of the PATH program now providing assistance to homeownership, so they'll be able to access that program to purchase a public housing unit. We're actually thinking of approaching some of the public housing clients that have been there and been good tenants and keep the rent up to date for a long time. We're actually considering approaching them to see if they would be interested. So, the work is ongoing in that.

The operating deficits, we do have a number of communities that are running a deficit right now, but we're working closely with the communities and we think that with the new program that we're able to monitor the activities of the LHOs. If there are any red flags, we should be able to pick those up right away.

When we appear before committee next year, I think this is being implemented on April 1st, if I'm not mistaken, we're doing all the preliminary work right now, so we'll be able to monitor and have some real time data and be kept up to date on those.

The rent collections, I have to say the numbers have improved considerably. There are a number of LHOs that are over 100 percent, which means that they're collecting the rent that was assessed plus a lot of people are putting money on their arrears. I think our highest one in the latest fact sheet I have is at 173 percent, so that's a good indication. Unfortunately, we still have some communities that are quite low, and we're working on those communities. We keep Members up to date on any potential evictions that might be happening in their riding and you may be hearing from certain individuals who are being evicted because of not paying their rent.

The rent supplement access, the Member is correct; we've got 150 units that we're funded for. I think we had 100 and then we had 20 of them, I think, that have moved on, which I guess in a way is a good thing. We've had some public meetings and we're trying to communicate the fact that we have this option that's available to them, and word of mouth is sometimes the best advertising. We've had people approaching us saying we know about the program. I believe there were a couple ads in the paper. But we are communicating it to the public, we're working on that and we are anticipating that we should be able to pick up more clients in this particular program.

The legal action on the mortgages, I think we've got about 30 clients that they're over at the lawyer's office right now. We want to move on these clients, because they have been given a fantastic opportunity, as I said in my opening comments, to come in and redo their mortgage balance. For one reason or another, they decided not to take us up on that and continued with their own mortgage, which with many of them we're still in arrears and they just haven't paid since then, so they really have left us with no choice but to proceed with legal action because it's unfair to a lot of those people that are paying on time and have been paying on time for a number of years.

Hot water tanks, we have 90, I believe, that are left out of 2,400 units. I think the replacement of these electric hot water tanks is still ongoing through the M and I, Modernization and Improvement Program. As a unit is getting some work done, I think in my

opening comments I mentioned we had 216 we are hoping to do, so any of the units that we're doing the major retrofits on, we will be replacing the hot water tanks on there. Again, as we come before committee next year, those numbers should improve significantly. We have regular briefings with committee, so as we replace out the hot water tanks, we'll be giving committee an update on the number we have left.

Utility costs, the tracking is an area that we have had some concerns with again. With the new program that we have in place, we will be able to capture their utility costs very quickly. I believe we are working with the utility providers and they're going to do an electronic transfer of the usage from all our clients. Again, with the major retrofits we have, we'd like to see that number come down. Obviously there are some things we can't control, but there are some things that we can and that's what we're working on. But with the new program we have in place, I think we'll be able to track all of the usages in the communities a lot closer. Again, that will be a valuable tool for us. If we see a unit in a particular community that has extremely high utility costs consistently, then we know that's one of the units that we may have to consider doing a major retrofit on.

I believe I've touched on all the points the Member has raised. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There are lots of great initiatives in the NWT Housing Corporation as we move forward. I just want to make note that there are a lot of individual cases that continue to come across my desk, but I think as we replace public units and more homes and increase the changes to the PATH program... I'm not sure what changes have been made to the PATH program. Maybe the Minister can elaborate. I'm not sure if they have examined it, but with regard to PATH, many people in my constituency are always over the household CNIT limit, the Core Need Income Threshold limit. I don't know if they've reviewed that. I have always been of the position that people who can afford those homes are the ones we should be helping. I don't know if they've had a chance to review that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Member is correct; we have a lot of individual cases that we do deal with. The numbers have come down substantially in the last little while which, again, is a good indication that the work that a lot of people want done on their units is being carried out.

As far as the changes to PATH, the Member is absolutely correct. We've had issues in the past

where somebody would be a dollar over the Core Need Income Threshold and they were automatically declined. We've tried to tailor our programs that if they are a little bit over, now it's not going to be that they are automatically declined. We take those into consideration. I think the zones, if they are over, then obviously their subsidy would come down a bit instead of just being flat out declined for any kind of subsidy. So for those who are slightly over, they will still continue, if they are eligible on all other fronts – there's more to it than CNIT – then they will be receiving some assistance; however, the subsidy would be lower than if they were below the Core Need Income Threshold. That's one of the major changes because we've heard from so many places where I'm \$10 over and I'm declined. So we have tried to take steps to address that to get more people to access some of our programs, because you're right, Mr. Menicoche, a lot of these people are the ones who have proven that they would be able to maintain a home. We need to do what we can to assist them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: In Fort Liard alone, I think they're building a new seniors complex. The community is looking forward to that. It will help alleviate some of the needs of the elders in the communities or in the older units and are of that age where they can be accommodated somewhere else.

Just speaking of elders in the communities, I know that the Housing Corporation used to have senior-specific programming, but a lot of that is done away with. Perhaps the Minister can comment on that. I get a lot of requests by elders as I travel to communities. I think one of the programs was just cleaning their chimneys, cleaning their stoves and preparing them for the oncoming winter. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There were a lot of programs that were specifically designed for seniors, but we've rolled all those into the programs that we offer now. If you look at the Preventive Maintenance Program that the Member was referring to, a good portion of those clients are seniors and our program officers working with the government service officers in the communities, we try to get to as many seniors as possible. If they applied the year before and we know that they are still an eligible client, then we'll see what we can do to try to assist them in getting preventative maintenance done.

As well, I could point out that we're looking at the role and responsibilities of our local housing organizations. Our plan is to use them as more of taking applications and working with the potential clients in the community, because in the past, clients in the communities had to wait until a program officer from the district office came in and

they did the application process. They left and then they had to do all the other work. We're thinking about using our local housing organizations to do a lot of this work and then people in the community would know they had that one central point of contact. If they have to bring financial information, they know it's just going to the one person.

With a lot of our programming now, I believe instead of having set times to get an application in, we almost have a continuous application process, so they can almost put an application in at any time which is a great convenience to clients in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: When trying to address seniors' needs with some of the program dollars that are there, small communities like to get everything done at the same time. I'm sure the Minister is aware that that's an issue.

I would just like to speak a little bit about the homelessness supports. It references the Anti-Poverty Strategy Framework. We are investing \$680,000 in four new transitional housing units. I know that I raised this with my communities. When we try to address homelessness, I don't know if it's old parameters or guidelines, but I think it was \$40,000 per community. It was told to me that they can't really do too much with \$40,000, so I was just wondering: how does the Minister see the \$680,000 rolling out? Does he see an actual unit being built in a small community to address homelessness? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The \$680,000 is not to actually build brand new units. We will take existing units in the community and we will retrofit them so they're suitable for hard-to-house clients. Part of that money will be earmarked for working with a local organization who might want to run this particular program in the community for us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: So that's a little bit clearer. One of my communities started working on a proposal and then they ran into an issue and weren't sure where to get a unit. Do they approach the district office for their particular community to see if there's an older unit that can be retrofitted and not scheduled for repairs for homeownership? I'm pretty sure the Housing Corporation can assist communities as they develop their application and try to do something for homelessness in our small, little remote communities. Thanks.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We'll work with the district office and the local housing organizations to identify any units that could be used in the community. Our plan is to send a reference with a terms of reference to all communities that might want to access this program. Then we do have a homelessness coordinator who is quite interested in trying to get out into the communities and work with

communities on proposals and things along those lines.

Once the budget has gone through and we have approval of the Legislative Assembly, we'll send letters out to communities and gauge interest. I see we will probably have some good uptake and a lot of interest in this particular program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Next on my list I have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My first comment is related to what I see as the social trend, the trend of social housing and moving away from homeownership. As we know, in communities we are challenged with finding employment and business opportunities, for that matter. Having a job is very far and few. If you do indeed work, you're working on a seasonal basis. For example, in my home community there's a large injection of job opportunities at the health centre and that's not going to start until about April and people manage to get by in terms of trying to make a living, at the same time they ultimately strive for the ultimate pride, which is owning your own home.

I know in the past the Housing Corporation has offered a program in terms of first time homebuyers. I think it was a program to at least give some incentive for people to buy their own homes by giving them a portion of equity to go to the bank with. I don't know if that's still in existence or not.

The other point regarding social housing is that you'd indicated that there are about 39 older units that exist. Whether that's just one community or throughout the NWT, there are elders that have lived in their homes for a long time. They've raised their family there. Now they're living on their own and they continue to pay rent and some of them are appalled, basically, that they're not given the option of either buying their home outright or at least given credit for their homes.

I wanted to at least get an indication from the Minister that these things have been contemplated in terms of meeting the needs of elders. That's my first point. I want to seek some information from the Minister.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a Housing Corporation, we'd like to see as many people in their own homes as possible. If you look at the houses that we've been providing over the years, we have 2,400 public housing units. I think through the years we've managed to get about 1,500 homeownership units starting from way back to the present. So we've put a lot of people into their own homes and we're still trying to tailor some

of our programs so we can get more people into their own homes.

We have to be careful. We've had a number of clients that have turned their units back over to the NWT Housing Corporation because once they got into homeownership they realized it was a lot different than being a public housing client and they just weren't able to keep up with the demands of being a homeowner.

The Member was asking about subsidies, I believe through the HELP program. The HELP program was designed so we can get a potential client into a unit for up to two years and then after two years they would be responsible for all the utilities and the operation of the home. After two years, if they determine that they might want to go the next step, then they can make an application to purchase the home or another home. I believe the subsidy used to be \$10,000 that we would give them towards this, but now it's up to \$20,000 that we're able to provide a subsidy for.

The PATH program is another one where, if they're eligible, clients can qualify for up to 48 percent of the purchase price and they can take that money to the bank to leverage more funding and get into a mortgage with the bank. I think that that would help a lot of people.

Again, as far as the elders go, we have I think as a Housing Corporation, not only as the Housing Corporation but as the Government of the Northwest Territories, I think we have some of the best programs for our seniors in the country. I've had an opportunity in my role as Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to travel across the country and listen to people talk about the programs that they have and compared to the ones that we've got, I mean, we have the Cadillac of programs for our seniors in the Northwest Territories and they're appreciative of that. We do try to work with them closely. There were programs a number of years ago to get seniors into their own homes and with the Fuel Subsidy Program, our preventative maintenance program, and our GSOs and our people on the front lines going to work with the seniors to make them aware of some of the programs that are available to them. I think, as well, the NWT Seniors' Society has a handbook that speaks to some of the programs that are offered.

We try to get as much information out there as possible to make our seniors and all residents aware of some of the programs that we offer and it's an ongoing work. I think what we have to do is we try to provide the Social Programs committee with regular updates on some of the programs as we're changing them and as we're improving them, and I think we're almost due for a briefing soon to update them on some of the changes that we're

making to the programs that we're offering. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: Thank you. I'd like to thank the Minister for sharing that information. I have three points, by the way, but my second point is a matter of jurisdiction and that relates to the Hay River Reserve. I know it has been a challenge of this government to try and work through the levels of authority and legislation because the reserve is a unique jurisdiction in the NWT tied with the federal government. I know it has been a dilemma and frustration, at least from constituents, to see houses that remain empty and yet governments are basically stymied of trying to reach a solution. I know there have been overtures from ATFN to see if there's a workable solution to trying to at least bring heads together, trying to consider some options. I think discussions have gone as far as approaching the federal body charged with housing, but that hasn't led to any conclusive or effective options and solutions to the dilemma.

Has there been any movement on the front of trying to come up with a suitable working arrangement with K'atlodeeche First Nation? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We have offered up a meeting to the leadership of the Hay River Reserve. That has been a challenge. Almost from the time of the Minister previous to me, that has been a bit of a challenge. Part of it is because of the fact that it's on reserve land. If there were eligible clients there and they were able to get I think it's a band council resolution, a BCR, to have tenure to the land, then they would be able to have access to those units.

We've tried everything, we've tried selling it to the band. We've had many discussions on this particular file and we'd really like to see it come to a conclusion because those units have been empty for a while and, ideally, we'd like to see six clients in there. If we can get six clients that are eligible, six clients that have land tenure because land tenure is one of the conditions of accessing our program.

We've worked with the band. I know they've written a letter to AANDC, if I'm not mistaken. So it's something that we need to get resolved fairly quickly because these houses have been empty. I've been Minister now of the NWT Housing Corporation since 2009 and those units have been empty since then, and even before then I think they were still just being completed. Part of the problem was getting them completed in a timely manner. I think that's what kind of held everything up and then getting suitable or eligible clients to get in there and, as well, getting the land tenure.

So, I believe I've written a letter, or the president has written a letter to the leadership there and we've offered up another meeting because this is a situation that we would like to get resolved. We've been working with the Hay River Reserve to try to make that happen. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: My final point is just trying to understand the scope of April 1, 2014, when there is the transfer of responsibility, more authority, and in respect of land tenure and whether that holds any implications for the Housing Corporation. Right now, currently in communities you have Commissioner's and then you have Crown land or IAB lands, and whether that's going to change, because I think in people's aspirations to build their own home there has to be, of course, a level of equity plus financing, and banks want a level of certainty, and whether that's going to change or not.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Crown land will convert to Commissioner's land. The IAB lands will pretty well remain the same because I think that is an agreement with the Government of Canada to reserve land, so I don't think those are going to change. I'll confirm that and I'll communicate that to the Member, but as far as I understand, that's the only one that won't change.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few comments. I have a couple of questions. More concerns, I guess, than questions particularly. I would like to echo my colleague's comment earlier about the good work that the Housing Corporation has been doing. Two things, in my mind: One, they've been keeping Members updated, as the Minister mentioned a little while ago, and when we are updated and we have information, then that lets us know what's going on and certainly keeps us much happier. We don't get cranky that way. I think the changes to the programs that the Housing Corporation has instituted seem to be working out well.

I'm really pleased to hear the words "housing continuum." They appeared in the Minister's opening remarks, and they are used relatively often when the Minister and his officials come to meet with committee, and I'm really pleased because I think that's something that was lacking previously, so it now seems to be part of the language of the Housing Corporation and I'm very glad to hear that. We do have to cover our residents from absolute homelessness through...birth to death, basically, kind of thing.

I do notice there's a significant increase in the budget, about \$20.7 million if I did the math correctly. I think I understand where the additions are coming from or what the additions are for, but I did wonder, as I looked at those numbers, whether or not the Housing Corporation is going to have the capacity to be able to accomplish everything they want to accomplish in this next budget year. There are always carry-overs from one year to the next and I don't know what the amount of carry-overs are for '13-14, but I just wonder if the corporation

has considered the amount of work that is going to be required in budget year '14-15 and do they feel confident that they'll be able to get it done. I think all of us have seen piles of crates in communities waiting for houses to be built and that's not something that is of benefit to our residents. It's just a general sort of concern as we do have the capacity within the corporation to handle both carry-overs and what we've got on the books for this next budget year.

I'm really pleased to have seen an increase in the Homelessness Fund. It's a little more than doubled and I think that's great. I heard the Minister mention Shelter Capital Fund, so I presume that's what the increased money is for, but I would like to hear from the Minister what the extra \$358,000 is intended for.

On the subject of homelessness and shelters, I have questioned the Minister on this before, but I am concerned that we have shelters, particularly in the city of Yellowknife, where there is an issue of capacity for staff. There are no standards for shelters, and in response to my query the Minister indicated that we have legislation in place which should handle anything that NGOs would be required to do to operate an emergency shelter or a homelessness shelter. I don't think that's where I'm going.

We do have standards for our shelters that deal with women and families escaping family violence, and that's the sort of standards that I'm looking for are the standards that apply to our family violence shelters should also apply, in my mind, to homelessness shelters. At the moment, we have situations where we have one staff person overnight for 40 to 50 people, and we would never see that in any government operation. We wouldn't allow that. The union wouldn't allow it. My point is I don't think that we should be allowing that in our NGOs. We all know NGOs don't have a lot of money so they staff what they can to whatever limits that they can, and I would suggest if we had standards in place, that would force them to hire more staff. It would force us, hopefully, to provide them with more funding so they could hire more staff. I just raised that as a concern and I would hope that maybe the Minister might change his mind if he thinks about it a little bit, or maybe we have a conversation.

The Transitional Rent Supplement Program has been mentioned, and I agree with – I think it was Mr. Dolynny who mentioned it – it's a good program. I am still concerned, though, and I've mentioned this before, that I wish the rent supplement could apply to people who are in transitional housing, and I'm speaking particularly of transitional housing that the YWCA operates. There are a lot of people there who are coming directly from homelessness into some sort of a small home

of their own. Generally, if they do that they have absolutely no income or at least they start with no income, and they certainly could use the rent supplement.

Lastly, just in general terms, we have made – we, the royal we, the government – the Housing Corporation has made a number of changes to programs. We've initiated new programs and we've made changes to old programs. I would like to know what we are doing to evaluate them. Some of them are really recent, but some of them have been ongoing for close to a year now, and I know oftentimes the government says, well, we're going to wait three years and we'll evaluate after three years, but I think that's too long a time period. I think we ought to at least do an interim evaluation after six months to a year and get a sense whether or not something is working. I think the Housing Corporation is doing that, but I would like to be reassured that they are.

That's all I have. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We'll go to Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Member for the concerns that she's raised. When she talks about the capacity, I believe the Housing Corporation has demonstrated that they do have the capacity, and I use the example of all the money we got for the Affordable Housing Initiative a few years ago, and we had to get all those projects on the ground. I think it was quite a task for a couple years and we managed to get all the units on the ground. I think we're one of the only jurisdictions in the country that was able to use all the money and match all the money. We had to deal with the problem of vacant units afterwards, but we wanted to make sure that we got the product on the ground to access the money that was made by the federal government. I believe we do have the capacity.

In '13-14, I think we're on track to have 90 percent of our capital projects completed. Our carry-overs, I think, are getting smaller and smaller every year, so we've been fortunate that we've been able to get most of our capital on the ground, and it's our goal to make sure that we get our capital on the ground, because the longer we delay then the longer people have to wait for these particular units.

The Homelessness Fund, the hard to house, I believe we had \$280,000 that was earmarked for that. The Shelter Capital Fund, we have earmarked \$100,000 for that. Now, that's to go to help the NGOs with some repairs that might be needed. It's application based, so again, it's a new one and we'll see how that rolls out.

As far as evaluating our programs, I believe we have an ongoing evaluation of our programs. I think Members are well aware in the last few years we've

made a lot of changes, and a lot of changes we made on the fly when we realized that maybe this can work better or we can improve in this area, so rather than wait three years to say we need to improve this, we tried to initiate those improvements right away. We've had a number of changes to our programs over the last number of years.

The transitional rent supplement, the Member spoke to one area in particular which is basically getting a building that is free, on top of getting some money from the Housing Corporation to assist with the O and M. This was specifically earmarked for those that are going into market housing and had to pay the market rate and it was a struggle for a lot of them. This program was mostly designed for them. I think it's working quite well. I've had some comments come back.

I will have Mr. Stewart touch on the standards if you don't mind, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of the standards, as the Member alluded to, there is a number of pieces of legislation that help define how the shelter should operate that we think covers most of the issues that have been raised in the past. That said, though, there is certainly also opportunity in contribution agreements for specific program delivery to lay out specific approaches to operating that may address some of the other concerns. It becomes a bit of question as to whether standards and regulations of those sorts of things are the best way to tackle those issues, or whether it is better to look at the individual contribution agreements and through the various departments that provide funding to make sure that the issues that the Members identified have been addressed. Certainly, there's more work that could be done on that, but there are different ways to, I think, achieve the objective that I think the Member is really after here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. I will allow Ms. Bisaro just to have one quick follow-up question. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Chair, it's not really a question, but thanks to Mr. Stewart for I think hopefully indicating that this issue is going to be addressed. I can appreciate that maybe standards aren't the only way to go, but there is a concern for the safety of the people that are working in some of the homeless shelters.

I did forget to mention that I've noticed in the mission, as I looked at the mission for the Housing Corp, there's no mention of homelessness. Now that we have a homelessness coordinator housed within the Housing department, I wonder if the Housing Corporation would consider changing their

mission slightly to address the issue of homelessness since you are now responsible for that. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We would be willing to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Moving on with general questions, I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Minister and his staff for exchanging some information with us today. It's been over two years, I guess, since we've been working with the Housing Corporation. I just want to commend the Minister and his staff on the improvements and hard work that they've done. It's been very noticeable. I know we get a lot of good feedback within committee after our exchanges or meetings that we do have, so that's been great.

First off, I just want to talk about some of the investments into our public housing stock as well as the transitional housing and Shelter Capital Fund. We have a good program going on in Inuvik right now that just started up with very minimal dollars, so it's nice to see some of these dollars that are put in here for the upcoming budget that Inuvik can be possibly one of the leading groups that are working with very little to provide shelter for those that need it. So, I am very happy to see that in the budget.

There is also mention of improved energy efficiencies, and speaking with a couple of constituents back home that are interested in this area, it's nice to see that it's still looked at and there is support out there to see what we can provide in communities where we can provide some of these energy efficiencies.

The Minister did mention earlier about giving Members an update or just a briefing note on the evictions of people in the communities, constituents. I for one deal with some of that on a regular basis, but just getting the whole briefing note and understanding how hard the LHOs and how hard the Housing Corp has worked to try to keep people in their homes in most cases and working out every last bit of possible avenue to help people get through it. I think there were 30 cases that he mentioned that are going to court in terms of the mortgage arrears. I know this government and this department is working hard to address those issues.

Members made comments of the Transitional Rental Supplement Program. I won't get into that any further, but it's nice to hear that it's still being utilized and there are people that are getting into that.

I don't have a whole lot to say about this Housing Corp. There's been a lot of good work over the last two years and I know committee can also preach to that.

The Minister does know that I did have a constituency concern just recently, as of yesterday and today. It brought attention to this new act that Alberta has just passed. It's the new Home Buyer Protection Act. That just deals with mandatory warranty programming and it will actually hold the builders more accountable when they are building some of these houses in Alberta. I want to ask the Minister if we have anything similar here in the Northwest Territories that would hold people that are building our dwellings and housing in the communities more accountable, especially with the plan to build 100 units over the next three years. It might be something to look into and see if there is any way that, as a government, we can legislate some type of act that would hold people building these units more accountable. Obviously, we want to make sure that we have proper housing units that will house people in the communities, but as we look to bring more people in from down south, that they have proper housing.

One other question that was brought up that is just how does the department write off and certify a housing unit when it's built and ready for move-in. Do we have a proper inspector with proper regulations to sign off on those units? Obviously, we are going to have 100 units built over the next three years, so we want to make sure that we have all these things in place.

I just want to make a comment, and I think Mr. Menicoche made comments about the shelter and some of the vacant units in our small communities. Committee did hear from some Members that some of our residents going through some kind of treatment program outside of the Northwest Territories not having the proper support or having some kind of halfway house when they come back to the community for support, and whether or not an NGO can take over one of these vacant units to have some kind of transitional program in a small community, or regional community, for that matter, where they continue to get the support that they need. I know Yellowknife has quite a bit of opportunities or resources in that aspect, but even visiting those facilities here in Yellowknife there is also a definite need for more operations and more workers, as Ms. Bisaro said, and the safety as well.

Just some general comments. A couple of big issues there towards the end, but all in all the Housing Corporation has done a great job, and working with them since the beginning of the 17th Assembly there have been a lot of good improvements and the communication has been one of the better ones with departments. Just general comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. We will go to Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Member's comments on the work that the Housing Corporation has done. As I said on a number of cases, we have come up with a lot of initiatives and then we task our officials with doing all the work and they do a very good job.

The public housing stock, we are placing I think 39. You notice, when we do talk about our public housing stock, we always talk about replacement. We are not adding any new public housing on. If we put 39 in, we will more than likely be taking 39 out, some of our older units because we do have a lot of old units out there. Part of that is as a result of the declining CMHC funding.

We still are hoping to meet with the new federal Minister of Housing with my colleagues across the country. We are co-chairs of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Housing, so we need to get some face time with the new Minister. I think he had committed to Premiers, when they were at Niagara-on-the-Lake, that he was going to try to get together with the Housing Ministers. That's something we're working on right now.

The application-based program through the homelessness, I believe the particular one that the Member was raising, I believe they have an application in and it's just in the process right now. I think we do support two or three initiatives in the community of Inuvik, accessing some of this money, but I believe the new one has... I see your colleague is giving you a hard time about that. Actually, I think there are none in Inuvik and 10 in Yellowknife.

---Laughter

We're reviewing the application right now.

Again, I appreciate the Member's comments. I think it's something that the message is starting to get out there. I always say that Housing didn't just wake up this morning and decide they were going to evict somebody today. In a lot of cases, it's a year-long process. I've heard the saying that we don't evict people, people evict themselves, and I believe that. It's almost a year-long process and they're given a number of chances to try and stay out of being evicted. Some of them will take us up on it and they will honour it. There are some that will use all those avenues at their disposal and then it comes to an actual eviction, and I think that's when Members of the Assembly hear from them, is when the actual eviction is taking place, so we like to provide Members with a small briefing outlining the chronology of events that took place to lead up to the actual eviction.

With the home warranty, the units that we built, our technical people will inspect those homes and

ensure that they're built according to the Building Code and according to our specifications. They will normally carry a one-year deficiency warranty. For people who purchase homes – and I think that was the case in this event, that home was built and this was the second owner, they weren't buying it from the actual builder, they were buying it from someone else who had it built – part of the responsibility would fall on the homeowner that's buying the unit to ensure that they have a proper inspection done. I think we've gone above and beyond in a lot of the cases, where some of the houses we've built and maybe two years later somebody says this isn't working, our folks will go back in there to ensure that it's working. Again, it's something that we need to work on, but I know for the units that we're having built – and the Member mentioned the 100 units that we're doing over the next three years – of course we'll ensure that they go through a rigorous inspection process to make sure that we're getting a good quality product. In most cases it's a one-year warranty afterwards. So, we will do what we can to ensure that the public dollars we spend on these units is well spent. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also have found some very good and positive changes in the Housing Corporation, which I appreciate. I know the Minister has excellent staff. I like to share the credit and think that committee has also contributed. In fact, he has staff who listen well and he himself listens well and reacts positively. I think working as a team, big stuff can happen.

I have a number of questions just on the energy front, and I know that's always an ongoing challenge of putting in some better monitoring to see what the effectiveness of our actions are and stuff like that, which I appreciate.

Heat and power costs I see are up by another \$1 million this year in this budget, so there's obviously still room for improvement. We'd like to see those go down, moving to renewables and energy efficiency. Specifically, I know solar water heating is a demonstrated technology. I know our solar plan seems to emphasize, almost exclusively, electricity, but some of our biggest gains have been made through the water heating and, in fact, solar water heating. In fact, I know that the Minister has staff with expertise and enthusiasm on this I think in Hay River. I think that's an untapped resource that the Housing Corporation could be thinking about there. Would the Minister look into that?

He mentioned, I think in response to my colleague Mr. Dolynny, the question on hot water heaters. We have about 90 electric hot water heaters right now and I think the key question is what did we have

last year at this time, so if the Minister has access to that information, that would be a clear indication of progress.

On the housing for devolution, it's tough for our communities – the professionals, housing, teachers, health professionals and so on, and now with devolution and decentralization – so I recognize there's an issue there. The government is putting substantial money into that. Can the Minister give me assurance that this is not detracting from providing housing to those members of the public that need housing in a more serious way? They don't have a job that takes them into the community, for example. This is market housing. Obviously, there's no such thing in small communities, so I'm wondering: does that mean they will actually be paying the costs of this and that we will be recovering the costs of this housing?

The next area I have questions are in my constituency work I found that there are often differences between support programs in Education, Culture and Employment versus the Housing Corporation. One example that I'd like to see is the Housing Corporation change their policy – and I'll be raising a reverse situation with ECE later – is children as dependents. ECE is satisfied that children are dependents whether or not they're adopted. If in fact, in reality, they are the people who are the guardians and caregivers for our children, they don't have to be adopted. The best example is quite frequently in our Aboriginal cultures, of course, are grandparents. When they're looking after children, the Housing Corp refuses to acknowledge the number of children unless they're adopted, unlike ECE which does acknowledge them. This is problematic, so if I can ask the Minister to look into this and hopefully revise the policy so that they're in line. These are the sorts of things we're hoping to get through the Anti-Poverty Strategy and so on, but this cross-departmental stuff is just tough to do, so I'm trying to raise some very specific examples.

Another issue that I've come across is the way people are prioritized for public housing, specifically people in transitional housing versus the homeless. Right now people in transitional housing are put on some... They're not even put on a list, as far as I know. They're supposed to be put on the list for housing. Often the transitional housing is inappropriate. It's sort of an emergency basis. Here's something transitional. Meanwhile, they'll sit there and sit there and sit there, but somebody homeless will say I need a house and they'll get the house. What would you expect to happen? Well, in fact it does. These families are making themselves homeless so that they can get on the darn list for public housing, and putting their families at risk. I've had this happen repeatedly with my constituents, families that are split up and couch surfing, camping in less than secure situations and so on. If

we're putting people in transitional housing, let's make them a priority for getting them into housing and prevent them having to make themselves homeless because they can't take it anymore, because they're not in appropriate housing, in order to try to get on the list.

I think another opportunity, and I know this department does listen and does try and deal with these. I am hopeful on this stuff.

There are still a few remnant issues from the days of ECE looking after public housing subsidies and they are remnants. I think the department has done a good job in dealing with the bulk of things, but nevertheless, there are remnant issues out there where, for example, clients or previous clients were inappropriately assessed where they did not take the paperwork that was given them and deal with it appropriately, or where the family moved out of public housing and it wasn't recorded so they continued to be assessed at full cost now because there wasn't any communication. These are wearier issues and remnant and historical. Often the paperwork is not there.

Now, I have been successful at getting some adjustments where paperwork does exist, but there are cases now where the paperwork doesn't exist, but there's a record of not taking appropriate action and being accurate by the Housing Corporation. That's admitted where their people delivered, not necessarily Housing Corporation staff but the LHO. So again, an issue that could use some resolution. We've been doing major things to resolve these things in a big way, a systemic way. So this is clean-up stuff.

The last thing I wanted to mention was the apprentices that the Housing Corporation has. It has been a program I've always supported, always expressed an interest in, always appreciated information on it. If, once again, we could get an annual sort of report on where we're at with apprentices, how many we have in what trades and specifically what's happened to the ones that have sort of graduated out of the system and become full-fledged journeyman or whatever. I also notice a specific budget now, I think \$127,000, a one-off thing perhaps or the start of a new program. I wouldn't mind hearing a little bit about that. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, the Member was talking about sharing the credit, and I think I've given credit to committee in committee and I'll do it publicly. A lot of the initiatives that we've worked on I think would be very difficult to put through if we didn't have the support of committee and this Legislative Assembly. So that support is much appreciated.

The housing for devolution, as the Member called it, we're looking at it as housing for staff in the communities and it won't be just specifically earmarked. It's not taking away from the work that we're trying to do. We have 100 units that are identified for housing for staff. We kind of have an initial allocation right now. It's not finalized yet, we're working with that. As well, we still have the incentive program that we're trying to work with the communities so they can provide some housing as well. I mean, I can assure the Member and this Assembly that these aren't just specifically earmarked for any devolution positions that might be going to the communities. We just wanted to ensure, and I think as a government wanted to ensure, that there was some options available to those that might be moving into the community where positions might be available and we didn't want to see anybody not wanting to go there because of issues with housing. So we're trying to address all the issues we've had with housing in trying to improve on the stock we have in the community. We've improved some of the incentives that we've offered to developers to try and get them to put some units in the communities. So there's a lot of work that's ongoing there.

The children as dependents, now I'm not sure how it would work today because children are dependents, and I don't know if the Member is specially talking about public housing units, but that has no effect on their rent or anything like that unless they were over 18 and they were employed, then that would be part of their household income. Pardon me?

---Interjection

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Size of unit, yes. They would know, yes, I suppose, if they've got four or five kids under their care, but I'll look into that and see if the Member has any specific cases that he may want to share with me that brought this question about, then I'd be pleased to hear them. But as far as the actual assessment of rent itself, it has no bearing.

The transitional housing, we've had some success with this program and I think it's helping people. The Member is talking about I think going from transitional housing. I'll have Mr. Stewart add on to that in a minute.

The hot water tanks, I can't remember the amount that we had last year, I don't have that information in front of me, I will dig it up and share it with the Members of the Assembly and members of committee, but again, as I said before, with 216 major retrofits that are happening, I'm sure a good portion of those 90 will be hit by the 216. So we'll have an updated list for the Members.

ECE, I believe we've hit pretty well every assessment that was done. I was sure we were at 100 percent of the ones that have provided the

paperwork. As far as not having the paperwork to validate their information, I mean, it would be awfully difficult for us to go back and make some adjustments, but the ones that have been able to provide the proper documentation, we have been able to make some adjustments and I believe in one case somebody that left, they're going from \$8,000 to zero. So a lot of it was on them providing the proper documentation. Again, I'll follow up on that and if the Member has any specific cases that we can have a discussion about afterwards, I would be pleased to hear those.

So the apprentices, we'll provide some information. I think we do have a one-pager that I would be more than happy to provide to committee. We're quite proud of that program. We've had a lot of folks that have gone through that, we have a lot of them that are certified housing maintainers. We continue to support that and I think the Members of this Assembly continue to support that, so we look forward to that ongoing.

I will have Mr. Stewart, with the chair's indulgence, touch on a couple of things. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just very quickly on a couple of the issues raised by the Member. Prioritization in terms of allocation of units, we do have a standard system that we use that allocates people to available units. We do give extra points on that system for people that are in homeless situations or people that are in family violence situations, for example. I think that's reasonable in terms of, you know, those are situations that you want to try to address as quickly as possible compared to others that maybe have housing that they would like to get into their own unit but that aren't ideally housed, so to speak. But certainly something like our prioritization system is something that I'm sure we'd be happy to talk with committee about in terms of how it works and the type of points associated with it.

The Member also touched on the extra funding, I believe, that was identified for training and support for our LHOs, and we really think that's an important piece of the LHO funding model in terms of regional workshops we'll have and having LHOs the opportunity to get additional training but also to learn from each other. We're going to be rolling those out in the new fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few comments to the opening remarks and the budget for housing as a whole.

I'm glad to see they're planning to actually replace some new stock in the communities. This year I

believe there 19 older public units that are going to be replaced. I hope that one of those units is Bennett Apartments in Aklavik. I believe that is older than I am. I recall in the '80s when I went there for the Northern Games, that building was there and I believe it is time to make changes to that.

Also, as I've explained, there are a lot of people moving back in the riding that I represent. I'm not too familiar with other ridings, but in Tsiigehtchic, Aklavik and McPherson there's a big waiting list of people that are trying to get units, and I believe that there is a need for market rental units, and I hope that those communities are put on the list when the time comes.

I'm actually glad to see that the Joe Greenland Centre is in the books for this year. I'm glad to see the department is actually putting something into the community rather than taking stuff out like other departments. Also, the community would really like to see these kinds of projects actually taken on by the residents of the community just to provide more jobs. One thing that we've noticed when outside contractors get the work is that they bring in workers from out of town but the people in the communities just would rather not have that. They'd like a lot of that funding to stay within the community and boost the economy of the community.

Also, one thing that was mentioned through our tour, as you recall, is some questions towards a shelter. Some funds that were allocated through there that the community wanted to access to provide meals for the residents that are having troubles. I think that's very important to work with the community on.

The other thing was one thing that is working really well, working with the Arctic Energy Alliance for homeowners, was the wood stove program. We're hoping that more units, you know, as we try to cut down on the consumption of fuel, that we work with a lot of the homeowners to ensure that they have wood stoves or pellets put into the homes just to... It's also good to have a backup, say, if the power goes out, especially in the smaller communities and even the larger centres. It's good to have a wood stove in your house, because you go three or four hours without heat in your home and the pipes start freezing up and we've seen that in a lot of the communities. A few years back in Fort McPherson, we had the whole power plant burn down and that was a big strain on the community, but the community did pull together and they recovered. It's always good to plan for those sorts of situations.

As I mentioned, a lot of good programs that are coming within this fiscal year, and as I mentioned, I hope to see a lot more homes. I'd like to commend the department, as I did last year on the job that has been done in one of the communities, Aklavik.

All the units there have been completed and people there are very happy with those new homes that they're now living in. As I mentioned, there's a big waiting list there and we hope to increase that amount of availability.

With that, I'd just like to thank the chair and thank the department.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We appreciate the Member's comments on the work that the NWT Housing Corporation is doing and we look forward to getting this project in Aklavik done. We are pleased that the community had chosen the same spot as the previous one, and having been there just recently, I see that one is down. I think we're doing the work on the tender documents now and we're hoping to have those out and have the contract awarded.

You talk about local employment in some of the smaller communities. A lot of the M and I work that the community does is an opportunity for employment, as far as some of the contracts go. Most of the contractors in the smaller communities now have proven that they do have the capacity to bid on a public tender and, in most cases, win it, because being from the community they have an advantage. I hear your concerns, though, about contractors coming from out of town, but at the same time, we want to make sure that we get a good price on our product and make sure we get our product on the ground in a timely manner, because we want to be able to have folks move into these places as quickly as possible. We continue to work on that though.

The waiting list in some of the communities, and I think one of the communities in your riding was identified, because we work closely with the NWT Teachers' Association in trying to identify some of their communities where they feel that they have a lot of trouble getting teachers in there, for example, because I think they did a review of their housing situation in a lot of the communities working with our folks, and one of your communities was one of the ones that was identified as one of the communities to have challenges providing units to professionals that come in. We take that information and we use that as a guide to help us determine that, well, we should maybe get four units into this community and two units into that community and a few more over there, and that will alleviate some of the pressure. That was very valuable work that went on there.

The power outage that you had in McPherson, you talked about the wood stoves, and we like to see our homeowners with wood stoves because, you're right, Mr. Blake, with the high cost of fuel and electricity and that and the fact that the power goes out, you need to have a backup. If the homeowner

wants to put a wood stove in their place, again, they would have to deal with the insurance issues on that.

You were talking about the power outage in Fort McPherson and the power plant burning down, and it was interesting how all that came about, because I was working in Inuvik, and they just happened to have a workshop in Inuvik where they brought all the maintenance workers from the communities into Inuvik and then the power plant burnt down, so all the boys were shipped from Inuvik. Well, they volunteered to go up there, and they spent a couple days up there just going from unit to unit running the generators and making sure that they had some heat. Unfortunately, the power plant burnt down, but at the same time, we had boys from some of the High Arctic communities that were in Inuvik that were up in McPherson assisting, so it was a real team effort not only from the residents of McPherson, who were pretty good, but from the Housing Corporation, and it just worked out that all our boys were in Inuvik at about the same time. That was a good news story there. I know in the housing office in Inuvik they still have the letters up from the Minister of the day commending them and all the other employees on the work that they did.

I think I've touched on a number of points that the Member raised. I hope I didn't miss anything, Mr. Blake.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few comments to the Minister. I do appreciate Housing's list of seniors units into the small communities, and Fort Good Hope being listed as one of them, and the community of Colville Lake being listed also for a unit up in their area. The homeowners in our communities, there are quite a bit of them in our region: 38 percent, according to the stats that I've got, in Norman Wells that own their own homes; 41 percent in Tulita own their own homes – I'm just doing some of my work here – and 36 percent in Deline own their own homes. You can see that there are a high number of homeowners. Fifty-seven percent in Fort Good Hope own their own homes, and in Colville Lake the number is quite high there, too, at 86 percent. But also in Colville Lake there's 77 percent, just the latest numbers. It might be better than 77 percent of their households in Colville Lake are in core need. When you look at core needs, you look at three criteria that fit the core need. Tulita, 37 percent of core need. These numbers are still 55 percent of households in Fort Good Hope are in core need. When you look at and examine the core needs of these houses, they are quite high and I understand that there are programs set out for them and to lower the core needs in our smaller communities.

I guess what I'm saying is some of the people, either in homeownership or in the public housing units, sometimes it's quite difficult to get equipment and material in there, and people are pretty busy, especially in the last couple of months with the cold weather coming in and freeze-ups of pipes, water pressure pumps and sewer pipes. On top of that, you have leakage on the floor. Is there an annual really in-depth inspection of these units with the wood floor chipping away because of leaks in the bathroom or the kitchen dripping water throughout a continuous period of months or weeks? I would like to know if each household gets a pass inspection from the health that there is black mould, or people don't really know sometimes if it is black mould or just something else.

I get calls. There are repair units that people are living in that sometimes you see boards over the floor that is rotten. The boards are there and they show it to me. Things like that they have in some of these public house units.

My point is there is a high percentage of homeowners, also, that get quite challenged by having to purchase their own material and supplies because you can't pick up the phone and ask Housing for the guy to come up with a van and work. They have to do it themselves. In small communities it's quite expensive, so they would like to see some kind of relief, especially for the older people to have someone they can call in the community. It would be good if you have that. I know it is quite difficult, but it is also nice to have somebody from the government, a maintenance person, to come and help these people to have their equipment. I had to do that over the holidays and get my own equipment when it's 55 below outside. It's not fun.

I want to ask the Housing, is that something that is discussed or talked about? One of my neighbours across the street, who does he call? He is an elderly person. He owns his own home. If his pipes are broken, he has to buy his own pipes from Norman Wells or from outside the community. Those are just some of the unique challenges. I'm not too sure if it is being put into any type of discussion with the Housing Corp.

You have enough houses already to look after; it's a lot of housing. This is added stress, but it's also more for the people who own their own homes. I'm very interested in having the Sahtu be considered as one of the hard to house because we have some people in Deline who are very challenged and it makes it quite hard for them to get into a house. Actually, we have a young man – I just talked to and let the Minister know – that is living in his own shack. He made his own house out of crates from the housing packages. This young man is challenged because he is disabled. The doctor said he can't be out in cold weather, but he's so bad in

arrears that he just kind of gave up on life and that's what he was trying to do, but he survived. Now he is in a little shack in 40 below. It is really difficult, because of our policies and programs, to get him into a unit. He has to wear a scarf over his face. It's too dangerous for him to be out in the cold weather and he's still in that situation. I guess for myself, I am requesting a hard-to-house unit in the Sahtu for this one, look at a community that I would ask that he be given some consideration.

I brought up this black mould and mildew because I had a couple of people from my community come and talk about that. We weren't too sure. They've taken some pictures. It is very difficult to get the nurse involved because she doesn't really get involved with that type of situation. Is there an environmental or health person that comes around and says, I want to inspect the houses, not just the housing, but I want to do it from the South, inspect the housing around our small communities, looking for black mould or mildew? How do we clean that up? People get sick. I'm really concerned about that.

Overall, when I look at the Housing operations and their efforts to help those with all the unique challenges in our communities, especially in the Sahtu, they have come a long way. It's not bad planning they have, trying to capture everything we could do with the money that we have. I look forward to seeing some of the infrastructure being built in our small communities. I think that people in the communities would appreciate it.

I guess the bottom line is, is there any type of an apprenticeship program that we can increase in our communities for electrical, plumbing, pipefitting, to maintain a house that we can get our young people to work? Does the school offer any type of training so the kids can learn the trade and they can help the elders out or help their grandparents out? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is talking about the homeowners in the Sahtu. If you look at the number of homes that are in the Sahtu, initially those homes were provided by the NWT Housing Corporation or with assistance from the NWT Housing Corporation. We contributed greatly to homeownership not only in the Sahtu but across the Northwest Territories.

The Member talks about core need. Again, core needs is kind of a tough one to gauge. If you look at the numbers from the last one done in 2009, I think it said that – I can't remember exactly what the numbers were – 35 percent was core need. Again, we have to make sure that information is accurate, because if you came and asked me is there anything wrong with your house, I can find

something wrong with my house, so that's going to affect the core need percentage in a house.

He talked about inspection of units. We have condition ratings that are required to be done on our housing units every year. It's done every year. They go in, they inspect the unit and identify any potential work that needs to be done and any potential issues that might be coming up. Again, I think the Member was using this in reference to homeownership. Again, if you look at homeownership, it would be their responsibility to ensure that they do the inspections on their house. We have programs in place like the preventative maintenance program, the SAFE program, which is a bit of an emergency repair program, and CARE program. If they identify some issues that needs to be done, they put an application in and our technical people will go work with them to make sure they identify work that needs to be done and they help them with it. Nowhere else in the country is that opinion available to a lot of homeowners.

I'm a firm believer in putting the onus back on the homeowner to identify. I always think of the story where an 85-year-old lady had crawled underneath her house to work on her own sewage tank because it was her house. She felt it was her responsibility, so she did that.

Again, we have a number of programs in place that assist people in the Northwest Territories. If they feel that there is a potential issue with their unit, then they would contact our district office. We're hoping that with the new way we do business, they would contact the local housing authority and do a lot of the application process through them. Then if there is technical work that needs to be done, our technical people would come in and help identify that.

As far as mould goes, mould is getting to be an issue and a lot of it is how we maintain our own units. That has something to do with it. We were starting to see more and more people... In one of our district offices, we have someone there who is a qualified mould technician. We're hoping to have those. After a recent visit to one of the communities in the Mackenzie Delta, they had some concerns there with potential mould. I think it was the very next day our mould remediation person went over there to inspect the unit. I haven't heard the outcome of that yet. I am quite interested in hearing about that.

With mould being an issue, we are starting to see more and more people with expertise privately and within the corporation and we plan on utilizing that. A lot of it is education. We try to put a document out there to say this is what you may need to do to prevent mould.

As far as the transition housing goes, the hard-to-house units that we're doing, it's our intention to try to spread these units all across the Northwest

Territories to make sure everyone benefits from them. Again, we haven't decided where these are going yet. We will work with the communities and see which communities have high need. I am sure we will hear from a lot of communities across the Northwest Territories. Again, this is four units this year and we can maybe consider this a bit of a pilot project to see how this goes over and then go from there. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe I have touched on everything Member was asking.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Bouchard.

COMMITTEE MOTION 6-17(5):
CONCLUSION OF CONSIDERATION OF
NWT HOUSING CORPORATION,
CARRIED

MR. BOUCHARD: I move that this committee now concludes consideration of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation financial summary information and all related information items in Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2014-15. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. We'll just take a minute and circulate this motion. The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I'd like to thank the Minister today and our witnesses, Mr. Stewart and Mr. Anderson, for joining us. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Thank you, committee. Just for the record, with this motion we have concluded consideration of Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Moving on with our agenda, we have Health and Social Services. With that, we will go to the Minister of Health and Social Services for opening comments. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you for this opportunity to appear before Committee of the Whole to present the Department of Health and Social Services' main estimates. The proposed operating budget for 2014-2015 is \$391.929 million, which represents an 8 percent increase from the current fiscal year.

This budget includes \$19.1 million in forced growth and \$16.5 million in key initiatives. The initiatives increase our investment in a number of areas that

target priorities identified by the 17th Legislative Assembly.

Our system continues to face many challenges, including fiscal sustainability, an aging population, changing patterns of chronic disease and the need to keep up with emerging technology. Investments in this budget will help to address these challenges and move us towards our goal of better health, better care and a better future for NWT residents.

Sustainability of the health and social services system is an ongoing concern. We face constant increases in cost and demand for services to meet the needs of our clients and patients. Members of this Assembly have raised concerns about deficits in health and social services authorities. This budget includes \$15 million in forced growth that will help to address ongoing pressures in the system, including providing our authorities with appropriate funding for standby and callback pay. Three point two million will address a base deficiency in Stanton Territorial Hospital's medical travel budget. Five point two million has been added to the budget to address increased costs of children and adults accessing residential placements outside of the NWT.

Funding to support our work in shared services and innovation will also promote sustainability in our system as we move towards achieving efficiencies by sharing expertise and resources among health and social services authorities. One million three hundred thousand dollars in funding to bring Stanton Territorial Health Authority and the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority will help lay the foundation for moving all authorities to a common financial system as well as being an essential stepping stone towards implementing a territorial electronic medical record.

We know we can deliver better care by improving access to services to our residents. The budget includes funding to roll out the Med-Response system. Beginning later this year, this program will provide regional and community health workers with immediate access to physician support, using phone and telehealth technology. This will ensure an immediate response to community medical emergencies, including coordination of medevacs. The budget also includes funding to expand midwifery programming in the NWT.

But we can't focus only on how we deal with people when they need our services. To achieve better health for our population, we need to invest in prevention and promotion. This budget includes funding to improve the overall health and well-being of our people through three major initiatives focusing on anti-poverty, early childhood development, and mental health and addictions.

The budget includes \$500,000 in new funding to support communities, Aboriginal governments and non-government organizations in tackling poverty in

our communities. It includes \$1.5 million to implement our Early Childhood Development Action Plan. We absolutely agree that focusing on healthy child development in the zero to three age group remains a top priority and that we must implement and strengthen a number of programs to support this age group. We also realize that those in greatest need are the families most at risk. They are often the ones who do not take advantage of facility-based programs, whether they are offered in a health centre, a child and family resource centre or a daycare program. If we are going to truly make a difference, we need to find ways to improve our ability to reach the parents and caregivers who are in greatest need of support; including pregnant moms, and parents and caregivers suffering from addictions issues.

Lastly, we continue to invest in Mental Health and Addictions. We continue to make progress on our action plan, including offering a broad continuum of treatment services to meet as many unique treatment needs as possible. We are exploring new options for addictions treatment in the NWT using existing infrastructure, from community-based services to specialized residential addiction treatment options. We have been working with an established treatment centre to pilot a mobile addictions treatment option, and are expanding the availability of day programs and after-care. We are exploring options for re-establishing residential addictions treatment in the Northwest Territories.

A key recommendation of the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness was that the government support a range of on-the-land programs as part of the continuum of addictions programs. I am pleased that the budget includes \$900,000 in new funding which will position us to respond to this recommendation, working in partnership with Aboriginal governments and communities.

This government has identified a number of priorities for this department. I plan to keep Members updated as much as possible as we roll out these new initiatives.

This concludes my opening remarks. I am happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015, and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Do I have a seconder? Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 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
 - Motion 10-17(5), Setting of Sitting Hours by Speaker
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 8, Write-off of Debts Act, 2013-2014
 - Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2013-2014
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 4-17(5), Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2013 Final Report
- Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015
- Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act

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, February 19th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:58 p.m.