



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, May 29, 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 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. I would like to take this opportunity, as I do during each sitting, to acknowledge those of our friends and families who have passed away since we last met. There have been some tragic losses in our communities and I extend the condolences of this House to all who are grieving the loss of loved ones. We grieve with you. My thoughts and prayers for the communities of Sachs Harbour: Tyson Lennie, mother Sarah Lennie, Freddy Lennie, our thoughts and prayers are with you; Tuktoyaktuk: Troy Taylor, parents Laura Raymond and Ronnie Taylor; my aunt Bessie Raddi, her husband, Jim, and children Greta, Roxanne, Tyrone and Tiffany, and all the grandchildren, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Today I am unable to attend the funeral service of one respected elder in my home community and I wish I was there to be with you all, but my thoughts and prayers are with you for Christina Felix, a well-respected elder. Her children Eileen, Jim, Willie, Emmanuel Jr., Clarence and Dolly, Wayne, Thomas and Deanna, my thoughts and prayers are with you for this day.

Ulukhaktok: Renie Oliktok passed, her children Katie, Mary, Annie, Elik, Agnes, Sadie, Lucy, Joanne, Joshua, Molly, Jason and Merven, my thoughts and prayers are with you.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 66-17(5):
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, on March 4, 2014, this Assembly received a report on child and family services from the Auditor General of Canada. The report confirmed what we already knew: that we need to do a better job of supporting children and families. It highlighted areas where

our system has seriously failed. It told how some children are falling through the cracks and how some health and social services authorities have not routinely followed up on the well-being of children placed into care. These situations are unacceptable.

I recognize the need for change, and I am committed to taking aggressive action to make it happen.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will table the report of the director of child and family services, covering the years 2002 through 2012. Although we still have a long way to go, the report shows that we are making progress in some areas. For example, over 11 years the proportion of children receiving services in their family home has increased. The rate of voluntary service agreements and plan of care agreements has gone up. There has been a corresponding decrease in the rate of custody orders and southern placements. This tells us that parents are seeking help and making efforts to improve the situations which are putting their children at risk.

It is also a positive sign that more youth between the ages of 16 and 18 are receiving services. This addresses a gap that was identified as critical by the Standing Committee on Social Programs of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. The proportion of Aboriginal children in the system is far too high. The Auditor General of Canada has confirmed that there are serious deficiencies in accountability, monitoring, reporting and compliance. Addressing these gaps is a top priority and work is underway.

Moving forward, we need a fundamental shift in philosophy. We need to move to a system that puts greater emphasis on building strong families. We need to support families at risk so that children don't need to come under our care. When that fails, we need to have supports in place in the community that will allow children to stay in their homes and will help their parents get back on track.

Mr. Speaker, we know what needs to be done and we will do it. We have already put the key building blocks in place to support families at risk with our strategic action plans for Early Childhood Development, Addictions and Mental Health,

Economic Opportunities and Anti-Poverty. Later this summer I will share with Members of this House an action plan on building stronger families. It will provide a roadmap for changing the child and family services system to achieve these goals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 67-17(5):
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN UPDATE

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share some exciting news about the rollout of junior kindergarten that will begin in the fall of 2014. There has been much discussion on how we are implementing junior kindergarten, and we carefully considered comments and concerns raised by education boards on the rollout of junior kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, we put the decision to education boards and gave them a choice of whether they wanted to implement junior kindergarten in the fall of this year, or defer it to next year.

I am pleased to announce that of the 29 small communities who were offered the chance to implement JK this September, 22 have chosen to say yes to junior kindergarten implementation. Of the seven communities that chose to defer for a year, four of these are the communities in the Tlicho region. While the Tlicho Government fully supports junior kindergarten, it has chosen to defer implementation to 2015 because it is considering its own early childhood legislation and wants to consider a good fit between its early childhood programs and junior kindergarten. Aside from the Tlicho region, only three communities decided to wait another year: Aklavik, Paulatuk and Jean Marie River. In each of these communities, the boards and schools felt they were just not ready to deliver junior kindergarten this fall, and we respect that choice.

Mr. Speaker, it is great news for the Northwest Territories that free, optional, play-based junior kindergarten will be introduced in 22 communities this fall. Then in 2015-16, junior kindergarten will be introduced in the remaining small communities as well as Hay River, Inuvik and Fort Smith. In 2016-17 Yellowknife comes on stream, and junior kindergarten will be available in every community in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in this House, junior kindergarten is the right thing to do. Right now 10 of our smallest communities have no access to early child care programs. These communities in particular will get a real benefit from having junior kindergarten delivered in established and safe places: our schools. It will be taught by

trained teachers with specialized junior kindergarten in-service training and will use a play-based exploratory curriculum. Our junior kindergarten teachers will continue to undergo training to ensure they meet the needs of our early learners. As I have said before, junior kindergarten is not about children in desks, this is about giving children the tools and ability to discover, imagine and learn.

Mr. Speaker, as we roll out junior kindergarten, there may be some growing pains. But we have learned from our junior kindergarten pilot sites. At one of these sites, some children weren't initially ready for junior kindergarten and others had to be introduced slowly. But they learned and adapted, and within a few months, all of the four-year-old children in the communities were attending. We have learned from this experience. In fact, we are already hearing that those schools that have offered junior kindergarten have made incredible strides: they are seeing more confident, socialized children that are engaged and learning and, most importantly, having fun.

Mr. Speaker, I have also met with the chairs of YCS and YK1 on Tuesday. The meeting was very productive and we agreed to get our respective staff to meet and go over the junior kindergarten implications for both school boards. The meetings between staff have taken place and I am advised that they are now in the process of finalizing their analysis. I will report back with the facts on the implementation of junior kindergarten for the two Yellowknife education authorities.

We know that we have moved very quickly on this, but we heard, loud and clear, that we weren't doing enough for our children. Feedback from surveys, meetings and roundtables in the last 18 months specifically directed us to investigate early learning programs for our children.

Mr. Speaker, delivering a quality early childhood program in these 22 communities this fall will not just benefit those communities, it will benefit the territory as a whole. As territorial leaders, we should recognize that everyone benefits from investments in our children, whether that's in Yellowknife, regional centres, or our small communities. We need to give our children, no matter where they live, the best programming we can offer "right from the start." Mahsi.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 68-17(5):
IMPROVED SERVICES FOR PARKS AND
A POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR TOURISM

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, tourism is the Northwest Territories' largest renewable

resource-based sector. Last year approximately 76,000 tourists visited the territory, one of the highest visitor numbers we have seen in the last decade.

Today I would like to tell you about ways we have and will be improving our territorial parks and the positive outlook for our tourism industry.

To ensure an enjoyable experience in our territorial parks, we invest heavily in parks facilities and infrastructure. There is a new kitchen shelter situated closer to the waterfront at Fred Henne beach that is available to rent. At the Prelude Lake Territorial Park marina, more parking spaces are available. At Nitainlaii and Gwich'in Territorial Parks in the Beaufort-Delta region, new hiking trails have been developed. There is also a new shower building at Queen Elizabeth Territorial Park near Fort Smith.

Our efforts to promote our territorial parks and campgrounds and the investments we are making to improve these facilities are not going unnoticed. In early May, Fred Henne and Blackstone Territorial parks were both included in the list of "Best Family Campgrounds in Canada" by Today's Parent magazine.

Mr. Speaker, this year we launched a new online campground reservation system at NWTparks.ca. The new booking system makes reserving campsites quick and easy, and multiple sites can be booked for different dates in one simple transaction. Campers can book double sites to guarantee they can camp together with their friends and families. The public response to the new website was overwhelming, and over 1,000 online reservations were made the first day the site was open. We also conducted a direct mail campaign in early March to select households in Edmonton and Calgary with the result that visits to the NWT parks website escalated.

Families are major users of our territorial parks, and this year we embarked on an education and public awareness campaign to ensure the parks are fun and safe for families. We have launched a water safety campaign that will run throughout the summer in northern newspapers, on Moose FM 100 radio, on social media and on-screen at the Yellowknife Capitol Theatre. These ads promote the importance of being within arm's reach of children who are swimming, wearing a lifejacket, and watching children near water.

These public awareness materials will be supplied to schools and daycares in Yellowknife and Hay River in the last two weeks of classes, and available at Fred Henne and Hay River Territorial Park beaches.

Emergency phone boxes will be available at Fred Henne and Hay River beaches. There is also new, easy-to-understand signage alerting beachgoers to

safety hazards. With the assistance of local contractor Mr. Trevor Kasteel and other local businesses, we have installed a lifejacket loaner station at Fred Henne. Finally, we will be training our parks staff in basic emergency procedures.

These steps will ensure our territorial park beaches are among the safest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, territorial parks are just one part of a tourism sector that continues to grow stronger. I have received reports from our tour operators that the Aurora visitor statistics were very high again this past season. NWT Tourism, the destination marketing organization that the GNWT funds and works closely with, is doing solid work. Their new "Aurora Capital of the World" brand has gained us recognition around the world as the premiere Aurora viewing destination.

This year we saw the number of Chinese visitors to the territory increase substantially again. The Northern Frontier Visitors Centre alone welcomed over 1,000 Chinese visitors in the first quarter of 2014.

Our outdoor adventure operators are also reporting increased bookings for the summer. These visitors are predominantly exploring the Sahtu and Deh Cho regions.

Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry plays a vital role in our economy and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is dedicated to seeing it thrive. Supporting the growth of tourism through investments into NWT parks and tourism infrastructure helps create a vibrant and diversified territorial economy, one of the goals of the 17th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE HAY RIVER HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. I just want to give a little update on some issues related to health and social services in Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, the new hospital or the new health centre in Hay River is well underway, creating a lot of activity and it looks like things are right on schedule. I had the occasion to have some first-hand personal experience with our health services in Hay River in the last six weeks, and I want to report that it is a good system, that it does work. Right from the minute that I walked in the door, off to X-ray to see the physician, the follow-up X-rays, trips to the medical clinic, I have nothing but the

highest regard for all of the people who are delivering services in Hay River and for the way that the system works.

As an indication of this, I wanted to share that, maybe since the last time we were here in this House, a health care professional at the Hay River clinic was awarded a very prestigious award by the Hay River Chamber of Commerce for the outstanding service person. So, for a business community that should be all about customer service, to award a person in the public sector the outstanding service person in a community the size of Hay River is quite something to say for the staff at our Hay River medical clinic, and that recipient was Mrs. Iris Blake. She is definitely an integral part of that clinic.

We have stood in this House so many times and talked about the lack of physicians in Hay River. As many will know, awhile back we signed a resident permanent physician by the name of Dr. Coralie Boudreau, and today I'm pleased to share that a Dr. John Desmond and his family will be moving to Hay River and will also be joining the Hay River Health Authority as a second resident physician for Hay River.

In this good news, we have to be willing to stand up and share that as well. In the meantime, we continue to be well served by our locums that are often on a rotation, where we see the same ones coming back to the community on a continuous basis.

Shortly, the Minister of Health and Social Services will be announcing the name of our new health centre. We look forward to that and of big things to come from this department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE HAY RIVER HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, too, to talk about the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority. We're proud to announce that they've hired two midwives to come on stream in September and October of the fall.

The authority has been working to get the spaces available for the midwives, to make the medical clinic available and set up for them, as well as a delivery area for the potential birthing. They've purchased equipment from last year's funding.

They set up a Midwives Committee to basically work to see how it's going to be implemented, how it affects all the different parts of the authority, such as labs, acute care, practitioners, medical clinic, et cetera, and to help develop processes and policies for the midwives.

Hay River Health and Social Services continues to work with the midwives consultants from the Department of Health and Social Services. They are also linking and working with the Fort Smith Midwifery Program, to make sure that there's a consistency and similar policies that are being implemented.

I'd like to take this time to thank those people who have made this happen. We have some tremendous staff at the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority that basically did all the hiring, that went out and found these people. They're going to be a vital part of our community.

I'd like to thank the former Minister and current Minister for their help in making this happen as well as the many advocates that helped us – my colleague, Mrs. Groenewegen; Social Programs committee – to move this up and make this happen sooner than later. There are also many advocates out there in the public who sent letters of support saying that this should happen sooner than later, and we're pleased that it is. But we are also pleased that Hay River will now be on birth certificates, finally, in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROACTIVE APPROACH TO FIGHTING FOREST FIRES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My communities and constituents are talking about how dry the forests are this spring. We see and have heard that this year's fire season is predicted to be a very, very bad year.

Firstly, I want to commend our brave men and women who have been hired this year, and with all the fire crews throughout the North they will keep our people and property safe. If I may, Mr. Speaker, on our behalf, I salute them in advance for their efforts for this coming fire season.

A constituent has been wondering if the fires had been more aggressively fought last year at the beginning of the season, would residents have been enveloped in smoke for weeks at a time? Sensitive residents, elders and young children can suffer from smoke inhalation, as we have seen last year.

I will be asking the Minister of ENR later today, will the department modify their planned approach to be more proactive when they're fighting fires, to avoid weeks and months of smoke inhalation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ACCOUNTABILITY IN POST-DEVOLUTION
GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In listening to our Premier's sessional statement yesterday, one line stood out which I'd like to share with you today: "Devolution has the potential to create a strong, prosperous territory that provides opportunities for its residents to succeed and supports those who need our help."

Mr. Speaker, that is the key word of the day. Never before in our territorial history has one government been faced with such a significant milestone in its evolutionary path. Our new regulatory regime with new ministerial powers will no doubt create new opportunities that will equally test the moral fabric of what we know today as consensus government. Yes, we have given ourselves new powers and new opportunities on protecting our environment, managing our land and developing our resources, yet we should question where is the government's commitment to accountability and transparency on this evolutionary path. As this government becomes to realize its complexity and sophistication, so too will be the complex myriad of appeal mechanisms, untested policies and poor legislation for its people.

This begs to ask, who is going to help our residents succeed in this brave new world? The answer is so very simple: we need, more than ever, an ombudsman office. The Premier reminds us this balanced agenda focused on helping the people of the Northwest Territories, as he states, "putting Northerners in charge of decisions that affect them," then clearly the next logical evolutionary step is to create an independent body which is the hallmark of transparency and accountability.

Now is the time for this government to join together with Regular Members and Northerners to forge a pathway to a proper support mechanism working alongside our current oversight commissions of privacy, equal pay, official languages and human rights. In fact, there exists a huge opportunity for the creation of a one-stop single-window government accountability office, an office that could house all levels of commissions with the addition of an ombudsman.

This government accountability office concept would set the core standard of accountability and transparency and could conceivably be the true hallmark of a post-devolutionary legacy.

This is what the people want, this is what the people expect, and this is what we ask. Mr. Premier, are you listening? Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INCREASING FUEL PRICES
IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost of living in our small communities has been brought up to this government before and here we are again talking about the high cost of food, fuel and community services. My community of Tsiigehtchic recently experienced a huge increase in the price of fuel. One litre of gas costs \$2.01, which rose 9 cents. Heating fuel is \$1.92. Petrol is 19 cents. Also, diesel fuel is \$2.05 per litre.

Our constituents want to know why there is such a huge increase in fuel costs for Tsiigehtchic. They are concerned that this increase will affect many of our residents in terms of hunting, fishing and gathering for their livelihoods because they need fuel to go out in their boats, vehicles, snowmobiles and also to heat their homes.

Many of our elders are very active. They still go out hauling wood, hunting and travelling to their camps for traditional living. The high cost of gasoline and other fuels will surely affect their way of living. Our elders have a pension that they live on and use sparingly for one month at a time. If they choose to go out on the land, this added cost will prevent them from continuing their healthy living lifestyle. This also goes for the rest of our community members. We are asking ourselves, how can we continue this lifestyle when the cost of gas is so high? If we want to show our youth hunting, fishing and gathering skills, we need the means to go out on the land.

As leaders, we need to work together to find a lasting solution, whether it is bargaining in gas and fuel instead of trucking. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard a quote from somebody that said, "never tear down anything unless you're prepared to build something better in its place." The last couple of days I had the pleasure of meeting with the Tulita leaders, and I want to thank Premier McLeod and the Ministers for making themselves available to sit down with the Tulita leadership to talk about some of the issues they are dealing with today.

What I got from the Tulita leadership meeting with the Ministers and the Premier is that we must keep moving forward no matter what happens. We can either sit idle or we can move to live, and they chose to move forward to make a life for themselves.

I also heard it is far more difficult to be a builder of people and create opportunities, jobs and businesses and anything in this life here. What I got from the leadership meeting is we're in control. In 1994, the land claims, there were provisions in our own land claims to ensure that we have control. That has not happened in the past. By gaining control in the land claims, we have access and benefits which allows direct involvement that sets the terms and conditions for coming and working on our land. We have land use plans. This involves communities and elders. I know my mom was involved in that, that we're participating, which lands were set aside for development, what lands where it says no development. We have harvesting areas, spiritual areas, cultural areas. We even announced Naats'ihch'oh Park as our area.

We have a young population. There are 45 potential graduates this year, 59 next year and 51 the following year. What will we do for them? What are we going to set in place for them? We have Aurora College graduates.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. YAKELEYA: There are 10 Aurora Collage graduates this year. What are the training opportunities? We're looking for a Sahtu technical institution. We have 295 people in the Sahtu today who are capable of working, plus more that need to get to work. We had income assistance decrease a million dollars when there was work going on in the Sahtu region.

The point I want to conclude is our people want wellness. They want to have wellness of our people, on-the-land programs, a transition home for people, and they want to get our people to work. The message is that we want to work. What I want to say in closing from the leaders, is that it's better to be a builder than a destroyer.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PRODUCTIVE CHOICES PROGRAM FOR INCOME SUPPORT CLIENTS

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to turn to the topic of how income assistance is administered. The Auditor General's 2013 report contains shocking findings about failures to service delivery, things like inconsistent treatment of clients and front-line workers performing many other duties without adequate supervision.

My focus today is the productive choices requirement for clients of income assistance. Productive choices placements are mandatory for all adults in the client's household, although exceptions only apply to anyone who is disabled,

over 60, or unfit to work because of a medical condition.

I'm not convinced the productive choices requirement is working effectively. For one thing, organizations are being unnecessarily burdened. One of the band councils in my riding has a core staff of three, and they are expected to provide work for clients of income support, but there isn't always enough work for them to do. Besides that, staff members don't have time to properly supervise them. The government is thrusting people into make-work situations and placing undue pressure on local organizations. It's one more example of poor management.

Another problem is with the term "productive choices" itself. It implies that income support clients are personally at fault for their circumstances, that they must be steered away from unproductive choices. Income support clients don't enjoy having to rely on the government to get by. It's a tough way to live. If we examine things more closely, we find that it's not a simple matter of personal choice. Maybe the person is living in a community with super high unemployment rates. Maybe they're dealing with an addiction or some form of intergenerational trauma or maybe they're a single parent facing the perennial struggle to combine child care duties and paid work.

A third problem is how the productive choices component is administered. Client services officers, or CSOs as they're known, have too much discretion. On a case-by-case basis, CSOs determine where clients will be placed and how many hours a week they'll spend at their placement. Things aren't standardized, which isn't fair to clients.

It's time to review the productive choices component of the income support and consider policy changes. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON YELLOWKNIFE HOUSING CONCERNS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A good segue; thanks to Member Nadli for that. We are facing a housing crisis in Yellowknife. We all experience the high cost of living, and especially housing in Yellowknife, but government policies are causing people with the lowest incomes and housing issues to struggle more than ever.

Local organizations that help people with low income note that waiting lists for their low-income housing programs are longer than they've ever seen them. The same is true for public housing units. The lists are so long that for most people they are not a viable option. People end up paying sky high rents in the private rental market.

One constituent couple is addressing their issues by going to Alberta for addictions treatment, requiring temporary placement of their children and a plan of care. This is exactly what we say we want people to do: making productive choices such as seeking treatment and things will get better. But once in treatment, the Housing Corporation tried to evict them from their unit and withheld their rental form, so they don't qualify for rent payments from income support. So when they come back from treatment, ready to turn a new page in their lives, the first thing they face is a paperwork battle with the housing and income support system to get the support they need. They also return from treatment in serious debt, homeless, faced with the daunting task of reuniting their family under these conditions and under high stress. Great for addictions recovery. This multi-departmental policy failure causes the housing policy crisis I am talking about here.

Waiting lists for public housing are so long that 100-plus families are living in rental units paid for by income support. I've demonstrated previously that our income support system traps people in poverty by, for example, cutting people off as soon as they make any extra income, so it is not surprising to learn that Northern Properties is having trouble collecting rent from people when the income support system cuts off support before they are able to manage on their own.

Now Northern Properties say they will no longer accept new tenants who are on income support. This adds to already existing challenges. I have heard of tenants without running water for months at a time being refused transfers to new apartments and of Northern Properties refusing to sign new leases when people on income support are sharing an apartment and one tenant leaves.

I seek unanimous consent to complete my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, we know that our housing system is unsustainable. We have imposed a limit on the number of housing units in all communities, but there is a clear need for more public housing in Yellowknife. With a 4 percent vacancy rate, apartments are sitting empty here while people in treatment programs are being evicted. Renting market housing through the Income Support Program does not work for the landlords, does not work for the GNWT or the people who we are trying to help. Why not rent these vacant apartments through the Housing Corporation and make them available as public housing under a much more stable system that will actually support those who need it? I will have questions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On many occasions I have stood up in this House and spoke on the crisis of mental health and addictions in the Northwest Territories. However, today I will speak to one that tends to get overlooked on far too many times and that's dealing with prescription drug use, specifically pain killers.

Pain killers are very effective in treating acute pain and chronic pain and pain near the end of life. However, these pain killers can be highly addictive and easily misused and can be fatal at high doses or when combined with alcohol or other sedating drugs. This really affects not only the individual, it affects our health care system and also affects the families who are trying to help their relations who are dealing with these addictions.

In the NWT and also jurisdictions across Canada, we do have a fragmented, unsystematic and insufficient data and monitoring of prescription drug use, misuse and the death that's caused by overdose from prescription drugs.

Across Canada there has been an increase in the demand for addictions treatment programs for people who are addicted to prescription drugs, and we need to do more to regulate the pills themselves and users that they are approved for. We need to take this into the hospitals and to the health centres to make more information readily available to physicians, to families, to the patients and, as I said, to the physicians about their prescribing practices and also talk about the intervention to their patients who might be experiencing some of these addictions.

In 2013 the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse released a report, entitled "First They Do No Harm: Responding to Canada's Prescription Drug Crises." In that report there are many recommendations, some of them alluding to a standardized pan-Canadian surveillance system, a Canada-wide prescription monitoring program, strengthening regulations and a review of legislation related to the safety of these drugs. We also need to do more education and empower the public about prescription drug misuse.

Now is the time for action, and time is very critical. As we continue to talk about it, there are people that are continuing battles with these addictions, and I think the time is now to take action on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FUNDING REDUCTIONS ARISING FROM
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year I've been very vocal about my concerns with aspects of the Education Renewal and Innovation Project as proposed by ECE. I've questioned the Minister with varying degrees of success. In some cases I conducted my own research and then questioned the Minister. It has been a frustrating experience for both me and my constituents because good information has been hard to come by.

Today I will give voice to the words of numerous constituents who have contacted me and other MLAs, expressing their concerns about reduced funding to the Yellowknife school boards. These are constituents who have taken the time to review all the material that Education, Culture and Employment is using to justify the implementation of junior kindergarten. These are highly educated parents who care deeply about the quality of education for all children in the NWT.

Here's a portion of one letter: "One of the goals of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the school boards in the NWT is to invest in the education of children. While junior kindergarten is an excellent program for the children of the NWT, the funds cut from school boards to fund junior kindergarten will be at the expense of students from kindergarten to Grade 12. I believe the long-term effects of this funding cut will be a reduction in student achievement in the NWT."

From another letter: "In my experience with the Saskatchewan government renewal process carried out over 10 years, I heard from the then-Premiers that any new program had to be funded with new money. This would mean that to add junior kindergarten, another grade would have to be deleted or the government come up with new money. Both Premiers also believed that downloading responsibility for funding cuts to lower levels of government was the ultimate in political cowardliness."

A third quote, Mr. Speaker: "I am totally disgusted with the incompetent way that the introduction of junior kindergarten has been introduced in the NWT. I've never seen anything as destructive done by a government in my life."

One constituent has asked questions that I would like to see answered as well: "How do you add more students, lower the budget and keep the same pupil-teacher ratio? Could you explain to me how the same level of education can be maintained with the addition of junior kindergarten and the slashing of \$698,000 of the Yellowknife Catholic Schools' budget?"

Yellowknifers feel that they are being penalized twice over. Not only are their children's programs being affected but their tax dollars are being used elsewhere.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: One last quote: "To take away the surplus, which, by the way, comes from my tax dollars, is nothing more than blatant theft of the monies that pay for my children's education and special needs children who have to be accommodated by the school districts by order of Education, Culture and Employment. So not only am I displeased but also very disappointed that our elected officials would attempt to ram this scheme down taxpayers' throats, most of whom are in the major centres and are the ones being robbed."

The implementation of junior kindergarten at the expense of the other school grades, kindergarten to Grade 12, needs to be reviewed and reconsidered. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later on. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FUNDING REDUCTIONS ARISING FROM
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, before we begin today, I too support early childhood education opportunities in every single one of our communities. I also support the immediate need of those 10 communities that desperately need this opportunity. However, we have an Education Minister who would rather wield divisional politics amongst urban versus rural communities. This Minister should be building bridges, not finding ways to burn them down.

I demand the Minister to immediately show this Assembly any degree of opposition of support against any small community when they need their early childhood education needs met. I also demand this Minister to put any single statement before the House that shows that any Yellowknife MLA has ever obstructed any opportunity for these communities, because we too believe their children need good support. I further demand that he recognizes that all Yellowknife MLAs support the principles of early childhood education. It's time he starts recognizing that and telling the world that this is happening. We're not against these opportunities; we support them. We want to be part of the solution.

So I ask the Minister to stop discombobulating the issue. He's the one causing the problem. If the Education Minister became aware of this, maybe now is the appropriate time. He's Minister of

Education of the whole NWT, not just which communities he feels like it.

All children in Yellowknife matter, their families matter. All NWT children matter, their families matter. Let's start seeing it from this particular Minister, but no, he'd rather pit school board against school board, child against child. Yellowknife MLAs want to be part of the solution, as I said earlier, but no, instead of holding up the promise of standards of education amongst all the children of the Northwest Territories, he has found a way, as I said earlier, to pit board against board, people against people, students against students.

We need some real hard discussions right now. While Yellowknife school boards are under financial attack, they see what's coming. The question now starts to arise, maybe we should be discussing how we should turn back our school boards under the administration of this Education Minister, because frankly, Yellowknife citizens are already paying territorial taxes and we're paying local school taxes. He has gagged the superintendents, and maybe our teachers will finally be paid fairly, just like every other NWT teacher. I'll have questions later today. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to go to recognition of visitors in the gallery, item 6 on the Order Paper, please.

---Unanimous consent granted

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure again this year to have the Grade 6 students from Hay River take a bus up from Hay River to come to visit us here in the Legislature. I'd like to, with the House's indulgence, name each one of them, and when you hear your name called, if you wave, the camera might pick you up and your mom might see you on TV tonight. You have to be quick, though, because I have to do this quickly.

Anyway, Jaidyn Bourdages, Deanna DeRosa, Nicole Griffiths – and, Nicole, you can tell your mom we were talking today in the House about what a great job she does as a physician recruitment person in Hay River – Danielle Havioyak, Hanna Lafferty, Layne Leonard, Raven Magrum, Kiana Masuzumi, Ginger Milne, Hope Norn, Tenielle Patterson – and, Tenielle, you tell your mom, who is my constituency assistant in Hay River who is recovering from major surgery, that we missed her here today, okay? - Julie Squires-Rowe, Natalia Tambour-Lau-a, Zoey Walsh, Pranay Annavarapu, and chaperones here today – sorry if I've pronounced it wrong – Jordan Robinson, Jun Lau-

a, Cindy Lau-a, Ravi Annavarapu, Crystal Mackie, and as I mentioned, Orlanda Patterson in Hay River was instrumental in planning this along with my constituency assistant here, Wendy Morgan, and of course, Mr. Bouchard's assistant, Myrtle Graham, was also very involved in organizing this trip. Thank you to everyone.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the other half of the list recognizing Elisha Gill, Nicole Irwin, Shayna Wilford, Ceaira Flaherty-McKay, Roxie Beaulieu, Matt Hayward, Trey Beck, Angus Smith, Max Boomstrand, Bryce Smith, Shade Martel-Beaulieu, Aaron Herbert, Hunter Lafferty, Jared Chocolate, Caleb Brockway and, obviously, our two teachers, Jennifer Tweedie and Ms. Rita Moizis. They've been attending for the last couple of years. I'd also like to thank the owner of Frontier Coachlines. Going on 11 years in support, Joe Gagnier, one of my constituents as well as the Elks sponsorship of the bus. I'd also like to thank our constituency assistants. Obviously, Wendy Morgan, Orlanda Patterson, who couldn't be here today and, my assistant, Myrtle Graham.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to welcome all the folks from Hay River. It's really great to see this bunch, and it's an annual event and I welcome it. I'd also like to recognize John McFadden, a fellow from the media that many of us have come to know through his work. Mahsi.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose my hand to do the same thing Mr. Bromley just did, but certainly it's worth noting once again. I'd like to, as well, recognize Weledeh constituent John McFadden, citizen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'd like to welcome here today, too, the students from Hay River. I really enjoyed my time with you here today when we had lunch together and we got to get you into the House with most of the MLAs and get some photos taken. I hope you guys have a safe trip back home to Hay River. It was really good seeing all of you here, and do good in school.

Also, I'd like to wish a happy birthday today – it's a belated birthday – to Ms. Wendy Bisaro. Also, I'd like to wish Tom Beaulieu a happy birthday and, one more in the House today, Madam Clerk Collette Langlois. Happy birthday.

I wish all of you guys a happy birthday and have a good rest of your day.

Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Nadli.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 6-17(5): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2014 REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Introduction

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take the opportunity to express in my language the significant nature of this report, so I wanted to take the opportunity to switch to my language here today.

[Translation] ...(inaudible)...standing committee and special committees in the last year. The work done in 2014, the Auditor General working on behalf of child and welfare. We have met on it, and the people that work on the special committee, we would like to thank the Auditor General Mr. Ronnie Campbell, principal Mr. Glenn Wheeler, and lead auditor Ms. Erin Jellinek, and also they are part of the committee that worked on the special committee. There are also several people that worked on the special committee: deputy minister, Ms. DeLancey; and operations, Ms. Cullen; and also child welfare personnel. These are several of the people that worked on the special committee and also the Auditor General of Canada. He is also one of the officials that determine how they will be working as the standing committee and special committee, and some of the things that they also will work on as the Auditor General is the money involved and they also work with Nunavut and Yukon as well.

In regards to the money and how the Legislative Assembly oversees the operation and how they work and also how the government is involved in the way they use the money. In regards to how they work, they also monitor how they work and also how best to work as a standing committee. This is how they work together.

Since 2006 the Auditor General has been involved seven times in monitoring how the standing committee works. This is how the report has been done. The Standing Committee on Operations is how the Legislative Assembly appoints them is they also work on how best to work on behalf of the citizens of the Northwest Territories. The Standing Committee on Government Operations also wants the committees to work to the best of their abilities. This is why they monitor the reports and the Auditor General and how they work with the committees to work best for the benefit of the people of the Northwest Territories. This is how the Auditor General works with the standing committee and special committees.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Yakeleya.

Northwest Territories Child and Family Services Delivered by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Regional Health and Social Services Authorities

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 4, 2014. This year's performance audit focused on child and family services. The department is responsible for the overall management of the child and family services system, and the director of child and family services has key obligations under the act to protect children from harm, abuse and neglect. The regional authorities are responsible for assisting the director in fulfilling these obligations.

Many lives are touched by the child and family services system. Across our jurisdiction over 1,000 children – roughly one child in every six – receive services of some kind each year. Approximately 250 children are in temporary or permanent custody of the director of child and family services. The Government of the Northwest Territories spends about \$21 million annually on these services.

The Northwest Territories has one of the highest rates of child apprehensions in the country. Over 90 percent of child welfare cases involve Aboriginal children.

The root causes of maltreatment are well known. The Northwest Territories has extremely high rates of poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, homelessness and crime. As well, safe and affordable housing is often unavailable.

Underlying these problems is the legacy of the residential school system. Residential schools caused profound disruption to Aboriginal families, forcibly removing children from their homes and eroding traditional practices that bound Aboriginal families and communities together. The school system lasted four generations. Many children were subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect, or some combination of these types of abuse. While residential schools have been closed for decades, the devastating effects are still being felt today.

Child and family services is a very difficult area in which to work. Child protection workers are routinely exposed to traumatic and stressful situations in which they must make difficult decisions about the well-being of children. They also manage paperwork, prepare legal documents and appear in court. There are many dedicated and committed child protection workers in the Northwest Territories.

Two previous reviews of child and family services have been conducted, the first in 2000 by a national organization known as the Child Welfare League. Among its recommendations were: 1) strengthen

accountability; 2) increase resource allocations for regional authorities; and 3) improve tools and guidance to support service delivery.

The second review was completed in 2010 by the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Programs. Members traveled the territory extensively, hearing from people about how to improve the child and family services system. Eight core recommendations were made, out of which flowed several dozen others. The core recommendations were: 1) focus on prevention and early intervention; 2) take the least intrusive measures possible; 3) set up child and family services committees in every community; 4) provide alcohol and drug treatment options in all communities; 5) address gaps in services for youth; 6) improve administration and procedures; 7) develop a territorial anti-poverty strategy; and 8) develop a strategic plan for implementing recommendations.

The Auditor General's 2014 Report

The Auditor General's performance audit covered program delivery between April 2010 and September 2013. Case files for 46 individual children and 36 foster homes were sampled.

Looking to the Child and Family Services Act and the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual, the Auditor General tested the department against its own rules. Four main questions were asked. First, is there an adequate accountability framework in place? Second, are there adequate mechanisms in place to support service delivery? Third, are the department and regional authorities complying with key requirements under the act? And fourth, are appropriate prevention and youth programs in place?

The Standing Committee on Government Operations was deeply troubled to learn from the Auditor General's report that there are serious systemic problems with the delivery of child and family services. The department and regional authorities are not adequately meeting their key responsibilities. Deficiencies exist in almost every area examined.

According to the Auditor General, when the regional authorities initiated investigations, they did so within the required 24 hours, in most cases. However, 13 percent of these investigations did not include the required steps to assess the child's immediate safety. Moreover, not one of the investigations included a longer-term assessment of the potential for abuse or neglect to reoccur. Even more alarming was that in nearly a third of the files, child protection concerns had been reported but never investigated by the regional authorities.

The Auditor General also found that regional authorities did not conduct the necessary checks on

foster homes. In 69 percent of the files examined, children were placed in foster homes which had not been properly screened.

In addition, neither the department nor the regional authorities have developed programming to support vulnerable youth who are not entitled to protection under the act.

Mr. Speaker, now I will turn this over to Ms. Bisaro to finish reading the report.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Ms. Bisaro.

Observations and Recommendations

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's observations can be summarized as follows:

- The department and regional authorities are not adequately meeting their key responsibilities for the protection of children, youth and families.
- The department has not established an adequate accountability framework.
- The department has not assessed the financial and human resources required to carry out its obligations under the Family and Child Services Act.
- Regional authorities do not always complete required steps to keep children safe.
 - In 28 percent of files, child protection concerns were not investigated.
 - 18 percent of investigations were not completed within 30 days as required.
 - In 27 percent of investigations, required interviews were not conducted.
 - In 13 percent of investigations the child's immediate safety was not assessed.
 - Longer-term risk assessments were not conducted in any of the investigations.
 - 14 percent of plan of care agreements had not been signed by the parties.
 - In 54 percent of plan of care agreements, compliance with conditions was not properly monitored.
- Regional authorities are not meeting requirements for screening and reviewing foster care homes.
 - 69 percent of foster care homes were not properly screened.
 - Annual reviews were not performed in 81 percent of the files.

I. General Considerations

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan

The committee is alarmed by the number of deficiencies identified by the Auditor General and the degree of inaction displayed by the department following the 2010 report. During the public review, departmental witnesses were unable to explain to the committee's satisfaction why so little has changed. Instead, witnesses tended to deflect responsibility and blame the system.

In light of this grave situation, the committee expects to see a comprehensive action plan for addressing deficiencies. The action plan should differentiate between short-term and long-term priorities, and identify specific goals, timelines and indicators for measuring progress. Such an action plan will be critical to successfully implementing recommendations contained in this report.

The Auditor General has sounded a warning in this area. The 2012 status report examined progress made by GNWT departments in implementing recommendations of previous performance audits and identified the absence of strong action plans as a significant impediment to effective management.

In addition, the department has already failed to deliver on a number of promises. For example, in response to the Auditor General's report in 2011, the department re-committed to revising the funding methodology for the regional authorities by the end of 2012-13 having made the original commitment in 2006, but it did not follow through. Given this poor track record, the department's next steps will be closely monitored. The committee may request that the Auditor General conduct a follow-up audit if progress is unsatisfactory.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services produce its action plan by June 30, 2014, and table it in the Legislative Assembly at the earliest opportunity.

2. Focus on prevention, early intervention and family preservation strategies

The Auditor General's report underscores a fact established in the 2010 report: the legacy of residential schools reverberates throughout the child and family services system. Over 90 percent of child welfare cases involve Aboriginal children.

The effects of this inter-generational trauma show themselves in struggles with poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence, which figured prominently in the case files reviewed by the Auditor General. In 83 percent of them, alcohol or drugs were identified as putting a child at risk. Alcoholism and other addictions ravage families and communities, yet regional authority officials regularly told the Auditor General there are not enough practical avenues for treatment or prevention services to assist families.

Neither the department nor the regional authorities have developed comprehensive guidelines to assist child protection workers in accessing prevention services.

The committee recommends swift and vigorous action in the area of prevention, early intervention and family preservation strategies. Specifically, prevention services should be expanded in three areas:

A. Alcohol and drug treatment options:

Community-based options must be expanded to ensure that parents requiring alcohol or drug treatment or rehabilitation are able to complete the terms of the plan of care agreement within a reasonable time frame. Without such treatment options, the plan of care process for these families is doomed to failure.

B. Healthy Family Program: This program is aimed at providing in-home support to parents of young children and educating them about nutrition, oral health, play-based learning and risk factors associated with developmental delays. The program is especially beneficial for survivors of the residential school system. In that system, children were forcibly taken from their families, placed in institutional settings and often unable to form loving attachments with their parents. Thus, many parents, even those a generation or two removed from the residential school experience, do not have the necessary life skills or emotional capacity to form strong, loving bonds with their children. The program is currently operating in all regions but not in every community. It should be expanded into all 33 communities with the goal of reaching every at-risk family in the territory.

C. Family preservation workers: Another promising avenue is to employ family preservation workers across the territory. According to the Auditor General's report, at least one such position exists. The purpose is to provide in-home, individualized intervention services, with the aim of preventing the out-of-home placement of children whenever possible. The family preservation worker may provide assistance in the development of effective parenting skills such as: instructions in family budgeting; guidance in managing daily household tasks; information about nutrition and health; and identification of services that might help at-risk families.

The goal of prevention and early intervention strategies is to reduce the overall need for child apprehensions. In conjunction with vigorous prevention-based strategies, the department should therefore establish targets, such as a 20 percent reduction in the number of child apprehensions over a given period.

As a word of caution, reductions in the number of child apprehensions must never be achieved by cutting back on child protection services but rather only by improving the well-being of children and families.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services focus on prevention, early intervention and family preservation strategies with the goal of reducing the need for child apprehensions. Measurable targets should be specified for the upcoming five- and 10-year periods.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services investigate the feasibility of territory-wide expansion of family preservation workers. These workers provide in-home, individualized intervention services in order to promote the well-being of children and families.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the health and social services authorities, in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, assist child protection workers in identifying and accessing the prevention programs available to children and families. They should also ensure that prevention programs such as the Healthy Family Program are offered to families in need.

3. Build linkages in earnest with Aboriginal governments

As a continuation of the previous set of recommendations, stronger linkages must be forged between the child and family services system and Aboriginal governments. This should be accomplished through enhanced community engagement.

Band administrators should be encouraged to participate and advocate at all stages of the child protection process. They should also be included in training activities and workshops and given regular opportunities to develop and participate in training programs for child and family services committees.

Recommendation 5

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services build stronger linkages with Aboriginal governments pertaining to child and family services.

4. Monitor future progress through updates to Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report

The committee concurs with the Auditor General that ongoing progress will be best monitored through updates to performance indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

Updates should be provided on a quarterly basis to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, which will monitor progress on the department's action plan.

Recommendation 6

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services provide quarterly updates to the Standing Committee on Social Programs on improvements to child and family services. These updates should replicate indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report. These exhibits pertain to the following areas respectively: conducting investigations; addressing confirmed child protection needs; attending to children in care of the director; and screening and reviewing foster care homes.

5. Address deficiencies without delay

During the public review, the committee heard departmental witnesses blame a broken child and family services system for ineffective management. The deputy minister alluded to the need for amendments to the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act as this legislation contributes to the convoluted accountability framework. The deputy minister also alluded to impending changes to the broader structure of health care governance.

The committee is gravely concerned that efforts to correct deficiencies in child and family services may be delayed or postponed until governance reforms take place. Members agree with the Auditor General that deficiencies can and must be addressed within the existing legislative framework, even as improvements are made to the governance system.

Recommendation 7

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services begin immediately and in earnest to correct deficiencies in child and family services. Improvements must not be delayed until governance reforms have taken place as reforms may take until the end of the 17th Assembly or longer to complete.

6. Develop a communication plan

Finally, given the long-standing and serious nature of the deficiencies identified by the Auditor General,

key stakeholders and the public have a right to be informed about the department's progress in addressing them.

Recommendation 8

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services develop a communication plan pertaining specifically to child and family services so that stakeholders and the public are informed about completed actions, upcoming changes and anticipated timelines.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pass the reading of the report to my colleague MLA Dolynny.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the report, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

II. Accountability

1. Conduct a thorough review of the accountability framework

According to the Auditor General's report, the current accountability framework leaves the director with little control over the day-to-day operations for which he is ultimately responsible under the act. While the director authorizes child protection workers to exercise many of his duties and make decisions on his behalf, these workers are employed by the regional authorities and report to managers who are not accountable either to the department or the director for child and family services delivered in their region. This is a serious impediment to accountability.

During the public review, departmental officials tended to blame problems with accountability on a broken system. Departmental officials must not be allowed to deflect or redirect blame, but rather must demonstrate a greater degree of leadership.

To date, the department has not made full use of a statutory provision allowing the director to appoint assistant directors in the regional authorities. An assistant director has been appointed in one of the regional authorities. During the audit, the department was unable to explain why this provision had not been more widely used.

With respect to accountability and oversight, two promising signs emerged during the public review. First, departmental witnesses stated their intention to appoint CEOs in the regional authorities as assistant directors of child and family services.

Second, they stated that progressive discipline will be introduced for the first time. Members learned that child protection workers and supervisors have been informed that, as the most extreme form of discipline, their statutory appointments may be revoked if the required eyes-on contact is not made

with children in care of the director or other serious breaches of policy or procedure occur.

Recommendation 9

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General and recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services conduct a thorough review of its accountability framework for child and family services to identify existing deficiencies and implement mechanisms to enhance accountability.

2. Incorporate a performance component in contribution agreements

The current conditions of contribution agreements only require regional authorities to submit audited financial statements and incident reports. However, these documents do not provide the department with information it needs to evaluate compliance with the Child and Family Services Act. By incorporating a performance component in contribution agreements, the accountability framework would be strengthened significantly.

Recommendation 10

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that contribution agreements with the health and social services authorities include a performance component clearly indicating that funding is contingent on compliance with the Child and Family Services Act. This action should be taken immediately.

3. Complete required compliance audits

Under the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual, the department is required to conduct annual compliance audits across all regions. However, these audits are not being completed. During the three-year audit period, a total of 21 audits should have been completed across the regional authorities. In fact, only three audits were completed, along with one follow-up action plan to address deficiencies.

Failure to complete these audits is significant. Compliance audits provide the department with crucial information for monitoring compliance with the act and, more fundamentally, ensuring that children are being protected from harm, abuse and neglect.

Recommendation 11

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services conduct compliance audits of child and family services files annually in all health and social services authorities, as required by the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual. It should also require health and social services

authorities to submit action plans to address deficiencies and monitor their implementation.

As an additional accountability mechanism, the committee recommends that all internal compliance audits and associated action plans be forwarded to the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

Recommendation 12

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that internal compliance audits and action plans designed to address deficiencies prepared by regional authorities be forwarded to the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

4. Table compliance audits in the Legislative Assembly

The committee recommends that compliance audit reports be tabled as a matter of course and further that these audit reports include updates on indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

Recommendation 13

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that internal compliance audits, and action plans designed to address deficiencies prepared by regional authorities be modified for privacy considerations and tabled in the Legislative Assembly. The committee further recommends that internal audits include updates on indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

5. Report annually to the Minister as required under the act

The act requires the director to report annually to the Minister of Health and Social Services. The Auditor General found that reporting had not taken place since 2002. In the absence of such reporting, the Minister has limited assurance that the system is meeting the needs of children, youth and families. This finding is significant.

Recommendation 14

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the director of child and family services report annually to the Minister of Health and Social Services, as required under the Child and Family Services Act.

6. Table the director's annual report in the Legislative Assembly

The department should commit to tabling the director's annual report to the Minister in the Legislative Assembly each year. The report should include updates for each of the regional authorities on indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

Recommendation 15

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Minister of Health and Social Services table the director's annual report each year in the Legislative Assembly. The Standing Committee further recommends that the Minister of Health and Social Services arrange for the director's annual report to include updates for each regional authority on indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

7. Adopt indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report as performance measures in all future departmental business plans

Finally, the annual departmental business plan should incorporate updated data on indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

Recommendation 16

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that all future departmental business plans adopt as performance measures the indicators associated with Exhibits 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Auditor General's report.

I'd like to turn this over to my colleague Mr. Moses.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. To the report, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

III. Support for delivery of services

1. Conduct a thorough review of required resources

When the Child and Family Services Act came into force in 1998, the department set funding levels without assessing what resources would be required to fulfill its statutory obligations. Since 1998 the department has never done a comprehensive assessment of this kind. When asked by the Auditor General's team to provide a rationale for the 1998 funding levels, the department was unable to do so.

The 2000 report by the Child Welfare League recommended that the department rationalize the allocation of resources. Unfortunately, when asked by the Auditor General for the department's response to that report, departmental officials were unable to locate it.

The committee concurs with the Auditor General's recommendation that the department assess the human and financial resources required to fulfill its obligations under the act. The urgency of this task cannot be overstated.

In light of the substantial deficiencies identified by the Auditor General, Members were puzzled during

the public review when departmental witnesses said additional resources may not be required. The committee's view is that additional resources are almost certainly required. Any needs for additional resources should be communicated through the business planning process or, if necessary, through a supplementary appropriation request.

Recommendation 17

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services, in conjunction with the Health and Social Services authorities, perform a detailed assessment of the financial and human resource requirements for delivering child and family services. The department should then revisit this assessment periodically to identify any necessary changes.

2. Complete revisions to the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual

The audit examined whether clear standards, procedures, guidance and tools are in place to facilitate effective service delivery by the regional authorities and child protection workers. The audit determined that the department has failed in this area.

The department developed the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual in 1998. Despite attempts over the better part of a decade to revise the manual, the department has never completed this task. As a result, the manual has never been updated to keep pace with changes to the act or best practices in child welfare.

The audit also determined that some sections of the manual are lacking tools and guidance to assist child protection workers in meeting key requirements. These include sections on conducting investigations, administering plan of care agreements and screening prospective foster homes. The absence of standardized procedures for all key responsibilities is a significant deficiency. It represents a grave failure to support child protection workers. This likely affects morale, staff turnover and, ultimately, the well-being of children.

Recommendation 18

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that Department of Health and Social Services, in consultation with the health and social services authorities, update and clarify the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual and identify additional tools and guidance to better assist child protection workers in meeting key requirements of the Child and Family Services Act.

Recommendation 19

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services complete revisions to the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual by December 2014.

Recommendation 20

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services, in consultation with the health and social services authorities, develop a process for all parties involved in the delivery of child and family services to share information on best practices and challenges in delivery of these services.

3. Improve mandatory training

The department is responsible for providing mandatory introductory training to child protection workers. Members learned during the public review that this training typically spans a two-week period.

When child protection workers were asked by the Auditor General team about the effectiveness of this training, their responses were mixed. Some stated the training helped them understand their jobs but others said the training did not provide adequate guidance on how to apply the act and the manual in their daily work. The department should assess the effectiveness of the existing training program and make enhancements accordingly.

Recommendation 21

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services, in consultation with the Health and Social Services authorities, provide training to all child protection workers for all key responsibilities required to carry out child and family services. It should also assess whether the training provided is meeting the needs of child protection workers to deliver child and family services and make the necessary improvements as soon as possible.

4. Solicit input from child protection workers

During the public review, Members asked what opportunities child protection workers have to convey their ideas for improving the system. Members learned that informal opportunities – such as regular teleconferences – exist for child protection workers to communicate with departmental managers. However, Members do not think this is adequate and recommend a formal process for front-line experts to provide input.

Recommendation 22

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of

Health and Social Services implement an ongoing formal process whereby child protection workers have an opportunity to recommend improvements for the child and family services system.

5. Improve working conditions for child protection workers

The committee has serious concerns about stressful working conditions faced by child protection workers. The Auditor General reported that some workers consider their workloads to be high. The problem of overwork is not new. It is identified as a serious barrier to effective service delivery in the 2010 report by the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

Unfortunately, the department has never developed caseload standards, so it is not in a position to determine whether staffing levels are adequate.

Upon completing the assessment of required financial and human resources, the department should revise the funding methodology for regional authorities and establish territory-wide caseload standards.

Members urge caution in assessing caseload standards. The appropriate caseload for child protection workers in Yellowknife, where a comparatively large number of resources and other helping professionals are on hand, may be higher than in communities such as Sachs Harbour or Trout Lake. The caseload assessment should be sensitive to the fact that social workers employed by regional authorities are sometimes required to perform duties beyond the area of child and family services.

Recommendation 23

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services revise the funding methodology for the regional authorities upon completing the assessment of required resources.

Recommendation 24

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services establish territory-wide caseload standards for child protection workers, and further that the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that caseloads are fairly balanced across the regional authorities. Due consideration should be given to regional variation and duties, demands and available resources.

6. Increase support for the social work program at Aurora College

Finally, Members recommend additional support for the social work program at Aurora College to increase the number of Aboriginal students who

complete the program and subsequently have opportunities to serve as child protection workers.

Recommendation 25

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College to enhance supports for students in the social work program with a goal of increasing the number of home-grown Aboriginal students. A bursary program should be established. Online coursework and distance education options should also be considered.

I would like to now turn the report over to my colleague Ms. Bisaro.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the report, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

IV. Child protection services and foster care

1. Summary of observations

Child protection workers, who are employed by the regional authorities, are the face of child and family services. They deliver services on behalf of the director. The Auditor General examined whether the regional authorities are meeting key requirements under the act and the manual. Thirteen key requirements were examined in four areas: investigations (Exhibit 3); addressing confirmed needs for child protection (Exhibit 4); providing services to children in care of the director (Exhibit 5); and screening and reviewing foster care homes (Exhibit 6).

A sample was drawn from 46 case files for individual children, 26 who were receiving services in the parental home and 17 who were under the care of the director. Another sample was drawn from 36 files of regular, provisional and extended-family foster homes. The following observations were recorded:

A. Regional authorities responded quickly to reported concerns for children: The vast majority of investigations, 92 percent, were conducted within 24 hours, as required by the act.

B. Key investigations steps were not followed: The manual requires specific steps for assessing a child's safety. However, safety assessments were not always completed. In 27 percent of cases, the required interviews with children and other family members were not performed. In 28 percent of the files, concerns about children possibly needing protection were not investigated. In 13 percent of investigations, safety factors were not assessed. Failure to follow required investigation steps leaves children at risk. In 66 percent of cases where

proper steps were not followed, subsequent investigations ultimately found the child in need of protection.

- C. Investigations did not assess longer-term risk:** The statutory requirement to assess longer-term risk was not met in any of the case files. Most files were simply closed if the investigation showed the child was not at immediate risk. Yet the majority of these case files were subsequently reopened.
- D. Plan of care agreements were not properly monitored:** In cases where a child is deemed to need protection, the child may be allowed to remain in the parental home if a plan of care agreement is signed and followed. The Auditor General examined 37 plan of care agreements and found that more than half were not properly monitored. Furthermore, workers had not maintained regular contact with these children, as required by law. In 76 percent of cases, further protection concerns arose after the plan of care agreement was put in place.
- E. Children in custody were not sufficiently monitored:** Once a child has been placed in temporary or permanent custody, child protection workers are required to maintain regular contact. The Auditor General found that children placed in extended family foster care homes were least likely to receive follow-up services. In 59 percent of cases, regional authorities did not maintain regular contact with these children. Furthermore, none of the required case reviews were completed.
- F. Foster homes were not screened or reviewed annually:** Of the 36 files reviewed, 69 percent of the homes were not properly screened. In two cases this resulted in children being placed in foster homes that were later closed due to allegations of abuse and neglect.
- G. There is no standardized approach to foster care:** Beyond standard rates of pay for foster parents, there are no territory-wide standards for delivering foster care. As a result, there are disparities across the regional authorities in levels of support given to foster care children and families. Across the territory, there is a chronic shortage of foster care families.
- H. There are gaps in services for youth:** Under the act, most youth who are 16 or older are not eligible for protection services such as foster care, yet they are not eligible for territorial programs such as Income Assistance until the age of majority.

2. Develop a tool for longer-term risk assessment

Failure to assess longer-term risk results in recurring interactions with the system. In one case, for example, the Auditor General discovered that a child had been apprehended nine times.

The department agreed with the Auditor General's recommendation to develop a tool for assessing longer-term risk but indicated the tool would not be in use before 2015-16 at the earliest. The committee thinks this is too long to wait and urges the department to make it a top priority to develop this tool.

In addition, as a word of caution in this endeavour, the committee urges the department not to operate under the illusion that neglect is a lesser form of abuse. Neglect can be extremely damaging to a child's well-being and often entails serious long-term consequences.

Recommendation 26

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that health and social services authorities, in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, develop a tool to ensure that longer-term risks to children are formally assessed when determining a child's safety, as required under the Child and Family Services Act. This tool should be ready for use by front-line workers within the current fiscal year. To expedite the process, the department should look to other jurisdictions for guidance.

3. Ensure services are delivered in compliance with the act and manual

Inadequate monitoring of plan of care agreements and of children in custody is simply unacceptable. Likewise, failures to screen and review foster homes are unacceptable. Such practices must not continue. Barriers to proper service delivery – such as insufficient resources or inadequate training – must be assessed and promptly addressed. Efforts should also be made to standardize foster care across the territory.

Recommendation 27

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that the health and social services authorities comply with the Child and Family Services Act and the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual in their delivery of services to children and families. They should ensure that key requirements are met when: investigating concerns about child safety and well-being; providing protective services to children to address confirmed child protection needs; providing services to children under the care of the director of child and family services; and performing screening and monitoring of foster care homes.

Recommendation 28

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concurs with the Auditor General of Canada and recommends that health and social services authorities, in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, should regularly assess whether the services they provide to children and families are in compliance with the Child and Family Services Act and the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual. The results of these assessments should be used to improve compliance and should be shared with the director of child and family services.

4. Address gaps in services for youth

For decades, youth aged 16 to 18 have been falling through the cracks in the child and family services system. Youth under the age of 19 may not qualify for protection – for example, foster care – yet because they have not reached the age of majority they cannot legally sign a lease or receive income assistance. The department has known about these service gaps but has done little to address them. This situation is unacceptable.

A successful court challenge in 2010 of the Nunavut Child and Family Services Act determined that it discriminated based on age and, therefore, violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This court decision indicates that changes to the Child and Family Services Act of the Northwest Territories are likely required. In the meantime, the department should provide services to youth on the basis of discretionary provisions in the act.

Recommendation 29

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services address gaps in services for youth and make appropriate amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. Performance measures should be included in all departmental business plans to track the number of youth receiving discretionary services and the types of services received.

Mr. Speaker, I would turn the reading of the report for the conclusion to our chair, Mr. Nadli.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Nadli.

Conclusion

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Auditor General, the department is not adequately meeting its responsibilities under the act. The department does not have an adequate accountability framework in place. Neither the department nor the regional authorities have adequate mechanisms in place to ensure key responsibilities are being met.

Even with a long-standing awareness of such problems, the department has failed an entire

generation of children and families. Since the publication of previous reviews of child and family services in 2000 and 2010, little has been done in the way of systemic analysis or action to address the weaknesses.

Dramatic changes are required. The department must assess resource needs, fix the accountability framework, improve standards and procedures and provide better training to child protection workers.

The committee is encouraged that the Minister accepted the Auditor General's recommendations and plans to implement them. At the same time, Members are understandably sceptical because of the department's lacklustre response to earlier reviews of this kind.

In conclusion, the committee reiterates the words of the Auditor General: changes are within the department's immediate control. The department is at a critical juncture. It must go beyond making minor adjustments and overhaul the system.

Recommendation 30

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the government provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

That concludes the presentation of our report.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT
6-17(5) AND MOVE INTO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 6-17(5), Report on the Review of the 2014 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Northwest Territories Child and Family Services, be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 6-17(5) has been received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Mr. Dolynny.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 303-17(5):

“SUPERBUG” BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back on February 24, 2014, in this House, I spoke to the fact that right now superbugs pose the biggest challenges in our hospitals nationally. In fact, one in 12 patients in a Canadian hospital are infected by superbugs during their stay. Unfortunately, after waiting 94 days for an answer to my tabled written questions from the Department of Health and Social Services, it is clear this department is not concerned about these national statistics or the potential health threat to the residents of the Northwest Territories. My questions will be for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

The fact that this department has almost ignored national alarming statistics on hospital superbug infestation is shameful. Focusing on one matrix, that of only methicillin-resistant strains of Staph A begs to ask the Minister are reporting mechanisms truly in place or do these superbugs fail to cross the 60th parallel, because every other jurisdiction in Canada faces these threats. So why, Minister, why are we so unique that we don't see these other prevalent superbugs in the Northwest Territories? 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. I appreciate the Member's consideration or suggestion that we don't care or we're not taking this particularly seriously. I would like to suggest that, in fact, we do take this very seriously and are monitoring where appropriate. I can't say why there isn't more prevalence or more indication. We do monitor; we do track. I would also suggest that the Member take a closer look at the report, because we do see increased rates in some of our communities. It just doesn't happen to be in all of our communities. We are tracking, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: The recently tabled NWT Department of Health and Social Services Annual Report of 2012-2013 lists Methicillin-resistant Staph showing a doubling of incidents in our hospitals in just one calendar year. Plus, a tabled data provided yesterday by the Minister equally echoes regional authorities struggling with huge reporting increases. So, unfortunately, with only one matrix of evaluation which is clearly showing alarming increases in certain regions, what is this Minister doing to mitigate this situation? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We're working with each of the authorities to identify protocols that work within particular jurisdictions. We are working with health professionals; we are working with

individuals who are on the front line who have the best opportunities to provide recommendations on how to address those situations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm not sure if there was a response there, which was totally unfortunate. As I indicated in my Member's statement on February 24, 2014, our basic defence in superbug control is a more robust and well-funded housekeeping program. Yesterday's tabled data on the subject fails to address the questions posed some 94 days ago, making this tabled document virtually useless. Mr. Speaker, I cannot express my dismay in such a non-response to a written question. Therefore, I ask the Minister: when can this Member or the people of the Northwest Territories expect the full and complete written reply to my questions on housekeeping cleaning budgets in the Northwest Territories health care facilities? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Getting and liking the response are two different things. The Member did get a response. It was full; it was comprehensive. It has the data he asked for. As I've indicated, the departments and the authorities do take this issue seriously and we are working with the authorities to come up with methods to address this particular concern and control the spread of these bugs throughout the system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister and I have a different definition of whole and comprehensive. If I was in pre-kindergarten, that would probably be applicable, what I received yesterday. That was not full and comprehensive.

In trying to reflect best practices that we see nationally, can the Minister indicate when we should expect a full, public reporting mechanism that reports all superbug incidents in our in-patient hospitals and a complete public reporting program that evaluates our NWT housekeeping programs? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There is a significantly large list of different superbugs that the Member is referring to. There are some that are more common and prevalent than others. According to the information provided, we've got incidents that some of the superbugs in our authorities that are non-existent or very, very low, not even at a point where it's reasonable or possible to collect that data and the more common, prevalent superbugs, and we will continue to report on that and we're happy to share the information.

Once again, getting and liking the answer are two different things. I believe the answer was comprehensive. I answered the questions the Member did ask. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 304-17(5):
PROACTIVE APPROACH TO
FIGHTING FOREST FIRES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister of ENR some questions with regard to my Member's statement. Forest fires are common occurrences in the Northwest Territories from May to September and can cause extensive damage, put lives in danger and cause health effects.

I'd like to know what the Department of ENR's assessment and plan is for this coming fire season in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've got all the traditional forces together. The fire crews are back on. The fixed-wing resources or assets are there, as are the rotary wing. We have, as well, looked at the meteorological reports. We anticipate, and predictions are, extreme drought in the southern part of the territory, both the South Slave and the Deh Cho. So, we have folks on high alert. We've made alternate arrangements for, as well, a DC-6 from Airspray to be available and we will be making use of the MARS agreement, should the need arise over the course of the fire season.

The cool, somewhat damp weather has been a blessing so far, but like everybody else, I watch the weather very carefully and we anticipate that sooner or later the fire season will start up in earnest. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I note that on the NWT fire website that we've had four fires to date and there's two current. One is being monitored, but constituents have been asking. The fires that are being monitored late last year that caused excessive smoke in the communities causing some health effects to the elders, to young people, people with health conditions.

Can the department consider being more proactive in putting out these monitoring fires early? Particularly when there's so few of them, I'm sure we can use some extra resources and put them out before more heat comes and more winds that cause bigger fires. Thanks.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We proceed by the policies laid out and directly laid out through the values at risk. I appreciate the Member's concern, because smoke can travel a long way. I will talk to the department about the fires the Member is mentioning, to see what is in fact possible. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Earlier in my spring tour as I toured the smaller communities in my riding, the leadership was asking about updating their firebreaks and getting that cleaned up. I'm wondering if the department has been to the communities and are working the communities to update and even clean out their firebreaks so that they're out of danger. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There has been work done through the FireSmart Program. It is not heavily resourced. What we have been doing is trying to work with municipalities, with individuals to make sure they fire smart their own properties, and where there's an opportunity early in the fire season or when there's a lull in fire season and if the crews are available, we've been putting those crews to work, as well, in the various communities, trying to look at firebreaks and the thinning of brush and the removable of flammable under-forest to help limit the spread of fire. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just getting back to the health effects of smoke from forest fires, does the department work, say, with the Department of Health with an information campaign so the residents can best be prepared for the fire season? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, we will ensure that, as usual, folks are ready. This is the time of year, as well, where there's a dusting off of emergency measure plans and the need for, as the Member indicated, a communication between Health and fire and in the event of heavy smoke that everybody knows what to do when that situation arises. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 305-17(6):
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment and I'd like to begin by asking the Minister one or two of the questions which I mentioned in my statement, which have been provided to me by constituents and are questions which I would love to get an answer for as well.

The first one from a constituent: How can the Minister add one whole cohort of students – and by that I'm referencing junior kindergarten – and reduce funding to the boards and at the same time still maintain that the boards are able – the Minister is saying that the boards are able – to maintain the same PTR? So we are adding one whole grade, junior kindergarten, we're reducing funding and

apparently still maintaining PTR, which I have great difficulty in believing. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When we are rolling out the program this fall, as I mentioned earlier, 22 out of 29 communities are going full force with the introduction of junior kindergarten and the rest will follow a year after and then the third year phased approach.

As I stated yesterday, two days ago I met with the board chairs of YCS and YK1 and we gave them some information that will be a useful part of their calculation of numbers. So we need to have actual, concrete, factual numbers and those are the facts that we want to lay out. The information that was introduced in the media is misleading; it wasn't accurate information. So, the numbers that will come out early next week will be much different than what we've seen based on enrolment. So at that time I will be sharing it with the public. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for the information. I think I and the public will wait with bated breath to see this new information and see how it's presumably going to assist the boards. I still have difficulty believing when you take money away that it's going to make things better.

The second question from a constituent: How can the current level or quality of education be maintained with the slashing of funding to the school boards? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: When we first introduced junior kindergarten, we worked with the superintendents and they gave us some ideas of how we could mitigate and also work with the existing funding that has been introduced. Based on that, we came up with some numbers, a first and second and third year approach based on the 29 communities and then on to the regional centres and, finally, the Yellowknife school boards. Based on that, I've also committed that anything beyond 16 to 1 student teacher ratio I will be subsidizing as a department, as the Minister responsible for education. Based on that, the PTR, that's why I don't really want to say much in this House as of yet because those numbers are being crunched by the two senior staff, YK1, YCS and my department as we speak. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I didn't hear much reference to how this is maintaining the quality or the level of education that we currently have when the boards are losing money.

I'd like to also ask the Minister: It hasn't been stated outright, but certainly in recent actions and statements by both the department and the Minister, there's been an indication that there's a

new policy which is being instituted by the GNWT for boards. That seems to be, from what I'm gathering and what I'm hearing, is use your surpluses to fund your budget shortfalls. You've got surpluses and we want you to use them up, we're not giving you any more money until you do that.

I'd like to know from the Minister if this is a new policy on the part of Education, Culture and Employment and are they implementing it on their own, or is it a part of a Cabinet decision? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. The board surplus is at the discretion of the school boards at this time. Mahsi.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. It's nice to know that, if I hear the Minister correctly, he's not going to claw back surpluses, but by reducing funding, that in effect requires them to use their surpluses to fill in the shortfalls.

So I'd like to know from the Minister, in Yellowknife, obviously the situation is different, the Minister is well aware, if he's forcing the boards in Yellowknife to use up their surpluses, a portion of that is taxpayers' money. So does he feel that that's fair in that my taxpayer dollars are being forced to fill in a shortfall that the GNWT is instituting? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I'm glad the Member is referring to taxpayers' money. It is public money, the surplus that's been accumulated. Some are substantial amounts and those monies should be expended into educational programming, so we support that as well.

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

QUESTION 306-17(5):
INCREASING FUEL PRICES
IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Public Works and Services. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, the high cost of fuel prices in the community of Tsiigehtchic. It's not bad enough we're paying \$8 per litre of milk, now the price of heating fuel has gone up.

I'd like to ask the Minister: Can the Minister explain the huge increase in the price of fuel for Tsiigehtchic?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. The biggest contributor to the increase of heating fuel has been the wholesale cost of fuel. The

wholesale cost of fuel over a 12-month period from early 2013 to early 2014 was 20 cents a litre. That is the price increase of the wholesale price when we purchased it Edmonton, and somehow that contributed to, for example, an increase of 17 cents a litre in Yellowknife.

MR. BLAKE: I was actually asking about Tsiigehtchic. I wasn't too concerned about Yellowknife. The prices here are, I believe, \$1.38 per litre. The residents of Tsiigehtchic want to know why they feel the communities are always hit with the highest prices. As well, Tsiigehtchic is on the Mackenzie River system.

Can we reduce the cost by bringing fuel in to the community by barge?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I was just making a comparison to the increase in YK. The Member is right; the increase in Tsiigehtchic, although we purchased the price of wholesale fuel for 20 cents a litre more, we charged 19 cents a litre more in Tsiigehtchic, so we did that by trying to use our Stabilization Fund to hold the price for a few months until the winter season was over so that the individuals in the smaller communities weren't hit with the high fuel prices that we purchased in January. We held the price using our Stabilization Fund until the end of the winter season so that we would try to somehow keep the cost as low as possible for the homeowners.

MR. BLAKE: One of our priorities for this government is to reduce the cost of living in our communities.

How does the Minister plan to address the impacts of increased fuel prices on the quality of life in our smaller communities?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We do try to buy fuel, heating fuel, motor fuel and gasoline at the lowest possible price. We do make a call on the price of gasoline. We do buy mid-grade gasoline. It's very important to the communities to have gasoline that doesn't de-grade. If we buy low-grade gasoline, which is four cents a litre cheaper, the communities also realize that sometimes when we buy a lower grade gasoline there have been issues with snowmobiles and boat motors and so on. When people are out on the land, it's essential that they have good gas, so we do pay four cents a litre more for that, but we do try to get the lowest possible price. Then we blend the rates and we try not to give people shocking fuel price increases. Even if we are paying those increases, to try to hold the price as much as possible by using our Stabilization Fund.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain some of the differences between the Northwest Territories petroleum products supply

and Nunavut's bulk fuel purchases that have allowed them to stabilize fuel costs while prices in the Northwest Territories continue to rise?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'm not familiar with the policy that Nunavut employs. The policy that we use is to provide fuel, heating fuel and gasoline to communities where there are no individuals that consider it marketable to be able to sell fuel, so the government steps in as a last resource to provide that service to the individuals. The government tries to come in at the exact cost of fuel and we sell it for the cost of operating and purchasing and transporting the fuel to the community.

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

QUESTION 307-17(5):
BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I talked about the Tulita leadership meeting this past couple of days, and again, I appreciate the Ministers and the Premier making themselves available on the short notice.

I want to ask my questions to the Minister of ITI. Due to the delay in further work and the exploration work in the Sahtu, work will still continue on the Husky road. They will continue doing environmental studies and some seismic work this summer.

I want to ask the department what type of department planning initiatives will continue to ensure that the people in the Sahtu, in the North, that we are ready when work will come up again.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the fact that the leadership from the Sahtu was down in Yellowknife meeting with us, and I understand they were in Calgary as well. It is a pause in the activity in the Sahtu and with that pause we have to keep a positive frame of mind about how things are going to progress there. There are other opportunities, and I know the leadership in the Sahtu is aware of those other opportunities. Our government is committed to continuing to work with the leadership in the Sahtu to see those opportunities realized, and we will continue our best on moving forward with advancing things in the Sahtu to allow people to take advantage of those opportunities as they come, and some are going to be coming sooner than others.

MR. YAKELEYA: The people in the Sahtu are looking at other opportunities due to the delay in the exploration work. I want to ask the Minister about the other opportunities that we really should talk about and what specifically.

Will the Minister come to the Sahtu to work and meet with the people in the Sahtu to continue this type of dialogue we've had in the last couple of days?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Certainly, the future looks very bright for the Sahtu, for the region. I do have plans to travel to Norman Wells and to Deline the middle of June, and I look forward to continuing the discussion that we had recently with the leadership from the Sahtu on how we can work together to advance opportunities that will benefit not only the region but the territory as a whole.

MR. YAKELEYA: The leadership wants to talk about that we do have a high population of graduates in the next couple of years. We're looking at the training opportunities and career development.

Again, are there opportunities? I want to ask the Minister, in regard to these, are there opportunities, as the leadership talked about, specifically with ITI to support them to advance these opportunities like the Canol Heritage Trail, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, training institution that we could have in the Sahtu? Is the Minister willing to support the leadership in advancing these types of proposed projects within his department and with the colleagues that are going to be working on these initiatives also?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Again, the dialogue needs to continue and the discussion needs to continue to happen. I know my colleagues, Minister Beaulieu and Minister Lafferty, we need to continue to work together, opportunities to invest in not only in people in the training but also in infrastructure. Those opportunities are before us and we just have to continue to work together. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the concerns that we have also has to do with the geoscience work that's happened up in the Sahtu.

Is the Minister also going to be involved in some of the leadership, some of the work that could happen that our people also can take advantage of the geoscience work that is going to be happening in the Sahtu?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We are now responsible for that work through the geoscience office here. We will continue to work to best determine how to go about collecting that type of information, cataloguing it and using it to our best advantage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 308-17(5):
COORDINATION OF GNWT HOUSING
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of the Social Envelope Committee. Like many social issues, the housing crisis I mentioned in my statement cuts across several departments.

Could the Minister provide some background on how we got here? Why is it that the Housing Corporation has a limit on public housing units while at the same time ECE is paying sky high market rents to house over 100 families? I believe it's 130 here in Yellowknife. Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't talk to the details about the NWT Housing Corp's programs, but I would encourage the Member to follow up with the appropriate Minister.

What I can say is that I listened intently to the Member's opening comments and Member's statement. The issues he is bringing up are consistent with issues that he brought up during the winter session about conflicts in departments and having barriers to providing quality services to our residents. At that time I did get a copy of the Member's statement with a list of samples and examples of areas where he felt, and others have felt, that there are serious barriers to service delivery.

As the Minister responsible for the social envelope, I did direct the deputy responsible to pull together the types of issues that the Member and other Members have shared about these types of conflicts. We have also directed them to dig into the departments and seek out examples that are similar. We have pulled together over 50 from the departments and added the samples that have been provided by Members.

As we have been going through this, it's clear that some of these barriers and some of the challenges that the Member is talking about, some of them are due to communication and perception and not clearly understanding some of the rules. Clearly, we as a government need to do far better at explaining and helping our public understand some of the programs and services. But at the same time, there are some that clearly, without a doubt, as a result of conflicting priorities and policies within the departments.

We have directed departments to work together through the Social Envelope Committee to identify which ones are more communication-based, which ones are policy-based and come back with recommendations on how to start breaking down

these barriers and remove them so that our residents are not forced to go into poverty or to have the housing challenges that have been identified over time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. This is the latter case, policy failures. I hope I've exemplified that in yet another example here. I would encourage the Minister of the Social Envelope Committee to speak to his colleagues. That's why I'm speaking to this Minister on cross-departmental issues. I cannot speak to each of them and address these issues. That's why we're failing and that is exactly why we have a Social Envelope Committee. I encourage the Minister to find out why it is that the Housing Corporation has a limit on public housing as well, at the same time ECE is paying sky high market rents. Neither Minister can answer that question. This is a Social Envelope Committee question.

Would the Minister agree that public housing, with its sliding rent scale and relative stability, is a more effective way of providing housing for families in need while they make the productive choices we encourage, more effective that is, than using income support to pay rent in market housing where monthly rent can jump from zero to thousands of dollars depending on how a family's income is assessed? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what part of my last answer the Member didn't understand, but I clearly articulated that we are working as Ministers on the Social Envelope Committee. I have shared this information with committee members and we have continued to have that dialogue. Clearly, we are doing what the Member is directing.

With respect to the specifics, I am happy to take the information that the Member is providing and to bring it into the Social Envelope Committee of Cabinet to continue to have that dialogue. I do acknowledge and agree with the Member that this one clearly sounds like a policy issue. I'm looking forward to getting the details from the Member, and I am looking forward to bringing it into the Social Envelope Committee of Cabinet to have further discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: The Minister didn't answer the question. I'll just give him the question again here. Given the sliding scale and relative stability of public housing, why aren't we going with that while making the public productive choices that we encourage? It's much more effective to have that than a situation where monthly rent can jump from zero to thousands of dollars through the Income Support Program. That was the question. The Minister didn't even touch on that. I will grant you that I'm dense and I didn't understand something, if that helps.

Would the Minister agree that private landlords, such as Northern Properties, would also likely prefer to have the stable contracts that would be provided if the Housing Corporation was renting their units on a long-term basis instead of the unstable income support system?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, the Member is asking me for my opinion. I am happy to give it, but at the same time, I work with my colleagues in the other departments and as Minister responsible for the social envelope, I will continue to do that. We will analyze the questions that the Member is asking and we will come back to the Member with a unified response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks very much to the Minister for that response. The Minister has done some sound work in producing an Anti-Poverty Action Plan. Here is another concrete suggestion that would significantly impact poverty levels in both Yellowknife and the communities where income support is paying for rent.

Would the Minister commit to reporting back on the feasibility of creating more public housing in these communities instead of income support housing? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that the Anti-Poverty Strategy is as strong as it is, is because we work together collaboratively with the other partners and nobody made a unilateral decision on what programs and services would look like. I would hate to presuppose a solution when I haven't had an opportunity to talk to my colleagues about what the Member is suggesting. I am very interested in the details from the Member. I think there might be some merit there, but I'm going to have a conversation with my colleagues on both sides of the House before I come forward with a decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 309-17(5):
ENERGY EFFICIENCIES IN NEW
HAY RIVER HEALTH CENTRE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members know and Cabinet knows, we have had some recent retrofits of some government infrastructure in Hay River. We appreciate these very much. Of course, I made reference today in my statement to the work that's going on to construct a new regional health centre for Hay River. I have a question for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

Over the years we have talked a lot in this House about how to make new infrastructure owned and operated by the GNWT more energy efficient. I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works and Services, are there any particular building techniques or building materials or technology or innovation that has gone into the planning of the new Hay River Health Centre that would see our costs of operation for that new facility be reasonable and energy conserving over the next many years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Public Works does a lot of energy retrofits. We track all of the greenhouse gases that we save through energy retrofits. We track all of the money that we save by using energy retrofits and installing biomass in our buildings, then we put that money back into more energy retrofits and biomass.

With the hospital, we will be using a biomass heating system and the envelope of the building would be of a high energy standard. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'm very happy to hear that and the Minister referred very specifically to energy retrofits, but I'd like to ask: has there been a point at which the Department of Public Works and Services has introduced any new guidelines that ensure energy efficiency in the construction, not just the operation through biomass, for new infrastructure? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, we try to use the latest energy-efficient methods when we do new construction, as well, at this time. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: It's no secret that we live in one of the harshest climates on the planet. It would reason well that our government, when investing millions of dollars in new infrastructure, we want to be on the leading edge, cutting edge. We would want to be the showcase of energy efficiency.

Again, I'm just curious, has the Department of Public Works and Services done anything above and beyond the standard national building codes for the various types of buildings that they build that would see our costs reduced to operate on an ongoing basis in the actual construction? I appreciate the biomass piece, but on the actual construction of buildings from here on out that would make them more energy efficient. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, the methods that are employed when we do new construction, the insulation value and the envelope of the building are designed to be as energy efficient as possible. So with the rising costs of energy right across the country, when we build anything new, we do that

with the concept of having as energy efficient as possible construction as we can. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand it may cost a little more at the beginning when constructing a new building to put energy-saving materials and planning in place.

Does the Department of Public Works and Services have a plan or a template for a follow-up after that building has been operating for a while to see what the return on those initial investments are in a higher energy saving? Do they have something in place to monitor that so we can hear the accounting of what those savings are? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: With new buildings, it is anticipated that the energy costs would be much lower than other buildings built previously. There is no actual savings because we don't have a comparative data, but when we upgrade older buildings into this type of energy-efficient envelope, increasing insulation values, we then take that and use those for all of the savings of the fuel that we burn or that we don't burn, I suppose, on these buildings and then redistribute it into all of our energy programs.

For the new buildings, like I said, we would see a lot less cost than it would be having not constructed the building with energy-efficient methods and biomass. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 310-17(5):
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today will be for the Minister of Education about the junior kindergarten and getting an understanding of some of the concerns I've heard from in the South Slave about the education and the implementation of junior kindergarten. I'm just wondering after the three phases, after first phase going into smaller communities, the second phase going into Hay River, Inuvik and Fort Smith and then, finally, into the larger centre of Yellowknife. Once those three phases are completed, how will these organizations be able to operate under the premise of having an additional pressure of having all those four-year-olds without having any additional money?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. After we complete the first, second and third year phase of introducing junior kindergarten,

those students will be registered under enrolment funding. On an annual basis, we contribute to school boards, so those students, the 40 students projected for Hay River, will fall under the enrollment funding. So we will continue for a number of years. Also, if they are upwards of or increase of 16 to 1, then there is a PTR in addition to the funding that will be identified. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOUCHARD: The other thing I have heard from the Hay River DEA, or the district education, was that they indicated they had to use some of their surplus to fund some of these JKs. Is that true?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I stated earlier that the surplus is at the discretion of the school boards, how they want to spend it, but we've always encouraged them to spend it on educational programming. It is up to the school boards to spend on programming in their communities and region. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOUCHARD: The Minister indicated earlier in some of the questioning that they were going to do some number crunching and there was going to be an announcement on new numbers. I was just wondering if they've indicated that they are going to implement this program, junior kindergarten, and over the three phases, wouldn't they have done that number crunching before? Wouldn't they have a complete picture of where the money is going to come from to fund junior kindergarten? Why is the number crunching coming now after they've indicated the three phases and all the expenditures that need to be done?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I met with board chairs and the superintendents on May 13th. Based on that, I had an in-camera discussion with the board chairs only. They gave me some ideas and suggestions about it not being mandatory, optional programming, and also having the four-day kindergarten. I was receptive to that and I said I would take that into consideration, which I did based on enrollment for school in the fall. So, Mr. Speaker, it was based on the recommendation of the school board chairs that we move forward on the changes. Mahsi.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has indicated some of the projections of students. I guess those are some of the assumptions. My understanding is that junior kindergarten is not mandatory; it's voluntary. So how can they be projecting what enrollments are if they aren't mandatory, and would the department consider it to be a requirement to be mandatory?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, when I met with the school board chairs on the 13th of May, we

gave them an extended week until the 23rd of May to go back to their communities and regions and identify how many students would be registered. So they had until May 23rd to give us the actual enrolment numbers, so it was based on the fact that we're producing these numbers. It was corresponding with the school boards. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 311-17(5):
OVER-PRESCRIPTION AND MISUSE
OF PAIN KILLERS

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a follow-up to questions on my Member's statement earlier on prescription drugs and the misuse and possibly the over-prescribing of, more specifically, pain killers, I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, what is the Minister doing to address the over-prescribing of pain killers and the misuse of prescribed drugs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the Member asked the question. Contrary to what has been suggested previously in the House, I as a Member, I as the Minister and the department both take this issue incredibly seriously. Within the department of Health and Social Services, our chief clinical advisor is actively involved in putting together a working group and committee, formed consisting of physicians and other health care practitioners, pharmacists and government personnel, to discuss and come up with solutions around the prescription drug abuse issue. Also, the department is working to set standards that will help guide physicians and nurse practitioners on prescribing opiates and other medications, but it's not just within the department. The medical directors of the Northwest Territories forum is working on guidelines for controlled substances, and these would be territory-wide and include an educational component as well. These guidelines and standards are also going to include some work around the management of opiate dependence as well.

Once again, it's not just the department and the medical directors. Under the Health Information Act we have the ability under Section 65 to actually put in a monitoring program, which will help provide information and the resources. We need to figure out what is happening with respect to prescription drug abuse.

Lastly, the federal government recently put money into their federal budget to address this issue

because it is such a significant issue and the Ministers of Health across the country are working together to look for ways to address prescription drug abuse. So, a large number of things are happening, and we take this very seriously, and we are working to find solutions and provide tools that will help practitioners as well. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. That was a really good update. I thank the Minister for all the information that he provided. He did mention that under Section 65 of the Health Information Act, which is slowly coming out and developing that monitoring program, I'm assuming that we can't get that monitoring program until the Health Information Act comes into play here.

Is there anything that we can do to monitor any prescription or prescription drugs in the meantime until the Health Information Act gets ascent? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. In the winter session there was some debate back and forth between myself and MLA Dolynny from Range Lake about our ability to monitor, and the Member did identify a large number of pieces of legislation and indicated that we can do a monitoring program. I was listening very closely to what the Member was saying and I asked the department for a comprehensive legal opinion on whether or not we could, and the department and the lawyers pointed out that we can't take individual pieces of legislation and think about them independently. We have to look at how they crosslink. The bottom line is we're still not able to put in the monitoring program. There are some barriers. We will be able to do it with the Health Information Act.

However, it was also suggested to me that with a minor tweak to the Pharmacy Act to include a notwithstanding clause related to the ATIPP, we would actually be able to put in a monitoring program. This is an important issue. I know Mr. Dolynny has raised it; I know Mr. Moses has raised it. We need to move forward on this. So I have come forward with an LP and I have provided to committee that it will allow us to make a minor change to the Pharmacy Act, which will allow us to put in the monitoring program that both Mr. Dolynny and Mr. Moses would like to see in place. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. I think there are a lot of people in the Northwest Territories, especially the families, as well, would like to see that monitoring program in place to help those that are battling addictions of these pain killers and affecting their lives.

The Minister also mentioned a working group. Can we get a timeline as to when that working group will first be meeting and when they'll get together to start looking at possibly developing a strategy and looking at areas to develop these guidelines on the

monitoring and the tracking of these prescription drugs and looking at some of this legislation? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. I did mention that there are a number of things going on, and there's work at the federal level, but I'm happy to keep the committee updated on that as we move forward. There's also the work of the Medical Directors' Forum and I'm happy, as I get briefings, to provide that information to the committee, as well, but we also have the departmental group that is being led by our chief clinical advisor and that group actually has been convened. Their scheduled first meeting was for May. I will follow up to find out what the results of that meeting were, but there's so much good work out there being done. As the Member mentioned in his Member's statement, a number of reports have been done and one of the reports that was done was "First Do No Harm," which was put together by the federal government, Nova Scotia and Alberta, and that report has been shared with all these different groups so that they can take best practices and lessons learned as they move forward to come up with some solutions. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think one of the main things is with the data collection monitoring, with the monitoring system, what kind of data collection will we have on file and how will that be used to develop future strategic plans, and will there be a data component in place and will it include not only drug misuse and over-prescribing but also stats that are related to overdose of prescription drugs? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. Through the Pharmacy Act, with the amendment to the Pharmacy Act we'll be able to track what has been dispensed. The interpretation of that data will have to be done and we'll have to come up with some policies to figure out how to do the interpretation of that data so that we can try to understand where the abuses are occurring. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 312-17(6):
PRODUCTIVE CHOICES PROGRAM
FOR INCOME SUPPORT CLIENTS

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Income Support is a program that the government delivers and it's targeted for the less fortunate. Usually it's in the unfortunate circumstances that people find themselves in that they require assistance. So my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

We're delivering the productive choices program. What is the process to ensure that host organizations have the desire and the capacity to deal effectively with clients? Mahsi.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Part of the productive choices within the income security division is to provide options for those individuals that are accessing income support. A part of that is by way of productive choices. We are trying to help them and assist them in opening doors for them to better their lives in the future, whether it be workforce development or training. Some of the productive choices, of course, are casual employment, education, there's also career training, planning, attending wellness programs, parenting a young child, caring for a disabled adult dependent and volunteering. So those are just some of the areas that we want them to engage in, the community, the organizations, so at least they can get their foot in the door with opportunities that may be available to them. Mahsi.

MR. NADLI: Thank you. I don't believe I got an answer to the question that I asked. In communities we have limited office spaces. So you're very fortunate if you go on the productive choices and you work in an office, but most of the time you have to take your productive choices outside. That means you have to do some outdoor work. Most of the time people that have to have productive choices, there are volunteer hours that they have to amass. Some of them, unfortunately, have to go on people's roofs shovelling snow sometimes and at this time of the year it's usually picking garbage. So what type of oversight or evaluation is taking place to ensure a productive choices placement is favourable for both clients and the organizations hosting them? Mahsi.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The productive choices, again, we work with the organizations, the corporations and the community to satisfy their needs as well. Those individuals are employable, ready to work and should be out there doing productive choices whether it be on a volunteering basis. I realize that from the small community perspective there may not be huge opportunities to do those productive choices, but we're working with wellness programming and other programs in the community. So from time to time we do evaluate our productive choices and we've made some changes. In 2014 we made some changes. We added wellness programming. So as we move forward, this is a part of the Auditor General's recommendations that we need to enhance our productive choices and that's what we're doing. Mahsi.

MR. NADLI: I think the point of my question is that, as an example, if someone has to do productive choices, say for their band council or maybe for the hamlet council or maybe for the Metis council, and they're forced to go on somebody's roof and they're shovelling snow and they fall off the roof, who's liable? That's the point of my question. I don't think I got a very confident answer that tells me a...(inaudible)...local organizations that have to take on these responsibilities that they're covered, and I'm not getting an answer from the Minister.

On the same topic, why are client service officers allowed so much discretion and so much power in administering productive choices placements? How does the government prevent unfair or inconsistent treatment from one client to the next?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Client service officers are there to implement the regulations and the legislation that we pass through this House, and we provide the guidance to them, the direction that they have to follow, the legislation and the rules and regulations that are in place that we have established for them. We are trying to be fair to each and every client service clientele out in the communities, the 33 communities that we service. We have client service officers in most of the communities, and the regional centres assist with those that may not have it. We're doing what we can in the income security division to assist those individuals. This is intended to be short term. It's not a long-term subsidy program. We're trying to get them to productive choices or enter the workforce or training program or such opportunities that may exist.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like the Minister and the department are taking a top-heavy approach, and if you have a top-heavy approach in terms of a system, the small person that's involved with income support, you know, sometimes they experience a system that, again, does not make their work with income support very good. But I'm encouraged. The Minister has indicated they have evaluated the program before and they have made some changes. I would like to get a commitment from the Minister, if he agrees, that changes to the productive choices are needed.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I don't see this as a top-heavy approach. I don't believe in that. I believe in working together. I met with the client service officers, most of them, just a couple months ago, to share their perspectives, coming from a small community perspective, working with the chiefs and working with the council members, community members. As I stated, in 2014 we made changes. The wellness is part of it now and we will continue to make those changes. All those recommendations, ideas and suggestions that are

coming to my office, certainly consider those part of the changes.

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

QUESTION 313-17(5):
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of places to start with today, and by golly, I think I'm going to give the Education Minister the pleasure of my questions today.

May I remind the Education Minister that in Yellowknife the education boards are administrative boards and not advisory boards. Now, in the capital, the YK school boards raise approximately 20 percent of their funding from their tax base.

Perhaps the Minister can explain the funding formula in this situation where YK schools raise part of their own money to educate our students and the difference between the other schools that don't need to do this, because we need to know what's changing as he's out there poaching money from our schools to fund other programs that he dreams up.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure where the Member is getting that poaching word from, but we're dealing with the public purse and we're dealing with the public funding that we contribute to all school boards across the Northwest Territories, 33 communities, seven regions. We will continue to do so and which will benefit our students.

MR. HAWKINS: Let me thank Robin Hood over there for that answer. I want to know from the Minister, is he in a position to fund all Yellowknife school boards at 100 percent, because it's unfair that in Yellowknife the citizens are double taxed. For the education of anybody following this issue, you pay through your property tax and then that money can go to the school boards where it doesn't apply elsewhere in the Northwest Territories. The citizens of Yellowknife are being double taxed on this issue. Is he prepared to fund them properly, 100 percent?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, we're contributing to all the school boards across the Northwest Territories based on enrolment across the North.

MR. HAWKINS: But the fact is, that's not a straight line funding formula. He has one for the communities, and then he has one for the regional centres, and he's got ones for Yellowknife. By the way, you have a large funding formula for the communities – which I support because it's

important – and I certainly say the fact is the problem is he's taking from the large centre of Yellowknife to fund them. He should be asking for money.

By the way, on that note, has the Justice Minister ever had the courage to come to committee or the Assembly, for that matter, and ask for the proper money and funding to fund JK from the very start, rather than going and poaching the money from other school boards?

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hawkins, that is a different line of questioning to a different Minister. Were you asking the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Education? Minister of Education. Mr. Hawkins, rephrase your question to the Minister of Education, please.

MR. HAWKINS: See, Mr. Speaker, you're so correct, because this is such a frustrating issue. I happen to look at all of them, and they all look the same because they all give the same answers: nothing.

The Education Minister is the one I'm, frankly, pointing at right now. Thank you for pointing that out. Frankly, has the Education Minister ever had the courage to come to the committee or the Assembly to ask for money to properly fund this program from the start, because I don't know how he's going to do more with less money.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'm going to remind all the Members about respect for each other in regard to answering and your tone of questions and that. I know it's heated and I know it's sensitive, but respecting one another in this House to make a common good for the people of the territory. Mr. Lafferty, Education Minister.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The answer would be no. We're using internal resources.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how you get more with less money, and he's spreading this around. But all of this problem really began, this epic journey, all the narrative of when the Department of Education gag ordered the superintendents in the fall, so none of us really knew what was happening, so maybe let's start getting to the bottom of this issue by working backwards.

We've talked about how we got here through the process of funding, how we're getting there and the problems. What about the problem about gagging the superintendents from the start on this particular issue? Why would the Department of Education tell the Yellowknife superintendents they couldn't tell their boards, which in essence, as I said at the very start, they're administrative boards, not advisory

boards, so those superintendents were put in a horrible position. Why would the Education Minister do that to our superintendents? They're accountable to the people. What is the Minister being accountable to in this regard?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: This Minister is accountable to the general public of the Northwest Territories. We did work with the superintendents where they gave us an idea of instead of just 10 to 12, cover all aspects K to 12. We listened to them. We made those changes that reflects on that. Also, 16 to 1, if they're beyond that there's new money with PTR that we are going to influx into the school boards.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Mr. Nadli.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 8:

WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS ACT, 2013-2014

BILL 9:

FORGIVENESS OF DEBTS ACT, 2013-2014

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has concluded its review of Bill 8, Write-off of Debts Act, 2013-2014, and Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2013-2014, and wishes to report that Bills 8 and 9 are ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 87-17(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2014-2015

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015."

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 88-17(5):
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
FOR THE YEARS 2002-2012

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled "Report of the Director of Child and Family Services for the Years 2002-2012." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Bisaro.

TABLED DOCUMENT 89-17(5):
CORRESPONDENCE FROM CONSTITUENTS
REGARDING JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN
IMPLEMENTATION

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a group of e-mails and letters from constituents concerning funding for Yellowknife school boards.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. There is one item before Committee of the Whole on our agenda today. What is the wish of committee? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We wish to deal with that tabled document. I don't know the number, but Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. It's Tabled Document 87-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We will commence with that after a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. We're dealing with the Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015. I would like to ask Minister Abernethy if he would like to bring opening remarks on behalf of Minister Miltenberger. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present Supplementary

Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015. This document provides for an increase of \$58.515 million to the capital budget.

The most significant item in this supplementary estimates is \$58 million in capital carry-overs for the completion of infrastructure projects. This represents a carry-over of 21.3 percent of the previous year's capital plan, our lowest in the past 10 years. These costs are offset by an equivalent lapse of infrastructure funding in the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

I am prepared to review the details of the supplementary estimates document. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Before we go to general comments from Members, I would like to ask Mr. Abernethy if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses to the table.

Minister Abernethy, for the record, could you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, on my left is Mike Aumond, deputy minister of Finance; on my right, Sandy Kalgutkar, deputy secretary to the FMB. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. General comments. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to welcome the Minister and department here today. I have just a kind of an opening general comment only because, as we become better at public accounts as some of the Members here on this side of the House, the whole issue of tangible capital assets and how we depreciate those assets as we prepare for the upcoming fall here, we see changes in what has not been spent according to the budget. We are looking now at those appropriations that are kind of a carry-forward for infrastructure.

My opening question is: How is depreciation now calculated with these tangible assets? Are we using a revised number? Are we using the actual number? How does this depreciated value move through the system as we prepare for public accounts reporting? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. To give those specific details, I'd like to go to Deputy Minister Aumond.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Madam Chair. For projects that are the subject of the supp here, the carry-overs, the amortization of those assets will not be put into service until the projects are actually completed. Amortization for them does not start until the projects are complete and the assets are put into service. So if it's a building project, the 40 year life, the schedule for that wouldn't start until the building is put into service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you for clarifying that. I appreciate that. I guess I'm just looking at your opening comments and it talks about this is the lowest in the past 10 years in terms of carry-over. You are using the term 21.3 percent.

Can you possibly give an explanation as to the possibilities why we are seeing such a lower carry-over than we have in years past? What has been the trend that has caused a lower carry-over? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the new capital process that came in process, it came live in the 16th Legislative Assembly. We are further down the line as far as understanding the costs of all projects. We have also been working really hard to actually make sure that projects are moving along in the timeline that was originally scheduled. There are always some unforeseen barriers or challenges, but for the most part, we are becoming more efficient at planning and having concrete numbers so that we're able to get more of the projects done on time and as designed and intended.

MR. DOLYNNY: So can the Minister elaborate? Has there been any one specific area of success? You know, we're getting better projects? Are there more specifics to that or better estimates? Are we getting better control of our contractors, compliance with timelines? Can we maybe elaborate as to... I'm trying to foster what are those success issues here so that we can look at analyzing if we can use that in other areas of the government. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, in the 16th Assembly there was a lot of questions around this. Back in that time the carry-overs were massive. I think I remember seeing one in the \$90 million range. As a result, the Assembly worked really hard to put in a new capital process where we actually have to move further along as far as having

a concept and a plan design and a Class C estimate, which allows us to have a far tighter idea of what the actual build cost is going to be, but it also allows us to have a more comprehensive build schedule. As a result of that, we have been able to get more solid contracts through our procurement process.

There are a lot of details here. There are a lot of things that can affect timing. For more specifics, I would like to go to Deputy Minister Aumond, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just briefly follow up on Mr. Abernethy's comments. Capital planning process that the Minister referred to injected more rigour into the process, so we have a better understanding about what it is we are trying to construct and what the cost might be.

The other factor I think that is at play, in addition to all those issues with our improvements to our own capital processes, we have a stable market now in terms of... On the bad news side, there's not a lot of opportunity out there for capital projects other than what the GNWT has on the table right now. We are getting more bids than we were getting, say, five or six years ago on our projects, so the competitive field for our capital plan is a little bit more stable than it was perhaps four or five years ago. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Minister's and deputy minister's response. My final area of questioning has to do with where we sit with respect to the Building Canada Plan, which I believe ceased about over a year or two ago. There were some residual projects which I believe were tied to some old monies. I'm looking at the accounting aspect. We cleaned up a lot of that money with the Infrastructure Canada plan we prepared for the Corridors for Canada III, which is a whole new other aspect of infrastructure and building.

Can we get, maybe, a broad overview? Have we used all the provisional monies that were set aside under the original Building Infrastructure Plan? Are some of those monies still reflected in this current infrastructure carry-over? Are we fait accompli? Thank you.

MR. AUMOND: There's, I guess, a small amount of BCP money reflected in this carry-over, some for MACA for community governments for some water treatment plants and the residual amount in DOT. I would say we have probably spent 95 to 96 percent of the BCP funds that were available to us in the last tranche. We are eagerly awaiting details about how we can engage with the Government of

Canada on the new round of Build Canada money that will be made available to the Northwest Territories and all other jurisdictions in Canada. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Madam Chair, I have no more further general comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will follow in the same line of questioning. In that percentage of carry-overs, do we have some goals set? Is it expected that as we get longer in the tooth about the process of approving infrastructure in the fall moving forward for next year that we will get down to a lower threshold, like down to 15 percent let's say? Is there a goal to do more of that in the future, to drop that number even more?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We haven't set a target like 5, 10, 15 percent, but our goal is always to do better and to get that percentage as low as we can. Ultimately, it would be great to get to a point where all the capital we budget for is completed in the year in which it's budgeted, but there are always extenuating circumstances that may limit that or interfere with that. Our goal is to get it as low as possible and spend the money in the year that it's allocated.

MR. BOUCHARD: The other question I have is with the financial part of it and us having borrowing limits and stuff like that. It is actually probably a savings concern. Are we saving money in interest costs and stuff like that when we don't spend all the money that is required under the infrastructure budget?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Very little savings at all as a result of this.

MR. BOUCHARD: I'm just wondering: it would be nice for the government to set a goal to decrease this number as much as possible because the money out in the community, out in the territory, we're talking about large sums of money, multi-millions of dollars going out in the regions and in the territory would have an economic spin. So for those people that there's a lot of concern that the economy is slowing down and the fact that we would like to see more of that money out and spending itself in the economy, it would be nice to see the departments set a goal, especially the big project departments such as Transportation and some of the ones that have bigger projects. It would be good to set a goal to achieve it down to a certain point. I know there is always going to be some carry-over. We can't get rid of all of it, but getting it down to a 15 percent goal in the next couple of

years would be one thing that I would look for them to try to achieve.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Madam Chair, our goal is always to complete the projects in the year in which they are budgeted for, to spend the dollars in the year that they are approved and supported by the Legislative Assembly. Ultimately, we would like to have no carry-over and that's our goal.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. General comments. Okay, moving to detail then. If you could please turn to page 5 in your document. Municipal and Community Affairs, infrastructure operations expenditures, community operations, \$4.374 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Total department, \$4.374 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, infrastructure operations expenditures, labour development and standards, \$269,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Total department, \$269,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed, thank you. Moving on to the Legislative Assembly, capital infrastructure expenditures, Office of the Clerk, \$328,000. Total department, \$328,000. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the information on here is a bit different than what I looked at earlier in the week and there is an additional amount of \$98,000 that, according to the provision here, is to provide funding for improvements to increase accessibility in the Legislative Assembly building. Can I get some more clarification on that entry? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Legislative Assembly, through direction of the Speaker and the Board of Management, are attempting to improve the accessibility of the Legislative Assembly and increase the ability for all of our residents to enter and enjoy this flagship facility that we have. These dollars are intended to help improve some of the accessibility issues here in the building, including some amendments to the bathrooms, putting the electronic push sensors that will automatically open doors, remove some of the glass walls in the bathroom and public areas so that there is less restriction for persons with disabilities

to come through the facility and gain access to this wonderful building that we call home. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. So how many, I guess for clarity, just to understand the scope of the project, we're putting a couple of automatic doors here in the Legislative Assembly, removing some glass and this is going to be almost \$100,000. Am I correct in that assumption? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a few more details. I have the specifics, which I can read off to the Member if he would like so that it's on public record, or I can share it with committee, whichever the Member prefers.

MR. DOLYNNY: Just for the sake because this is an addition here that I was unfamiliar with, if he could just briefly read through the highlights of what's included in the \$100,000, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: For the \$98,000 its installing an electrically assisted door opening mechanism on the public wheelchair accessible washroom door and on the door to the wheelchair accessible washroom in the hallway behind the Chamber. This is estimated about \$22,500. Installing an electrically assisted door opening mechanism on glass doors to Committee Room A and the library, which is estimated at \$49,000. Install a companion seat in each of the two wheelchair access visitors galleries, which are up there and up there. Estimated cost is \$11,500. Remove the glass door leading to the public washroom altogether to the back hall, which would require retiling, patching and trim, which is about \$2,500 and design fees for all the above work as well adds to the \$98,000 cost. It's intended to increase the accessibility and help move towards a more barrier-free facility so that all residents of the Northwest Territories can come in and enjoy this wonderful flagship building of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the Minister going through that list here. Would I assume that at this point we would become barrier-free for complete public access, or are there other phases that we should be expecting or is this a one time? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The building as it stands right now is compliant with the 2010 National Building Code with respect to accessibility. These will improve a number of the areas that have been challenged for some of our residents and enhance our accessibility. Going to barrier-free would require a significant amount of other work. We'd have to bring in some other professionals like CNIB to help us identify other areas that are working.

Earlier today I had an opportunity to meet with the NWT Council of Disabilities and the Speaker, and

we walked through the building and looked at some of the areas that need some work. I will say that the president of the NWT council indicated that the building is accessible and is good. He identified a number of improvements, including the improvements that are here. He concurred with the improvements here and did recommend some additional work that will help move us more to barrier-free as opposed to accessible.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. That answers my questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Legislative Assembly, capital investment expenditures, total department, \$328,000. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate my colleague's questions and the Minister's responses on this issue. This is, in fact, at least the second step that I know of. I believe that right in the 16th Assembly we did spend about \$88,000 to do the first round of this. This is overdue. I'm very happy to see it going forward and I'm sure my colleagues will join me in supporting this.

The participation of people with disabilities is really a fundamental concept I think we all subscribe to and that has not been enabled with the current accessibility, even though we meet standards and we've made some strides to surpass those standards. So, yes, when people come to us, we want to be able to respond and I think this is the right step. So I certainly will be supporting this. I suspect it may not be a final step. I appreciate the Minister's openness to further assessment from those with expertise on requirements for people with disabilities and I'll stand ready to support anything else we need to do to ensure that this building, of all buildings in the Northwest Territories, has the best accessibility we can provide to those with disabilities.

So, no question, Madam Chair. I just wanted to comment on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Legislative Assembly, total department, \$328,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Next department is Finance, capital investment expenditures, office of the comptroller general, \$28,000; office of the chief information officer, \$553,000. Total department, \$581,000. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions have to do with the electronic records and document management system. According to the revised budget that we originally passed back in March of last year, the budget for that whole

amount of document management was about \$341,000 if my math is correct, which means we only spent about \$19,000 out of that amount, which is a paltry amount of money. Now we've carried this over again.

Can we get an explanation why very little of that money was actually spent and why we're seeing it as a carry-over? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Madam Chair. The department had a resource shortage. We had some vacancies that we've since been able to staff and that was the reason why we weren't able to undertake the project. The vacancy was unanticipated, but as I mentioned, it has been staffed now and our intention is to complete that work this fiscal year. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. No, that's a reasonable explanation.

My next question has to do with the security infrastructure tools and improvements at \$231,000. Again, that was the complete budget that was approved by this Assembly where we have not spent \$1 and we're now seeing it as a carry-over.

Can we get an explanation of why? Again, between those two categories we got for the information, the last one, but we've got half a million dollars here that was barely touched. Thank you.

MR. AUMOND: I guess the response is similar, that our security manager's position was vacant. It is now staffed and the intention is to complete the project in the next few months. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I guess the question I have is with this delay in spending, have there been any other setbacks that we can anticipate as we prepare for, I guess, the budget plan coming up this fall? Did this delay of spending, I guess, cascade from a number of other events that maybe we'll foresee here in the future?

MR. AUMOND: No.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Finance, capital investment expenditures, total department, \$581,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Public Works and Services, capital investment expenditures, asset management, \$3.722 million; Technology Service Centre, \$230,000; petroleum products, \$655,000. Total department, \$4.607 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Moving right along. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health

and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$22.631 million; community programs, \$5.480 million. Total department, not previously authorized, \$28.111 million. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions have to do with the electronic medical records where we're carrying over a little over \$3 million here. Again, if my math is correct from what we approved in the last budget, which I think was over \$5 million, we only spent about 34 percent of that budget. My question has to do with the fact that we know that this is Infoway information money, this is federal money that's earmarked specifically for this type of initiative, and because this electronic medical record has spanned over a number of years, my concern has always been the security of funding for that long a period of time.

Are we in jeopardy of being in default of receiving this federal money as a result of not being compliant with any type of schedules of completion dates?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member clearly and I share the same concerns. I don't believe we're in jeopardy of losing those dollars at this point. The primary delay in the EMR project has been due to extensive contract negotiations with the vendor. These negotiations included the creation of a new pricing model to reflect a health care delivery model in the Northwest Territories which is different than most other jurisdictions, and we had to work on defining the requirements for NWT-specific functionality in our environment where we have the certain technology that we do. Due to these significant delays as a result of these contract negotiations, the majority of the software enhancements and site implementations planned for '13-14 have been pushed back to '14-15. The project overall is anticipated to be in the closing phase during the '16-17 fiscal year.

The request to carry over this particular \$3.421 million includes a significant portion of funding for costs which are reimbursable by Canada Health Infoway. Under our current agreements with Infoway, the earliest funding will expire on December 31, 2015. Basically what that means is that those portions of the project that are reimbursable by Infoway would be completed first and then we can move forward with the other portions. The project rollout schedule has been planned to target the reimbursable activity up front and move forward with the closing in '16-17 after we have utilized the Canada Health Infoway dollars.

We don't anticipate losing those dollars at this point. We feel we have time, regardless of these delays as a result of these contract negotiations. We will get the money.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Again, I appreciate the Minister's thorough response there. From what I gather, December 31, 2015, is going to be a critical time period for us, and I understand that, but I think for the betterment of trying to understand this project, because it has carried on almost the life of the 17th Assembly, where are we at in terms of spending today of the whole project, and what does that money represent in terms as a percent complete for that project, just so I can understand where we're at with the project itself, both in dollars and as also percent complete.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I don't have the full data with respect to the full project. I've got the data with respect to the carry-over. I would be happy to get the Member and committee that additional information and provide it to them as soon as we can pull it together for them.

MR. DOLYUNNY: I'll accept the update from the Minister. I appreciate it. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Next I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a couple questions about the budget. Obviously, the Hay River Health Centre amount, indications are that the project is on course, on budget. I'm just wondering why there would be a carry-over there. I know we shut down for the winter, but that was planned, I thought.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct; it was a planned shutdown, but that planning, I think, came up earlier in the last fiscal year after the budget was passed. So when the original appropriation for the previous fiscal year was approved by the Assembly, it was anticipated that they would work throughout the whole year. Subsequent to that, the contractor made the determination that they could shut down for the winter and still keep to the schedule and not incur any additional cost by doing so. That's the reason why it's a carry-over.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: My next question is about the Stanton Territorial Hospital plan study. I guess in coalition with the other expenditures is the Stanton Hospital. I'm just wondering what the plan is going forward. We're looking to do major upgrades to Stanton Hospital. What is the strategy going forward on upgrades to the facility in an area where we may actually be tearing down and replacing? I know these are not huge numbers we're spending on seclusion rooms and stuff like that, but I'm just wondering, I guess, the strategy going forward and how much money do we put into it that we're

basically maybe tearing away when we actually retrofit the full facility.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Kalgutkar.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. This \$900,000 was part of the budget that was used to pay for the feasibility study on the Stanton project and the functional design. The money that's being carried over is going to supplement the \$5 million left in the '14-15 fiscal year to continue on with that work. As the Members know, we have started the P3 procurement process related to that project. We initiated our...(inaudible)...process earlier this month and that funding along with the \$5 million is going to help fund that process.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Kalgutkar. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: I understand the planning side of it. I'm just wondering about the capital expenditures to Stanton now that we know that we're going to do a major retrofit to it. At what time do we say, okay, we're not going to retrofit anything anymore because over the next five years we're going to tear it all down? I guess what is the strategy going forward when we're implementing capital projects into that facility when we're planning to do a major retrofit to it?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: With respect to Stanton, there has been a significantly complex process where we've involved many professionals including health practitioners who are currently using the building so that we can have a really solid plan of care as part of our planning study and so that the building would meet our future and current needs. We've built hospitals and health centres before and we recognize that there are challenges in doing that.

By way of example, we did a major upgrade to the health centre in Fort Smith, and it was like this project given that we continued to provide services in that building while we were constructing it. We learned a lot of lessons for not having a really comprehensive plan as far as how do you build and live in the same building at the same time, so we spent a lot of time in the design of this project trying to put in those mechanisms and plans so that we can build and move from certain sections of the building without affecting program delivery. The bottom line that exists there today has a great skeleton but not much else, so we are going to add on to the building and then we're going to upgrade what is there now, which means a significant amount of work, but we do have a plan that will allow us to transition and to continue to provide services in that building while we're doing it. It's quite complex; it's huge. A lot of time and effort has

been put into it, so we will be able to provide services during construction.

MR. BOUCHARD: My only concern is in this supp we have over \$400,000 that we're going to be putting into Stanton Hospital, which I'm assuming most of that work will probably be torn down eventually in the next 10 years depending on where we retrofit and what we retrofit. I'm just concerned that we're spending money that we're just going to tear down eventually here. If we can come up with a strategy and maybe something to go forward as far as we're not going to invest money that we're going to just tear down I guess is my concern.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The build is not going to start until the summer of 2016, assuming the procurement process goes well. We have a requirement to continue to provide services to all the residents of the Northwest Territories and this is a territorial facility. We are taking steps to ensure that where we can utilize equipment, construct or utilize during the capital process, we can continue to use it as we move forward in the new design. We don't want to throw anything in the garbage. We want to maximize our investments as best possible, but we are going to gut the majority of the existing building, once construction starts, over a seven-year period.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$28.111 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to follow up on Mr. Bouchard's questioning I believe it's around the existing facility in Hay River. I would like to ask about that facility. Are there any plans once the old hospital in Hay River is not being used and there's going to be a new hospital there in operation? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is asking a question that I think a significant number of other individuals have been asking. The building will be assessed and go through the disposal process as usual, which may include, if appropriate and if the building has any life left into it, repurposing or tear down, depending on the nature and state of that building.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I want to throw in my comments to the facility in Hay River. It's a good facility and certainly I would support that. Madam Groenewegen talked about this in a previous session here, about having that facility maybe be considered with some work with the federal government and our government as a centre for excellence because we have a high population of people needing diabetes awareness and

programming and stuff like that, that facility can be used for diabetes services for the people of the Northwest Territories.

According to the Health department documents, there are at least 200 people every year who will be diagnosed with diabetes. This is two years and we will have 400 and so forth. There is a real crisis that's creeping up on some health care costs. I think it is something that the government maybe could consider working with other governments as to having that centre, because right now people are wondering where to go. Families are wondering where to go. There is a program in Edmonton out of the Royal Alexandra Hospital that has a program, because I attended the program with my wife for one week. It's an excellent program to work with people and families. I think this hospital is in good standing. Again, they are doing the assessment. We can pitch in for having a centre like that in the Northwest Territories for a diabetes prevention program. We can do some of that work. I want to leave it at that, make comments to the Minister while he is in front of us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, I hear the Member loud and clear as I have heard the Members from Hay River as they speak about the same issue. What we do know is, based on the assessment of that building, that building does not meet the needs of a health facility. I don't believe that we've done that additional assessment to see if there is any other purpose that it can be used for. As with the normal disposal process, that building would obviously have some work done to it to figure out if it can be used for any other. I can't say. I haven't climbed around in that building myself. I don't know the true nature and state of the roof and mechanical, but that work will be done and we will be able to determine if there is any future use for that. As always, we are always open to discussions with committee and the communities to see if there are opportunities to repurpose.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Committee, we are on total department of \$28.111 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Page 11, Department of Justice, capital infrastructure expenditures, court services, not previously authorized, \$353,000; corrections, not previously authorized, \$161,000; services to public, not previously authorized, \$237,000. Total department, not previously authorized, \$751,000. Committee, agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 12, Education, Culture and Employment, capital infrastructure expenditures, education and culture, not previously authorized, \$2.61 million; labour development and

standards, not previously authorized, \$193,000. Total department, not previously authorized, \$2.803 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had a couple of questions, a couple of topics on that page. First, the Kaw Tay Whee School interior works in Detah, not a big project but I see we are carrying significant dollars over.

Will that work be completed this summer and not interfere with the school starting up in the fall? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is the intent. It is intended to be completed by August 2014.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. That's good to hear.

The next item there, the biomass boiler in the Deninu School in Fort Resolution, I'm very happy to see that going to that community. I think it will help establish a bit of a biomass market there and it's also very much in line with their forest management agreements and some of the jobs they are contemplating and activities they are contemplating. So I am supportive of that.

I am wondering what the source of the \$300,000 is for that project.

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

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The source of the funding is the surplus funding that's available from the Whati transmission line project that was approved under ITI. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: I understand that that project is not going forward and thus the money is freed up. I'm concerned about that.

I'd like to ask how many project feasibility studies have we now concluded in Whati over the last decade without ever embarking on a single project.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have that detail in front of me. I'm not familiar with the number, but I am happy to get the department to pull that information together and provide it to committee.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate that. I suspect the next question might be the same response. How many millions of dollars have we now spent on

Whati project feasibility studies without ever having actually done a project there? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, we will include that information in the information I've already committed to providing the committee.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. Why did the Whati transmission line project not go forward? Why are we at this impasse here?

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the original costing of the Whati line was supposed to come in, I think it was around \$22 million and it has now come in at \$30 million. So we need a subsidy, we're required to do that and the reason for that is that the original anticipation was to have a much smaller line, but the terrain proved too challenging. It required a higher voltage line, which required more substantive towers to bring that in. So really we're looking at an increase of \$12 million to \$30 million and the subsidy to make ratepayers whole on that project is now up to \$20 million. So the decision was that it was not really economical to proceed with that project. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the deputy minister for that. My understanding was the latest was \$12 million and came in at \$30 million, but either way obviously a substantial increase, but on the other hand there is a significant demand for both heat and power in that community to which we subsidize probably over \$1 million per year, and there's also a mine being proposed not far from the community, the NICO Mine, Fortune Minerals. I think I'm just not convinced that we are doing the strategic thinking we need to do to enable these projects to actually go forward beyond feasibility studies. Partly I understand these are very steep, upfront capital costs and we need to wrestle with that and that requires fiscal management that enables us to take those projects on, and my feeling on that I think is clear. I don't think we've done that. We've been investing in very large, very expensive projects way beyond our affordability with the hopes that they're going to be economic when here we have projects that mean something to the people in their homes, businesses, at their small business sites and are struggling with the cost of living. Meanwhile we are pouring literally \$100 million into subsidizing these things when we could actually address them. These are long-term projects. Hydro is 50 to 100 year horizons and so on.

So I am very distressed and I wanted to take this opportunity to say that we need to get on top of this and start. When we do these feasibility studies, we need to make sure that the part of a strategic approach to get some resolutions in place for what

our people are facing in their homes. So, thank you. I believe that's all the questions I have on this page.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Member's comments and I am listening and I know my colleagues are listening as well. The additional cost would have to be borne by somebody, which could obviously affect the ratepayers, but I understand what the Member is telling us. We do know that if NICO does go ahead there may be an opportunity to revisit this as we'll have a larger market for power.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. I appreciate that comment from the Minister. I'm wondering: how proactive are we right now at working with Fortune Minerals, NICO Mine to help them ensure that the project goes forward based on renewable energy? Thank you.

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do believe that NICO has been working with Northwest Territories Power Corporation on looking at options to provide power to the mine, which would include hydro obviously in conjunction with what we just discussed for that purpose. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I understand that we have very little extra on the Snare power line. So is that with development of Whati hydro power potential? Thank you.

MR. AUMOND: That's correct.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for that. I guess I'm hoping that we'll be kept apprised of how that's going and have the opportunity to contribute to those discussions. That's all I have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Committee, Education, Culture and Employment, capital investment expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2.803 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Department of Transportation, capital infrastructure expenditures, airports, not previously authorized, \$2.567 million; highways, not previously authorized, \$10,648 million; marine, not previously authorized, \$619,000; road licensing and safety, not previously authorized, \$138,000. Total department, not previously authorized, \$13.972 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I have a question under highways with regard to the Ingraham Trail realignment, a question in terms of where that project is at. I think the description of this project

talks about lighting needing to be done and some what I consider reasonably minor bits and pieces that were unable to be done before the snow fell in the fall. I haven't driven the road often, but I've driven it once and it suggests to me that it still needs a fair bit of work on the roadbed, not just on lighting and other bits and pieces to be added. So I'd like to know what this almost \$1.2 million is earmarked for and if there is any plan in the works to do some more work grading, et cetera, on the roadbed itself. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the contractors worked to realign the Ingraham Trail from Highway No. 3 to the Yellowknife River to the bypass road for the Giant Mine Remediation Project, delays with the Baker Bridge, moving the power lines resulted in the work not being completed in the fall. The road was open to traffic by November. However, laying chipseal and signage needs to be done in non-winter months and that will take place this fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks. I'm sorry, I didn't get all of that, but was there any indication of any work being done on the roadbed itself?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Besides chipseal, I think was your last comment. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: My apologies, Mr. Chair. I missed her question. If she can repeat it, that would be great.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Ms. Bisaro, could you please repeat your question?

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I originally asked what this \$1.2 million was for and did it include any work on the roadbed which, to me, seems like it needs a little bit of work done. Apart from chipseal, is there any plan to do any kind of grading and/or upgrading of the roadbed itself?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to go to the Minister of Transportation to answer that question, if you don't mind.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That money will be used to prepare the road right from where the paving stopped until where the road connects to the other road, and we'll be applying chipseal and also putting up the signage. That would cover the \$1.2 million that's identified in here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you to the Minister. Could I get an explanation of what preparing the roadbed means, because it's pretty rough in some spots right now?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Preparing the road is just to ensure that the road is ready for the application of chipseal.

MS. BISARO: Okay. I guess I'll have to wait and see what the road is like after chipseal is done. I hope it can all be done with no more than \$1.2 million.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. I'll take that as a comment, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am continuing my questioning where Ms. Bisaro left off because I, too, am a bit concerned with \$1.2 million left. I, too, have been on that road and I can assure you, given the experience that I've had in this room looking at budgets for transportation and road costs, there is a heck of a lot more than \$1.2 million left to do there.

My question is this: Is this project still on budget? I've asked that a couple of times, and I've always been reassured we're on budget, we're on budget, we're on budget, so I'm going to ask again, are we on budget?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The amount of money that is being carried over is enough to meet the commitments with a contractor to complete the project.

MR. DOLYNNY: With the fact that we allowed light traffic, and I received that in a confirmation from the department here. Because we opened ourselves to light traffic on that road, some experts are believing that we actually caused damage to that road by opening up too early. That is going to potentially cost us money in the long run because of our haste to try to open it up under a superficial timeline, which was possibly created by the department. Did that early opening cause issues that we're going to see come back to us in terms of added costs?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: It's a fairly standard process when the highway is ready for chipseal often it is open to traffic. The concept is that actually the driving on the road before the application of the chipseal doesn't damage the road where it would need a lot of remediation before the application of the chipseal. As the road stands today, we would be able to prepare it and apply the chipseal and that opening it did not cause damage that exists now today had we not opened it at all.

MR. DOLYNNY: I guess if we can get confirmation that because we opened the road early, a lot of the

granular on the surface was dissipated, was moved around. Some of that granular, actually, now is in the ditch on that road, which means that we need to get more granular on that road. We all know well how much granular costs in the Territories. Has granular been an issue now as a result of this early opening, and again, are we going to see unforeseen costs?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: There is no indication that there is any issue with the granular material that is on the bypass road.

MR. DOLYNNY: Driving on that road recently, there were a number of boulders that I saw on the road that actually fell from some of the escarpments as the road was being cut through a lot of narrow passageway, and at that point in time there was a bunch of red pontoons around it, but there were a substantial size of boulders here. Has there been a full safety check on this road so that, again, it's safe to drive because, again, these boulders looked fairly dangerous if one was to run into one.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: All the highways in the NWT that are public highways are safe, as is this bypass road.

MR. DOLYNNY: I hope maybe Mr. Beaulieu will drive Highway No. 3 one day and maybe that comment might be challenged, but we'll leave that for another day.

My last question has to do with the bridge over Baker Creek. We know that last fall there were a number of delays and a number of questions in terms of the bridge that was going in there, and the fact that there were some abutment issues, to the point that there was concern that that bridge was actually put in reverse. We know that's not the first time a bridge has been put in reverse in the Northwest Territories. In fact, anyone who wants to do any trivia challenge will know that we've got a few bridges that went in backwards. I will leave that up for the academics.

Have there been extra costs incurred as a result of bridge problems or bridge schematics, bridge engineering that have added unforeseen costs that aren't reflected here that we might have a surprise later?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: There were certainly delays in the installation of the bridge. There was some work on the abutments to ensure that the bridge sat into the abutments properly. I'm not aware that the bridge was actually put in backwards. There was an issue putting the bridge in that caused delays, but the bridge is in properly now and it's safe.

MR. DOLYNNY: Again, one final question. I mean, again, we're looking at an appropriation here of a little under \$1.2 million. Once this appropriation is approved, can the Minister assure us that that is a

project that will be complete, that there will be no more further asks on that highway realignment?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The money that is put in here is a carry-over from an agreed contracted amount between the Department of Public Works and the contractor that did the work. As far as the government is concerned, we have a contract in place. There is a commitment on the part of the company to complete that road 100 percent according to the contract that they have in place, and our intention to do that.

MR. DOLYNNY: Again, just to reiterate, because I got a nice paid political statement here that, yes, the contract will be honoured and we all hope that this will be done according to the contractor, and I'm not going to disagree with you. Okay? My question still stands.

Do we have any unforeseen costs that taxpayers are going to be having to look at in the foreseeable future on that highway realignment?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: There has been no request at this time from the contractor that's building the road for additional money in order to complete the project. To date, the money we have here is all the money that we intend on putting into that project to complete the project 100 percent.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just quickly like to ask about the same project, if there was any consideration going with a higher grade surfacing. As we know, the Ingraham Trail is plagued with high cost for replacing surfacing. The Yellowknives Dene have used a very high grade material in their surfacing of the road in Ndilo. I've been quite impressed with the way that's standing up compared to all other applications of paving that I've seen recently and certainly on Highway No. 3 and Highway No. 4. So, has there been any consideration? Is it too late to give that some consideration even if it was to happen, to finally demonstrate to the Department of Transportation what the gains versus the costs might be? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The plan is to chipseal the highway. I'm very familiar with the product the Member speaks of. There was no discussion between the government and the industry that would provide Easy Street on that highway at this time. I think we are in a contract that says that we will be chipsealing the highway. If the company decides that they would put a different application on there within the same dollar amount, then perhaps the government and industry could sit down together and discuss that possibility. But

moving forward, our intention is to chipseal at this time.

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

MR. BROMLEY: That's the only question I had. I assume from that response that there was no consideration given to using that product here. That's all I had. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Bisaro.

MOTION TO SIT BEYOND
DAILY HOUR OF ADJOURNMENT,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In accordance with Rule 6(2), I move that we continue to sit beyond the hour of daily adjournment to consider consideration of Tabled Document 87-17(5).

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): The motion is carried.

---Carried

We will sit beyond 6 o'clock and continue with the Department of Transportation. Total department, not previously authorized, \$13.972 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital infrastructure expenditures, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$278,000; tourism and parks, not previously authorized, \$1.597 million. Total department, not previously authorized, \$1.875 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Department of Environment and Natural Resources, capital investment expenditures, forest management, not previously authorized, \$651,000; wildlife, not previously authorized, \$193,000. Total department, not previously authorized, \$844,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree that we've considered Tabled Document 87-17(5) and are concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Ms. Bisaro.

COMMITTEE MOTION 43-17(5),
CONCURRENCE OF TABLED DOCUMENT
87-17(5), SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2014-2015
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: I move that consideration of Tabled Document 87-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 87-17(5) be reported and recommended as further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. As we don't have any other items on the agenda, I will rise to report progress. Thank you, Minister Abernethy and officials. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bouchard, can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 87-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015, and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted and that consideration of Tabled Document 87-17(5) be concluded and that the House concur in those estimates and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Do I have a seconder to the motion? Mr. Beaulieu.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK, COMMITTEES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (Mr. Ball): Orders of the day for Friday, May 30, 2014, at 10:00 a.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 Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act
 - Bill 27, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, May 30th, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

