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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 9, 2015****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, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:29 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 135-17(5):
SINGLE WINDOW SERVICE CENTRES
WINS INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION OF CANADA AWARD

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Government of the Northwest Territories and its single window service centre model has been recognized for its innovative management by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, or known as IPAC.

The Government of the Northwest Territories was one of 10 national finalists for the IPAC/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Award for 2014 in the Federal/Provincial/Territorial category. This prestigious award recognizes organizations and their leaders that have demonstrated outstanding leadership by taking bold steps to improve Canada through advancements in public policy and management.

I am delighted to inform this House that the single window service centre model was awarded the bronze medal. This is the fourth IPAC Award the Government of the Northwest Territories has received. Previous recipients include the Government of the Northwest Territories Executive Council, Department of Transportation and the South Slave Divisional Board of Education.

On Thursday evening, Celine Proctor, our government services officer from Fort Good Hope, representing all of our government services officers, along with George Morin, manager of the single window service centre program; Dan O'Neill, regional director; Penny Ballantyne, deputy minister of the Department of Executive; and Betty Arden, administrative assistant, represented the Government of the Northwest Territories at the

Gala Awards Dinner at IPAC's 10th Annual Leadership Conference in Toronto.

Mr. O'Neill and his staff in the regional office, in collaboration with regional director Peter Clarkson, have championed this program and have worked diligently to ensure its success. During the gala, a short video was presented showcasing the uniqueness of the Northwest Territories, and how this service delivery model is helping residents in small communities gain access to much needed government programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with this program, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff in the Department of Executive, and the community government services officers, who have worked hard to improve resident access to our programs and services and provide outreach to all our citizens, particularly our elders in our most remote communities.

As I mentioned earlier, in the audience Thursday night was one of our government services officers, Celine Proctor, who started with the program when it was first launched in 2010. Celine is from Fort Good Hope, she speaks the language of her community and has helped countless residents. This includes elders, sitting at their kitchen tables, helping them to navigate their way through the sometimes complex federal and Northwest Territories programs and services.

As Members know, the single window service centres are located in 18 offices across the Northwest Territories, soon to be 20, with new offices being established in Trout Lake and Wekweeti. This model has been a resounding success and has reached out to residents in our more remote communities. To date, over 19,000 resident inquiries have been assisted through these offices.

Mr. Speaker, supporting all communities and regions is a priority for our government. We have funded from within these additional government services officer positions, which supports this Assembly's priority of providing employment opportunities in small communities. The single window service centres and government services officers program proves that we can provide more efficient services by creating positions in smaller communities to help residents connect with the

programs and services they need. I want to thank Members for their continued support for this initiative. It is truly making a difference and is now a nationally recognized model that is the envy of other jurisdictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 136-17(5):
SUCCESSFUL TRADE MISSION
TO CHINA AND JAPAN

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, in January the Premier and I led a second trade mission of NWT business representatives and government officials to China and Japan. Our delegation included NWT tour operators, partners in our fur and fashion industries, and a member of our territory's diamond manufacturing sector, Ms. Verda Law of Yellowknife Tours, Mr. Ragnar Wesstrom of Enodah Wilderness Adventures, Mr. Hideo Nagatani from Aurora Village, Mr. Andrew Stanley, a trapper from Hay River, Mr. Fernando Alvarez of Jacques Cartier Clothing and Mr. Dylan Dix of Crossworks Manufacturing.

Collectively we offered a significant, multi-sector mission highlighting the opportunities that exist within our territory's key sectors. In the interest of NWT businesses, our objective was, in part, to leverage a greater share of the immense and growing market in Asia for luxury products and travel vacations.

To that end, we showcased our fur and diamonds in foremost international fashion venues like the 41st Annual Fur and Leather Show in Beijing and the International Jewellery Fair in Tokyo.

Due to its high quality, limited supply and the sustainable and humane manner in which it is harvested, our Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs are being increasingly sought by socially and fashion-conscious consumers in Asia.

Almost immediately following our meetings with fur buyers at the Beijing Fur and Leather Show, we were advised that five new clients had registered to buy our wild fur at the upcoming March sale in Helsinki.

Meanwhile, our endorsement of a proposed MOU between the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Fur Institute of Canada has advanced that initiative to a point where it may be signed in the next three weeks. This is a big step not only for the spirit of cooperation that it represents but also for the fundamental role that it will play in protecting our collective interests in the fur industry.

Our presentations and meetings on tourism netted similar immediate results. Two new and major tour operators have come forward since our mission,

with plans to package and sell the NWT product in China. With upwards of 100,000 Chinese travelling annually, it represents an extraordinary potential return on our investment and the possibility of even greater growth in our territory's Aurora industry, already reaching record performance measures.

The Premier and I also met with the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency to provide an update on the creation of the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link and growth of the Inuvik Satellite Station Facility. The establishment of a fixed fibre optic link opens the door for a broad range of satellite-related activities for investors interested in projects relating to data harvesting. We believe the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency could be a strong partner with the NWT and Canada with a joint venture similar to those already established with other international partners.

Mr. Speaker, beyond our work to stimulate interest, investment and economic growth for NWT businesses, our second mission to China has served to add prestige and credibility to our relationships with the governments that guide and govern this trade. The Canadian Ambassador to China, Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques, communicated to us and to Chinese government officials during our meetings, the significance of the GNWT's investment in building relations through this return mission to China. Our trip served also to open doors with investors interested in learning more about the exciting opportunities that exist in our territory. I would like to express my appreciation to both Ambassador Saint-Jacques and to Mr. Mackenzie Clugston, Canada's Ambassador to Japan. The success of our trade mission would not have been possible without the outstanding support given by both of the Ambassadors and their staff.

Opportunities for investment are being increasingly sought and recognized by the Chinese in particular. These investments are not necessarily limited to non-renewable resources. Since our mission, the Canadian Consulate in Shanghai has received an inquiry from a company currently exporting Canadian freshwater fish to China and looking for additional sources of high-quality products.

Mr. Speaker, we are acting on the momentum established by this mission and responding to immediate inquiries. I look forward to sharing more detailed information with Members of this House in person and in subsequent meetings and briefings.

I can assure Members that we will continue to encourage and nurture a strong network of relationships and investments in China and Japan and in other international markets. Our growing political and reciprocal relationship with these nations is one that articulates the full value of the potential that exists for our territory and the returns that can be realized from investors, corporations

and even nations that are interested in partnering and investing in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FULL-TIME NURSE IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is supposed to provide high-quality health care to the NWT residents no matter where they live. Yet, in the smallest communities, places like Tsiigehtchic, people don't have year-round access to a nurse.

I've raised this concern many times. It's a stressful situation. Residents are scared that something terrible may happen and they won't have backup when they need it most. The idea for a full-time nurse made it into the Health and Social Services 2010-11 Business Plan, but the Minister of the day reneged on that commitment.

On February 7, 2013, another promise was made. Then Health Minister Tom Beaulieu stated that the department was working with the community leaders in the Beaufort-Delta Health Authority to try to provide nursing services and physician services in Tsiigehtchic. When I asked Minister Beaulieu if he would commit to an interim measure, a pilot project to hire a licenced practical nurse, he said an unequivocal yes. That was two years ago but nothing materialized.

My last exchange on this topic took place October 27, 2014. Minister Abernethy assured me that the government is, "always looking for ways to enhance the services that we provide in our communities." He stated that the department is doing research to bring forward new tools for enhancing care in our communities. Minister Abernethy also acknowledged that a community without a full-time nurse is vulnerable in the event of a medical emergency.

All this, and yet the Minister hasn't brought about any substantial changes. For too long Tsiigehtchic residents have had unreliable access to health care.

I will be asking questions to the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement will be somewhat close to

what Mr. Blake has been talking about, some of the communities that have not some of these essential services in our communities. Mr. Blake is talking about full-time nurses in our communities, and I believe there are eight communities that do not have full-time nurses in our communities and, you know, we do with what we have. The small communities pull together, you know, and do the best they can.

Year after year as an MLA, we come before the government and ask if it would be possible to put in a full-time nurse, or even, in one of our 11 communities, to put in an RCMP officer, and the government always comes back with some enormous cost to meet that request, and they always have come back with not having enough money or haven't planned for it, or it doesn't quite meet the criteria. Even with our schooling, with the quality of education. It's a matter of fact that the latest report from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment says that in our small communities, 50 percent of our students are not up to par in the grade level. You know, in 2015 we've got to fight doubly hard to get the grades that we want for our students, otherwise we're just toying with them.

We want to ask this government, are there other ways that we can help on this side, and I believe that we can. I believe we can help make some changes with the bureaucrats for their own people's attitudes and minds of how do we do things. You know, why do we have to spend \$100,000 to house one inmate if we change some behaviour? Or when people are drinking excessively, we spend somewhere around \$14,000 at Nats'ejee K'eh to put them in a 28-day treatment program.

I believe we need that type of thinking amongst ourselves, in our communities, to make changes to deal with what we have to do within today's budget.

I'll ask the Minister questions later on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENACTMENT OF NWT ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important recommendations to come out of the last Energy Charrette was the need for the creation of an NWT energy efficiency act. Some of us have pushed for this throughout our term but have been sloughed off by costly ministerial statements like, "I believe communities know what needs to be done."

Getting this act in place needs to be a priority for this government. Given the dollars that go to energy costs and the effect energy production has on the

cost of living and environment, it's unbelievable that we don't have one already. Leaving this for the 18th Assembly is unacceptable.

Government has been quick to see the savings realized through our own use of alternative energy sources: pellet boilers, solar arrays and energy conservation initiatives. With a short five- or six-year payback, Diavik has shown that wind power is eminently feasible here.

Liezl van Wyk, Diavik rep speaking to the Energy Charrette regarding their wind power project, stated that building this sort of infrastructure should be a condition for any future project and asked, why didn't the GNWT require this a long time ago? Indeed.

BC, Alberta, Ontario and other jurisdictions in Canada have energy efficiency acts and have for years. The opportunity to draw on their experience and our own considerable internal experience can easily be tapped and drawn together for timely legislation this term. Such an act can provide long overdue energy efficiency standards that must be met for buildings, equipment and operations.

Studies by Jaccard and Associates have indicated that savings enabled by energy efficiency legislation can amount to 14 percent on greenhouse gas emissions and that actions will more than pay for themselves. Such savings will directly lower the cost of living, decrease harmful environmental impacts and help build sustainable communities.

We do not need to reinvent the wheel in the Northwest Territories. We do need to set standards for a sustainable, long-term Energy Strategy. The government is ready; industry is signalling cooperation, and the people of the North are calling for action now.

Mr. Speaker, let's acknowledge the obvious relevance of the charrette recommendation for such an act and get it done. With our new responsibility, this government must set clear targets for government, residential and commercial/industrial energy efficiency. We executed the Energy Charrette; we must start to work towards completing a sustainable, energy-efficient, economically and socially responsible NWT energy policy. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's usual for people who have the experience from traumatic events in their lives to have flashbacks, nightmares or intrusive memories when something terrible happens. What I'm talking about is post-traumatic

stress disorder, also referred to as PTSD. It is a mental illness that affects a lot of people. It doesn't matter which demographic you're in, it affects people all over the world. It's exposure to trauma that might be involved in death or a threat of death; it could be a serious injury, an accident, violence, natural disasters, even crime.

There are various symptoms when people are experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. I won't get into all the details there, but what I really want to focus on in my Member's statement today is those people in our communities who are helping our residents and helping government-run programs: the first responders, the service providers that we think are strong enough to do the work. These are the ones that are going to the accidents, going to the deaths and trying to help people out. Paramedics, physicians, doctors, nurses, firefighters, RCMP, in some cases, the big ones are our coroners across the Northwest Territories. I do want to give recognition to the Department of Justice for the compassionate training they are putting on for the coroners across the Northwest Territories.

In some cases, these are our hard-to-recruit positions, so if we don't have the services to help them out when they're dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, there's a good chance that we will lose them and they'll go somewhere else.

There's a need for awareness and education in this area throughout the Northwest Territories and within our own service system and we need people to speak up about their experiences, and as a government we need to provide the proper quality of support to help these individuals with the mental illness that they will be experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions later today for the Minister of Health and Social Services on what kind of services are we providing to our first responders and service providers in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SENIORS ADVOCATE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to raise the idea of a seniors advocate. As seniors represent an increasing percentage of the NWT population, the initial mandate of a seniors advocate could focus on helping seniors who are seeking or receiving health care supports and services.

This is a fairly new concept. Not quite a year ago, the Government of British Columbia announced the appointment of Isobel Mackenzie as Canada's very first seniors advocate. As the voice of seniors in BC, Ms. Mackenzie has the broad mandate to

monitor and review system-wide issues affecting the well-being of seniors and raise awareness about resources available to them. The BC seniors advocate will also make recommendations to government and to those who deliver seniors services related to health care, personal care, housing, transportation and income support.

In the NWT a seniors advocate could work in concert with the NWT Seniors' Society. It could help them expand our services to our growing older population. The seniors advocate could perform any or all of the following duties:

First, advocacy, such as identifying gaps in our services, providing policy advice to government about services for seniors and proposing legislative changes.

Second, provide information and advice to government and to seniors. This could build on the good work that the NWT Seniors' Society does now, things like providing resources, ensuring the flow of information to and from seniors and advocating for seniors issues.

Third, they could receive and refer concerns and complaints. This is especially needed in regards to elder abuse and health care services.

Fourth, improve public awareness and communication. Awareness and promotion of the role of a seniors advocate, coordination of education about seniors and seniors' issues and respond to inquiries from the public.

Lastly, collaborate and engage with seniors and other groups. The advocate can work with voluntary and community advocacy groups to help identify key issues of concern to seniors, seek out the opinions and priorities of seniors and ensure that their views are heard and understood.

All of these concepts should be explored by the GNWT for value. This is an opportunity for the GNWT to meet head on the challenge of responding to the aging of the NWT population. By providing assistance to our elders, we can promote healthy and productive aging and create a society in which older people's voices are heard and respected.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: The office of a seniors advocate could have a key role in supporting a shift in public attitude by promoting and celebrating the positive aspects of aging, including the invaluable experience and wisdom that comes with older age. I urge the government to consider this initiative and to respond. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL RENOVATIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday our Finance Minister said, "We do not have the revenue growth necessary to make all these investments possible and we are constrained by our \$800 million borrowing limit to borrow to make strategic investments." As I further listened even closer, he points out that on the revenue side, resource revenues are expected to be \$41 million lower and corporate taxes \$24 million lower than estimated in the last budget. He points out that this is a perfect storm of shocks that has reduced our \$100 million cushion borrowing limit to \$70 million.

This is unwelcome news. Let me start off by saying this, I think we can all agree that our Stanton Territorial Hospital needs a mid-life upgrade, but we heard the state of our finances and I certainly am sure that we can all agree to some extent that we all believe strongly in our gold standard health care offered in the North and it needs to be protected. However, when we need to make strategic investments, we must examine them extremely closely, especially after hearing the Finance Minister's state of our financial affairs.

If this government's coffers are bare, as highlighted by our Finance Minister, where is the money going to come from, because this government has chosen the most expensive path to retrofit or renovate our Stanton Territorial Hospital.

When communities and regions are screaming for infrastructure dollars, this government is throwing them to the wind.

I have talked to many people in the construction industry and I've even talked to two of the three bidders on the Stanton Territorial Project, and everyone is in full agreement, renovating Stanton while the doors are open, full business and operating is the most expensive option this government could even dream of. This government must have more money to throw away than ever, because it's not a question of the merits of the renovation, it's about the process of how we're going to renovate.

For years I've been asking about this process. Why don't we build new? Why don't we connect to the existing hospital? Because it would be cheaper, and the government always said, well, if the bidders want to come back that way with that option, then we'll look at it. I've been recently informed that that option has been pulled from the table so only the three contractors welcome to bid on the Stanton Territorial Project provide a renovation option. This will grossly lead us down to the lane of the poorhouse. We must find a more financially suitable way to do this. It is expensive. We should have that discussion now, and we will later today in this House.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SMOKING CESSATION SUPPORTS

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to say I've been smoke-free of cigarettes since November 10, 2014. Before this time, I would wake up first thing in the morning and have a coffee and a cigarette, smoke up to about four packages of cigarettes a week, and experience exhaustion and fatigue. I could only smoke outside, and the smell of cigarettes clung to my clothes.

I thought of quitting smoking cigarettes for a long time. [English translation not provided.]

Like many of my peers, I started smoking as a teenager as it looked cool and helped me fit into the crowd. Tobacco use also extended to my parents and grandparents. Smoking or chewing is very common in my community.

Smoking causes cancer, and I found that out with the passing of my parents who both died of cancer. Lung cancer caused by smoking is usually fatal, and so is throat or oral cancers related to smoking.

I challenge other MLAs and leaders to quit smoking cigarettes.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROMOTION OF NORTHERN FISHING INDUSTRY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, the Department of ITI launched a new brand promoting Great Slave Lake fish. The Hay River MLAs were pleased to participate in the launch in Hay River. We would like to thank the local ITI staff as well as Super 8 and Steve Anderson. I would also like to thank Poison Graphics for my apron. It was exciting to encourage Northerners to buy more local fish.

As you know, Hay River has a strong history in fishing. In the '50s, '60s and '70s we had many fishing companies in Hay River. The fishing industry has changed. We have a few dedicated fishermen currently that catch at least a million pounds a year of the two million pound quota, so we have lots of room to grow.

We need to increase this industry. It's renewable, it's good local quality, and we know that fish is a healthy living choice. We need to have northern fish in our hospitals, correctional facilities, restaurants, grocery stores, and at all our kitchen tables.

Right now most of the fish caught in the Northwest Territories on the Great Slave Lake is shipped south with the Freshwater Marketing Corporation. We need to sell more locally. The recent promotion

was great but we need to make the next step. We need to be able to package it in the North, sell it in the North, sell it in all the stores in the North and all those facilities I spoke of earlier. Dozens of people came to me during that promotion and said, can I buy the fish here in the store, and the answer is no. So we've missed that connection. We need to work on that next step of getting that fish packaged in the Northwest Territories in a fish plant in Hay River, and I will have questions for the Minister on how we get there. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT DETOXIFICATION SERVICES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What was touted as a band-aid approach upon closure of the only territorial addictions treatment centre in the NWT, our current Minister of Health and Social Services assured all Northerners the southern withdrawal management and treatment services would be temporary.

If we fast-forward to today, we see this temporary promise is now permanently enshrined in policy. Therefore, the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Government Operations from its work on Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act, the government commissioned a report to look at the best options for withdrawal management in the NWT. This report was completed on March 31, 2014, shared with committee on August 27, 2014, and is on the department's website.

For starters, we need to set the right definition in place. What is meant when we say withdrawal management? Simply put, withdrawal management, commonly known as detox, can involve either medical or non-medical intervention. Those with severe risk of withdrawal problems, such as shock or seizures, require medical supervision and this service is only available in Yellowknife and Inuvik hospitals. Those who are deemed non-medical risk for withdrawal services only have the option of a six-bed facility provided by the Salvation Army in Yellowknife.

Therefore, one could safely say that initial withdrawal management is extremely limited in the NWT and as of today there are still no follow-up residential treatment options for our residents on home soil. Sadly, in addition, the NWT does not support any home base, mobile or on-the-land withdrawal management services in its toolbox for addictions.

The good news is we do have options to improve and enhance our current Withdrawal Management System. Even when faced with geopolitical challenges, the question is: Do we have the vision

for such investments? We need to understand how the future changes of withdrawal management will fit into the new, yet to be seen Mental Health Act, especially with respect to involuntary admissions.

Lacking still is our establishment of multiple points of entry for withdrawal management at regional and community levels where policy is quiet. As well, we cannot forget about all our first point of contact people, such as RCMP and child protection workers. These folks need ongoing training in such areas as withdrawal management, best practices, harm reduction and assessment tools.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. DOLYNNY: Many of these recommendations are found in this report, a report that has been in the hands of the department for almost a year. Therefore, it's time to ask our Minister to rip off his band-aid and allow the scab of our past to fully heal.

I'll have questions later today for the Minister as to what he has been doing in addressing withdrawal management for the past year. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GREAT SLAVE LAKE FISHING INDUSTRY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to join my colleague from Hay River North and talk about the Great Slave Lake fishery. I too attended the branding exercise that was organized and promoted by Industry, Tourism and Investment and I thank them for that, but we have a ways to go yet.

As most people know, commercial fishing was an integral foundation to the economy in Hay River and we always say that the success of the economy in Hay River is based on how diversified it is.

Industries come and go and sometimes there are good reasons for that. In this particular case there is no reason why we should not still have a very viable commercial fishing industry around Great Slave Lake, headquartered, of course, in Hay River where the majority of fishers live at this time in the West Channel and in the town of Hay River.

I love Great Slave Lake fish. It's like gold. I think we can say, without anybody challenging us, that it is the best fish in the world. It comes from clear, clean, cold waters and sometimes when I have to go pick up an order of fish for our little diner, I see it in those big buckets all nicely packaged and filleted and it looks like gold to me. When I hear there's a whole truck gone off to Yellowknife, of course I'm happy for the fishermen, but when you find it, it's

not like getting 10 pounds of ground beef. It is very special; it's a beautiful product and it tastes great. It is, as my colleague said, extremely good for us.

So it is a renewable, sustainable, wonderful product. It offsets the cost of living, if we could consume more fish, but we do have a ways to go.

I know the Department of ITI has had many programs and studies in the past to look at how we can enhance the commercial fishery. I know they've done everything from buy aluminum hull vessels for the fishermen to take out onto the lakes so they can harvest differently, to... They've done a lot of things. I could list a lot of things that have been done over the years, but the bottom line, at the end of the day, is fishing is extremely hard work. We have to find ways to make sure that it is economically viable enough to keep people engaged in the industry.

I'm very pleased that the economic opportunities report did highlight commercial fishing as an industry in the North which does need to be supported and enhanced, and to that end, we do look forward to further initiatives that we know are on the horizon for the commercial fishery on Great Slave Lake. We look forward to seeing those rolled out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to recognize some important visitors to the gallery today. I'd like to recognize Celine Proctor, government services officer, Fort Good Hope; also Priscilla Betsaka, government services officer, Nahanni Butte; and Dan O'Neill, regional director. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a constituent of mine who just came back from Toronto, I believe, Celine Proctor. I remember her talking about her job. She says, "I just love this job here." No wonder; you can see it here. So I want to recognize Celine Proctor, Dan O'Neill and the other guests up in the gallery. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 574-17(5): INNOVATIVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES DELIVERY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Premier some questions and congratulate the Government of the Northwest Territories and the model of the single window service centre as being formally recognized as an innovative management approach.

I want to ask the Premier, is this type of thinking that is going forward in regards to the type of budget that we're dealing with that we need some innovative management leadership thinking in our regions? Can this type of model be recognized in the Northwest Territories on a regional level approach, say, in the Sahtu, in regards to how they do business in our region or any other regions in the North?

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're always looking at innovative ways to improve the delivery of government services and programs. In this case, with the single window service delivery model, we're able to do it by converting resources from within.

I always go back to Albert Einstein, who said insanity was where you tried to solve problems by doing the same things over and over again. So this way we can improve our services by doing things differently and innovatively. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: This morning I was reading a book and I thought that it would be very unique if the regions got together themselves and sort of formed an innovative, taking the bold steps to improve, as Mr. Premier talked about, ways to improve our efficiency, our government, with the kind of funds that we get, to take the bold steps and even to model after Albert Einstein, one of the great thinkers, to look after how we can do business better in our regions with the amount of money we have, because we've always been asking, for example, for a new RCMP or a nurse or, you know, to improve education in our region.

Can that be implemented or looked at in our regions where we can get the thinkers together to say this is how we can do business in the Sahtu and be recognized? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'd be pleased to explore this further with the Member. I think it would be a question of what form would be the best one to use. We have a number of different avenues where we meet with community leaders in the Sahtu, but I'd

be pleased to explore this further with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: That's a bold step the Premier is taking. I'd like to ask him, in regards to the forum that we could have some...(inaudible)...could we look at, within the time that we have left in this government, a process, a step-by-step to say this could possibly work in regards to having this type of leadership and creative thinking with improving our efficiency in our government?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As my colleague to the right of me says, we have 286 days left in our mandate, so I'm sure that we can find a day or two to explore this further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I think that's okay. I want to ask the Premier, with the work that's going forward and what we're discussing here, can that somehow go out now to the regional levels to the executive and say that we want to look at this, even just to put ideas together so we can have some further discussions on how we get together in terms of having this type of think-tank in our regions?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'll get our crackerjack team together and we'll come up with some options. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 575-17(5): FULL-TIME NURSE IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it stands, the service delivery model does not authorize funding for a full-time nurse in Tsiigehtchic. Last October Minister Abernethy told the House that his department is looking into best practices in other remote areas in Canada and around the world. The purpose, he said, is to access our service delivery model and examine models from other jurisdictions to see how, if at all, they can be applied here in the Northwest Territories.

Minister Abernethy further stated that, "A review of the Integrated Service Delivery Model, medical travel, community health work training and the utilization of telehealth are being incorporated into the review of this review."

Will the Minister give an update on the status of these reviews and what can be expected in the way of a renewed Service Delivery Model? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reviews the Member is talking about

are all part of the entire health transformation we're going through right now where we're looking at how we're providing services in all communities throughout the Northwest Territories in order to enhance services. That work is ongoing. The legislation will be coming in front of this House shortly and the planning will continue through to 2016, when we hope to go live.

But at the same time, we're not just waiting for that to happen. We are implementing Med-Response, which I've mentioned several times in the House. We did a soft launch in November and we're looking at doing a hard launch here in the middle of the month. During the soft launch of that program, we have seen that communities where there are no nurses, CHRs are able to call into that number and get the support and direction they need.

We are trying to do a number of things, and at the same time, we continue to review what other jurisdictions are doing around other types of professionals, community-based professionals, people from the communities that provide services in communities like Tsiigehtchic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, Minister Abernethy stated in this House that he has been told that one of the major concerns in remote communities is emergency response. He also stated, and he just mentioned, that the department is in the midst of rolling out Med-Response, which will have a direct positive impact on the service delivery in places like Tsiigehtchic.

Can the Minister inform this House when residents of Tsiigehtchic will have access to Med-Response and how can they access it after hours? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In addition to Med-Response, I also mentioned some training on first responder training. I know that MACA has already begun delivering training on first responder in Tsiigehtchic. I believe that started in June 2014.

With respect to Med-Response, the residents are not the individuals who would call Med-Response, it would be the professionals in the community; in this case the CHR or CHW that happen to be in Tsiigehtchic. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I don't think the Minister knows some of the situations that the community goes through. Many times a lot of these emergencies are during the evening, even after midnight sometimes.

What can the community do in situations like this? Many times when people phone these numbers for assistance, they are asked to give basically the diagnostics of what the patient is going through. Many of the people that are responding don't have this medical training. You almost have to be a doctor to get help in our small communities.

What can our communities do in cases like this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, this is true for all the communities in the Northwest Territories where we don't have emergency rooms, so many of our small communities are in this particular situation.

When an individual in one of these communities is sick or experiencing an emergency, there are numbers they can call into their health centre, whether it's a community health nurse or, in the case of Tsiigehtchic, CHR or CHW, or in Tsiigehtchic they may actually choose to call the emergency room. Those professionals will still be able to contact Med-Response to help coordinate medical response in those communities if it requires medical travel or air ambulance but also to provide some clinical direction. So those individuals will still need to call the numbers that they call today.

If the Member has some concerns about the numbers that need to be called in Tsiigehtchic, I would be happy to sit down with the Member and address those concerns. Thank you.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are still waiting a formal policy change in the service delivery model. In the meantime, I have a practical suggestion. The current arrangement has a nurse visiting Tsiigehtchic one day a week for most of the year.

Will the Minister commit to funding a nurse to spend two days a week in Tsiigehtchic instead of just one, as most of that is due to travel? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In Tsiigehtchic, a community of 128 people, we do have a public health nurse going in there one day a week. I hear the Member; we will certainly take that under consideration, but we also have two times a year where there is a public health nurse in the community for six weeks at a time. There is some room for discussion and I would be happy to have that conversation with the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 576-17(5):
ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Public Works and Services. Today I am following up on my Member's statement.

The Energy Charrette held three months ago released its report a month and a half ago. One of its key findings was the urgent need for an energy efficiency act for the Northwest Territories. Getting this act in place needs to be a priority for us.

Will the Minister please confirm to the House that such an act is indeed being worked on by his officials for adoption during the life of this Assembly? Mahsi.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The energy efficiency act was last amended in September of 2009. We were currently using it up until December 2014. There will be another review of the consolidated energy efficiency act.

Any time there are energy codes or anything, regulations in the act, then the Department of Public Works uses the current energy efficiency act. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I didn't hear that the Minister was going to put this act in place.

Again, the charrette was very clear in its view that the energy efficiency act would be a cornerstone towards a secure energy future, economic sustainability, environmental responsibility and, most importantly, reducing the cost of living. To now leave this important work for some review later on in the 18th Assembly would make a bad track record even worse.

Will the Minister commit to bringing this act forward for adoption during the life of this Assembly?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Public Works and Services will be involved in organizing a construction workshop here in Yellowknife that's an annual thing. That will be occurring sometime in April. What we will be doing as one of the topics will be discussing the energy efficiency act. Actually, sorry, I believe that's in the middle of this month is when the date of that workshop will be occurring.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that information from the Minister. Glad to hear that's happening. That's part of regular business. Unfortunately, we've had lots of meetings during the last six or eight years like this and the Association of Communities has raised the need for an energy efficiency act and standards.

Will the Minister, again, commit to bringing forward this legislation for adoption by the 17th Assembly? Third time.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'm not sure that the department would be in the position to complete a legislative proposal to look at the energy efficiency act for the Northwest Territories. Currently, we are using the energy efficiency act that is used across the country. We use the energy efficiency and national energy efficiency codes when we do our buildings and make sure that all of our buildings are under the National Energy Code. These are buildings that are designed that exceed most of the energy efficiency requirements across the entire country and within the Northwest Territories. I'm

assuming that Nunavut and the Yukon also have highly energy-efficient units, but we can compare well to any of the national standards. We do exceed the national standards in energy efficiency. But to actually commit to bringing a legislative proposal to the Assembly on the energy efficiency act would be something that I would need to discuss with the people that will be putting the legislative proposal forward, because I don't know the timing on that. I would not be able to commit, but I will be prepared to have that discussion with the department as soon as I was able to do so.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's response is entirely unacceptable. This has been raised repeatedly, and now through our expensive Energy Charrette – yet another one – it has been raised as the answer to a lot of our issues and providing benefits including addressing the cost of living.

How often does this need to be done? Now we're sloughing it off again. The Minister is giving responses like need to discuss, we'll try and discuss, don't know what the timing would be like.

For goodness sake, this is long overdue. Long overdue. Lots of other jurisdictions in Canada have done this. It has been raised repeatedly. It has been raised in a workshop that we funded to get this done.

That response is entirely unacceptable. I have no further questions.

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

QUESTION 577-17(5):
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS
FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about what kind of services we have in terms of supporting some of our first responder service providers in the Northwest Territories, who, I must say, are identified as having some of the highest rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. These are our firefighters, our doctors, our nurses, RCMP. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

What is our government and the department doing in terms of reaching out to these service providers and making sure that they do have the supports should they need them?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't actually have any programs at this time dedicated strictly or particularly to post-

traumatic stress disorder, but we do have psychiatric assessment and treatment that is available both on an in-patient and outpatient basis. So if an individual is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, they can access outpatient care or treatment through a referral from a nurse or a doctor or other professionals here in the Northwest Territories. So I would strongly encourage individuals who are going through this to get in touch with their medical practitioners. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. In some cases just talking about mental illness is a tough thing to do for anybody, even if you are a doctor and understand the situation, to bring up the issues and the symptoms that you're dealing with. Particularly in the North because we have such a small population there's a good chance that if you end up in an event you might know the person and that can really cause really high stress and make you more vulnerable to PTSD.

I'd like to ask the Minister, other than what he's said now, how are we getting that information out to these first respondents as well as to the doctors and nurses?

How are we getting the information that there are those resources that he mentioned available? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We're trying to do a number of things to increase awareness of mental health issues here in the Northwest Territories. We did release a magazine last year, which was Mind and Spirit, which encourages people to read, talk and understand mental health issues. One thing I'd like to encourage all Members to do, as well as all the Ministers and all residents of the Northwest Territories, is to take Mental Health First Aid. That creates an awareness in the individuals so they can recognize when people they know might be struggling.

At the same time, we do have community counseling programs that are available. This is free counseling available to individuals who are either suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or may know somebody that is and they can refer them to. A lot of these situations the Member is talking about actually occur while the individual happens to be on duty or at work. Many organizations do have employee and family assistance programs. I would encourage individuals to access their employee and family assistance programs to begin the process of healing.

I would also suggest that individuals should call the NWT Helpline, which may be another resource for individuals who may not be willing or prepared to talk to either a friend or somebody they know, but might be interested in getting some advice from somebody that's a little bit more anonymous.

So there are a number of programs out there. We are constantly trying to encourage people to talk about mental health issues, to create awareness and lead people to the help they need. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I went to World Cancer Day, and talking to some of the individuals, they have a speaking forum, or a talking circle group here in Yellowknife, which is a great way to talk about it. So I was wondering if the Minister has any resources available that he can set up some type of forum for our first responders that want to get together and talk about these kinds of issues.

Are there any resources in the operations budget or any resources that he can think of that we can address this in a talking circle forum? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. That's certainly an interesting concept and certainly something that I will have the department look at. At this time I cannot say that there are actual funds available to do this exact thing, this exact round table of conversation, but it's something that's certainly interesting and I'll have the department take a look at it. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We talked about the Mental Health Act and post-traumatic stress disorder. So I just want to ask the Minister – I know we're going through a review of one of the bills – under one of the provisions in the Mental Health Act it talks about involuntary admission. Sometimes when a person who has mental illness doesn't want to admit themselves, they have people they work with that care about them.

Are there any amendments being made that we can make right now to the Mental Health Act that can address these issues? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Mental Health Act is currently in the process of being completely rewritten. Timing-wise to do an amendment and then interfere with the process that's underway might actually slow things up.

The types of issues the Member is talking about are going to be addressed under the Mental Health Act. We had hoped to have the Mental Health Act in front of this House in the life of this government, but it's taking a little longer to draft than we had thought. We think we may be done drafting in the summer, which means we're not going to have enough time to bring it to the House to go for first, second and third readings.

So, what I would like to propose to do is, as soon as the bill is done, in our August sitting I would like to table that document so that it is available to the

public to review and consider, so that it can be the first bill that is going through first, second and third readings in the 18th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 578-17(5):
MUNICIPAL INFORMATION AND
PRIVACY LEGISLATION

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and I'd like to initially thank the Minister for the MACA fall update which we received a little while ago. One of the pages in the update talks about municipal access to information and protection of privacy legislation, and this is a recommendation from the Information and Privacy Commissioner which has been stated for many years running. Those recommendations from the Information and Privacy Commissioner have been supported by the standing committee again for many years running. But recently the government seemed to agree, and as the update states, we entered into a process of consultations, and apparently there was a discussion paper put out.

So, my first question to the Minister is to ask what the status is of these consultations and the discussion paper. How close are we to seeing some finite end to this long process? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to get the update on that and provide it to the Member. I don't have it with me right now, so I'll take the Member's question as notice. Thank you.

---Question taken as notice

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

QUESTION 579-17(5):
STANTON TERRITORIAL
HOSPITAL RENOVATIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today, I talked about the Stanton Territorial Project that's coming before us. It's not an issue of the merits of the renovations, I think those are well-articulated out there how important this facility, this hospital is to the Northerners and we need to make sure it's kept up to speed and certainly up to date and able to provide the needed services. The issue really comes down to this, and it's about the money, how we renovate.

So I'm going to ask the Minister of Public Works these questions, which first off is: Why is the path of Public Works particularly focused in on building up Stanton Hospital while it's in full operation, rather than building either new or building a separate addition to it and attaching it later on? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been determined that the Stanton Hospital still has a lot of building left in it. It was built with the concept that at one point there would be a full mid-life retrofit, and we can't shut the hospital down.

There have been many incidents where they have done mid-life retrofits to hospitals and they continue the operation of the hospital. It would be difficult for us to relocate the hospital while we're doing a mid-life retrofit to it. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: For a couple years I've been asking about providing an opportunity to build a new hospital or at least a new fully independent wing attached to the hospital, because it makes better sense to make new than to renovate a hospital while it's in full operation.

The Department of Public Works has always said, well, if that's the choice of the bidders, then that's the one we'll examine, of course, and the best value for Northerners is the way we'll go. It's been my understanding that that has been taken off the table, and the three bidders, I was speaking to one a couple days ago and they said that option was taken off the table.

So, why is that the case that the government wants to renovate a hospital that's up and running, rather than building a new wing and attaching it to it, which would make the most sense to build new, rather than renovate? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The budget that we were looking at for the hospital at the point when we had gone out to RFP, looked like in order to bring that in on the budget that we were looking at would be to renovate, renew the hospital while the hospital is in operation. If one of the proprietors is able to come in at a cost that was equal or lower for a new site, new building and everything, then the government would take a look at that as well. It's not off the table. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: In speaking to two of the three invited contractors as well as speaking to a number of people in the construction industry here locally, they have all estimated that renovating the hospital while it is in full operation could run anywhere in the range of 20 to 30 percent more than what the project should cost.

These are estimates now, granted I know that, but why is this government so fixated on renovating a hospital that it costs us so much more than just

building a new additional wing to it? The fact is that is the truth of the reality, we are going to spend a lot more than necessary. Why is the government fixated on this?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, have they ever been given advice, their own advice, that it would be cheaper to build an addition on it than it would be to renovate it while it is in operation?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Part of the reconstruction of the hospital is to add a wing or a section onto the hospital while we are doing the hospital. So the hospital will actually expand in size by an additional 30 to 40 percent. That does include a wing to the existing hospital, if that is what is most efficient. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Industry has told me that it could run anywhere between 20 and 30 percent more because we are going to renovate and build while it is in full operation. I want to understand, does the Department of Public Works realize and accept that additional costs of this project, which we all know is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, is the department proceeding with that full knowledge and appreciation that additional costs are unnecessarily being borne by the taxpayer when we can't even afford it? I am not going back to the Finance Minister's statements, but he has illustrated quite clearly that the cupboard is financially bare. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: If the proprietors were able to come in with a new hospital, new construction, 30 percent bigger than what we have in place, 30 to 40 percent bigger than the current hospital, with a more reasonable cost than renovating and expanding the hospital, of course we would go with a new hospital, but at this point we were thinking that this would be the most efficient way to go. Once the proprietors are able to look at the project and cost the project out, we would have a better idea of which direction to go. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 580-17(5):
SMOKING CESSATION SERVICES
IN THE NWT

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. What are the current rates of smoking in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't remember the exact rates off the top of my head but I do know that we have some of the highest rates in Canada. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: What is the Department of Health and Social Services doing to help people quit smoking cigarettes? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a number of things that we are doing to encourage people to quit smoking or to reduce the amount they smoke, preferably quit smoking. We are promoting some services, resources, tools to help people quit smoking, such as the NWT Helpline, we have tobacco cessation aids, we are continuing to promote things like National Non-Smoking Week, and we are also promoting World No Tobacco Day. We are putting together some new websites, building upon the good work that was done with the Don't Be a Butthead campaign. Those resources or tools still exist and we will continue to hand those out until we are out of them, but we are working with some of our community health reps in the communities to tailor make programs for each individual community as well. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: I want to thank the Minister for his reply. One of the experiences that I have had is that you could approach your family doctor or physician in trying to assist you in terms of quitting cigarettes. They could offer a smoking cessation program. One of the examples of what kind of services that the people could find through their doctors is the patch, the Nicoderm patch, and that is what I personally use.

What is the department doing to reduce the overall impacts and costs to the health care system caused by chronic illness caused by smoking cigarettes and tobacco use? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: One of the best ways to reduce the amount of smoking is to ensure that new people don't start smoking, which is why we are working with the schools and the community health reps in the individual communities to tailor programs to suit, match or meet the needs of individual communities.

With respect to individuals that are already smokers, we are providing the NWT Helpline, and we also encourage them, if they need additional support, to talk to their physicians or health practitioners in their communities, who will be able to point them in a path of tools that might work for them on a cessation program. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of the initiatives in trying to educate the public is prevention strategies, and the department should be commended in terms of doing the public

campaign in terms of informing citizens of the facts of smoking.

What are some other healthy living initiatives that the department is undertaking to combat the overall costs of cigarettes and cancer, and so forth that affect people in the NWT? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We have a number of different programs that we are working on. We do have a chronic disease prevention promotion program that is underway and we have programs like BETTER and other tools that are available in individual communities to residents across the Northwest Territories. In every one of those programs we talk about the value of not smoking, eating healthy and getting lots of exercise. Healthy people will be more productive, they will contribute to society more, they will be living better lives and, obviously, that will result in lower overall health care costs in the long term. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 581-17(5):
PROMOTION OF NORTHERN
FISHING INDUSTRY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated, we participated in the buy local, buy Great Slave Lake fish. One of the questions while we were there was, are we putting the cart before the horse? How do we promote? We have a new logo and launch, but we actually don't put that fish in the store.

I would like to ask the Minister of ITI, how are we going to put fish into the stores and prepare that product for the stores? Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of our plan is to have a marketing assistance available for fishers to get that product into stores. I want to thank MLA Bouchard and MLA Groenewegen for their efforts in Hay River on promoting fish from Great Slave Lake. I know we have an effort here in Yellowknife as well. At the end of the day, it is up to store owners whether or not they put the fish into their store for sale. I know, here in Yellowknife, that happens at the Yellowknife Co-op store and down in Hay River. Again, it speaks to the importance of us putting a new export grade processing fish facility in Hay River, and I think that is something that the department and the government is certainly intent on seeing happen.

We have had discussions with both the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, when they were here recently last week and, as well, during NWT Days in Ottawa I had the opportunity to sit down with Minister Shea from Fisheries and Oceans and also

explained our case for some support from CanNor with Minister Aglukkaq when it comes to supporting our \$1.5 million that we have to put towards a new fish processing plant in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: Obviously, the Minister is answering some of those questions, but the \$1.5 million that the government has committed, have we got any commitment from the federal government to leverage any of our money to build this fish plant? We know it is going to cost more than \$1.5 million. Has the Minister been able to obtain any financing from the federal government? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: In order to get a quality fish processing plant constructed in Hay River, it is probably going to cost just north of \$5 million. We will need partners. CanNor, the federal government, Fisheries and Oceans and even Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation are the partners that we're speaking with. We want to see this happen. We are committed to seeing this happen. The discussions are ongoing and hopefully they will, I'd like to say bear some fruit, but bear some fish.

MR. BOUCHARD: Obviously, we have the \$1.5 million in this year's budget, so we're looking to do this. Does the Minister have any plan going forward on when we would actually have a date to break ground on that plant?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: With our discussions currently ongoing with CanNor, Fisheries and Oceans and FFMC, our hope is we'll have some answers here shortly. I certainly would like to see ground broken on the new facility by the end of this year.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I talked about getting the fish into different agencies and I'm wondering if the Minister could talk to the Minister of Justice and get it into our correctional facilities. Is that a possibility?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I've been accused of talking to myself before, so yes, that could happen.

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

QUESTION 582-17(5):
WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT
DETOXIFICATION SERVICES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I spoke about the issue surrounding our lack of progress on withdrawal management services. Clearly, the department has been given guidance and reporting to make realistic changes in its approach for Northerners. We are constantly reminded by our Health Minister that the economies of scale prevent us from finding a made-in-the

North solution when it comes to withdrawal management and treatment addictions as a whole. This argument is used far too often as a means to justify bureaucratic policy. In essence, nothing would be done in the North if one used the economies of scale defence, as all services would be cheaper done down South.

My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As mentioned in my statement today, the Minister has had a report in hand since March of 2014 clearly spelling out opportunities to enhance our withdrawal management services in the Northwest Territories.

Can the Minister indicate what progress or timelines were made with those recommendations?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report identified that the department is offering a continuum of withdrawal management services, although there are some gaps and there is room for improvement. One of the areas of improvement is mostly around awareness. We need to do a better job of making sure that our nurse practitioners, our nurses, our physicians and other practitioners throughout the Northwest Territories, as well as outside stakeholders like RCMP are aware of the program. We're working on information to get out to these individuals so that they understand what is available and how we can refer our clients in. There is also a requirement for some additional training for individuals on the actual intervention process and helping individuals target people that need to go in there. Those are the types of things we're doing now. We're doing some training programs and we're creating some awareness around the types of access points that do exist.

MR. DOLYNNY: The Minister just pointed out just one of a very broad range of recommendations that have yet to be implemented in the Northwest Territories. One of the recommendations of interest was the department being asked to develop policies, standards and guidelines in common language that are to be used across the system to establish a common assessment tool to assess withdrawal severity, stages of changes and addiction severity.

Can the Minister indicate if this has been done yet?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The work has begun but it is not concluded.

MR. DOLYNNY: One year later and it's still not concluded, as we're hearing from the Minister. We know our first point of contact folks such as nurses, physicians, mental health and addiction counsellors, social service workers, child protection workers and RCMP require ongoing training with withdrawal management best practices, harm

reduction and the use of a full range of assessment tools, not just awareness from what we heard today.

Can the Minister affirm that this is indeed in place?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is work that is currently being done. That is what's being designed and created at this time.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're hearing in progress. You know what? This is just ridiculous. All Northerners were led to believe that our use of southern facilities for withdrawal management and addiction treatments were to be temporary. The Minister is even quoted in saying, "We have not lost sight of the need to develop NWT-specific options of our approach to addressing addictions."

Can the Minister elaborate as to when we can see and expect a NWT-specific residential addictions treatment facility based in the North and run by Northerners?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: At this point in time there is no intention to build a territorial treatment facility in the Northwest Territories. We will continue to utilize the incredible facilities that we use in the South that are giving a wide range of programs and services to the people of the Northwest Territories; we will continue to deliver on-the-land programming through our Aboriginal partners, which the money has been put in the budget to do so; and we are continuing to pursue the mobile treatment options, which I would be happy to discuss with Members more.

With respect to withdrawal management, that is in the Northwest Territories. When it comes to a medical withdrawal management, individuals can go to Stanton Territorial Hospital or Inuvik Regional Hospital.

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

QUESTION 583-17(5):
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS
DISORDER SERVICES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a brief preamble in follow up to some of the discussion today on post-traumatic stress disorder, I myself experienced a traumatic event as a child which has carried over into adulthood. I'm almost 60 years old and I still have claustrophobia because I was in a building that was struck by a tornado when I was a child, and I did not see it coming. I heard it but I did not see it. To this day, I want to see what's happening around me, and that's why I don't like being closed in and that's why I sit beside the door. No, seriously, these kinds of things, at the

time, my parents said, okay, everybody back to work, like nothing had happened, but there are people who are dealing with all kinds of trauma that happened to them, probably far worse than being in a building that went up in a tornado, and there isn't help for them in the communities.

I floated this idea past the previous Minister of Health and Social Services and today I'm going to put it past the current Minister of Health and Social Services. Would it not be possible to bring professional, renowned services into the Northwest Territories on a tour to the communities where they would meet with the people and develop a relationship? Then they would go back to wherever their practice is in the South and those people could make appointments to talk to that person on the phone, so they could look forward to that, so they would know that if they were in difficulty or they wanted to continue on with their counselling that all they had to do was talk to that person on the phone. Is this not a model of care for things like post-traumatic stress disorder which would be helpful?

We, obviously, are not going to get professionals in this type of treatment and counselling in every community in the Northwest Territories. We probably couldn't even get that kind of specialized treatment here in Yellowknife, but I know there are contractors out there that would go into our northern communities, that would develop the relationship with the client, would be there for them, come back on an annual basis, something like that.

Is that a model we've considered? Could we think about it?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not actually aware of any programs like that, so if the Member does have some information she'd like to share, I'd be happy to read it and share it with the department

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: There was a young doctor that came to Hay River as a locum that did a practicum when he was receiving his medical training who went on to become Canadian known and an internationally renowned doctor who specializes in stress disorders and mood disorders. He has come back here to the North since. I am sure there are other people besides him. His name is Dr. Grant Mullen, and that is exactly what his practice does, and I did convey that information to Minister Beaulieu at the time. This is a doctor with an extreme interest in the North. Like I said, it doesn't have to be a sole sourced thing. It could be other people, but could we put out a request for expressions of interest of people who specialize in those areas that would be interested in serving our northern communities?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Once we have a better idea of what the program is and what it offers, it's something we may be able to do, but at this time I just don't know enough about it to say yes or no.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Even if it was not a specified program or something that's already structured. I'm just asking the Minister, would it not make sense to have people that are in remote northern communities who are enduring stress and mood disorders on a frequent basis where they are often in crisis, if they had a professional contact of someone they'd already developed a relationship with to be able to get counselling over the phone, because we know we're not going to have them in person in our communities?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It might be an interesting opportunity in the short term, but I think our priority needs to be to continue to staff the positions in the communities to make sure that people have somebody they can talk to face to face and eye to eye. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in an ideal world we would have people with those specialized skills in every community, but at this time we do not. I think there are things we can do in the interim, because people are under duress and stress and when they are in that situation have no one to turn to, they self-medicate, they use drugs, they use alcohol, all kinds of things to escape those feelings that they have of extreme stress and I think we need to do more as a government. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, understood.

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

QUESTION 584-17(5):
ROUND TABLE ON MISSING AND MURDERED
ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND GIRLS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House, in November, passed a motion and it was regarding missing and murdered Aboriginal women. That was passed on November 4th. It was a motion that I'm very appreciative that we had great support from this House. The reason I'm calling upon it today is I'm going to ask the Premier about the final clause in the motion. It reads as follows: And furthermore, that the Premier of the Northwest Territories transmit a copy of this motion to all of his provincial and territorial counterparts with a request for their consideration for support of a similar House motion.

My question for the Premier is: Has he had a chance to do that, and if he has, what type of feedback has he received from his

provincial/territorial Premier-type colleagues? I'm curious on where the development of this initiative may have stepped forward and what journey it has taken. Thank you

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to say that all Premiers of all provinces and territories are very supportive of holding a round table on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls and planning is well underway. The round table date is set at February 27, 2015. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Now to the part about the motion being forwarded to all of his provincial and territorial Premier colleagues, waiting for that particular answer as to has he had a chance to forward it to them or speak to them about it and are we aware of any sort of initiatives being developed or considered. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I always understood that holding a round table was the whole purpose of the motion. The Member is indicating that just conveying it to other provinces and territories was all that was required and I'll confirm that it has gone forward and I'll provide the Member with copies. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: There will be no necessity to read the whole motion, by all means, but this Assembly did fully support a national round table being led by our Premier. No change in my feelings on that at all. I don't think anyone has changed their feelings on our support for the Premier on that aspect of the initiative, none whatsoever. The only aspect that I'm asking about is the final portion of the motion, which asks the Premier to transmit a copy of the motion to his provincial and territorial counterparts and request that they consider support with a similar type of motion in their House. That's the aspect I'm curious about. If the Premier hasn't had the chance to do that, that's fine. I just would kind of like to get an update as to what he either has done or what he's planning to do. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. My office always acts immediately on motions that are passed in this House. So I'll just have to go back. I'm pretty sure that the letters have gone out and I'll go back and dig those letters out and provide copies to the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't need copies of all the letters. I think if the Premier just sends a note and says he's sent them all out I'll take him at his word. He's an honourable fellow.

Is the Premier aware of anyone proceeding in a similar manner? A couple of weeks ago, Premier Kathleen Wynne talked about her strong support for

a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls and the important issue is that other Premiers consider this an important issue. My question really is down to is he aware of any other provincial or territorial Legislative Assembly considering a similar motion to demonstrate their support to this cause that is very important. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'm not aware of any other Legislature that has passed this motion, but I'm sure that once we have the actual round table that the majority of them will do the same. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 585-17(5):
DON CHERRY'S COMMENTS
ON SEAL MEAT

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was listening to the news and listening particularly to the sports section. As I listened to the sports section of the news about Don Cherry's remarks about people eating seal meat and the racist and derogatory words that he used. This is a national hockey personality on CBC and we're trying to attract people to the Northwest Territories and half of our population is up above the Arctic Circle, people who live off the land and depend on the land, especially people who are around the Beaufort Sea.

Has the Premier given any thought with his colleagues to invite the CBC to ask for an official apology like the Premier from Nunavut has asked Don Cherry? Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the piece that the Member heard on the radio this morning shows that we have to be very vigilant in protecting our way of life. The fact that people in the Northwest Territories, and not only northern Canada but other places in Canada practice a way of life where they harvest animals and use it for food and clothing. So every opportunity we have to make sure people and the public are educated on these matters, we will do. I heard that the Environment Minister called for an apology, so we are prepared to do something similar. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I'm not too sure if it's a small percentage of the indication of southern people in Canada as to their views on Aboriginal people and our way of life. We've battled through the fur industry, the seal industry and now we know even in today's world, 2015, we have a sports person of his magnitude with his views on Aboriginal people, especially people in the High Arctic.

So I want to ask again if the Premier can officially write a letter that's required from our government to

ask Mr. Cherry to apologize. We probably want our process to start educating people in that category to the way of life up in the Northwest Territories.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I heard part of what he said and he was referring to baby seals. Obviously, that's not a big issue with baby seals up here. It's a different way of harvesting, but it would probably be more effective.

Mr. Cherry, when he was asked about it, didn't apologize. He just said that he was thinking out loud or something to that effect and it's probably better if we wrote to the guys that pay his salary to complain about it. Every time he comes on, turn your TV off. Thank you.

---Laughter

MR. YAKELEYA: Really good suggestion by the Premier. Every time Don Cherry gets on, turn the TV off for about 30 seconds or so. That sends a strong signal.

This is an indication of people in southern Canada, how they look possibly at the views of Aboriginal people, a small segment possibly of that, but it still tells you in today's world of the educating of our way of life, why it sometimes doesn't quite fit the southern mentality of how we live.

So, again, I would ask if the Premier would be able to look at the possibility of writing to the people who sign his paycheque, if he could look at issuing an apology to the people that he offended.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'll be in contact with others in the fur industry that we interact with and we'll take appropriate action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Colleagues, I'm going to call a 15-minute recess.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Item 11, replies to budget address. Mr. Dolyunny.

Replies to Budget Address

MR. DOLYNNY'S REPLY

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank the many fine folks we have working for our public service who have dedicated many hours of effort to bring forth our last budget of the 17th Legislative Assembly. Your hard work is definitely a reflection of the polished product we have before the House and it is important that this House respects this. So, thank you from all of us from the Assembly.

Sometimes we forget, and it is worth noting, the budget is not just an expression of numbers but an expression of our values and unique culture, a culture that everyone in this room cherishes and

holds true. For the past few days, many of my colleagues have offered their initial observations to the budget and the opening address of our Minister of Finance. It is clear, even in these early days, there are obstacles before us, there are doubters among us, there will be mistakes uncovered, but I am confident, when the dust settles, there is no limit to what we can achieve if we work together.

So for today, when addressing the budget address at a high level, I believe simplicity is the key. Keeping this theme in mind, I decided that it is only right that I identify the top 10 highlights that describe the last budget of the 17th Legislative Assembly and how historians may judge us. With that, here are those top 10 highlights from the office of Range Lake.

10. If one is approaching the fiscal edge of a cliff, check for flat tires.
9. Don't tell me; show me you can handle more debt.
8. A plan or strategy without an investment is merely a fairy tale, so please stop with the perpetual planning and frameworks of inaction.
7. Our number one control of expenses is wage dollars, then right size, not downsize, your GNWT workforce.
6. The plan was devolution then evolution. So what is the plan when there is a revolution?
5. If one says we need to make sure our expenditures grow in line with our revenues, please check your math, because four-to-one is not one-to-one unless you are the graduate of our ECE Discover Math Program.
4. If we borrow, we must repay. Then please specify who is co-signing your credit card application forms when you leave.
3. If we rolled up 5,000 kilometres of red tape 310 days ago, then why the spray painted F on our 2015 report card? You can table your response in the House when completing the following 12 department questionnaires.
2. We have the only Finance Minister in Canada that can crosshair caribou herd management and people management with the same "ready, aim, fire" trigger analogy.
1. The number one highlight that describes the last budget of the 17th Legislative Assembly, the Finance Minister is always quick to count the days we have left. We say, just don't count the days, be a good Minister and make them count.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, thanks for allowing me to bring my top 10 list today before the House. It is utterly important that we start to make sure that the taxpayer is getting value for their budget dollar. We owe them no less. The world is living in economic fear and the North is not immune. We need to

break the cycle of fear for our residents and businesses, and this can only be achieved with calculated vision and good economic medicine.

Now, Mr. Speaker, through you, I turn my attention to the Minister of Finance and, in the spirit of Mr. DiCaprio, I say, Mr. Minister, sell me this budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Mr. Abernethy.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 44:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
HOSPITAL INSURANCE AND
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION ACT

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 44, An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Bill 44 has had first reading.

---Carried

Item 20, second reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 43:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
BORROWING AUTHORIZATION ACT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 43, An Act to Amend the Borrowing Authorization Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill increases the amounts that may be borrowed by the Commissioner to ensure the Consolidated Revenue Fund is sufficient to meet lawful disbursements. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 43 has had second reading and is referred to a standing committee.

---Carried

Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 188-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2015-2016; Bill 38, An Act to Amend the Jury Act; and Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Partnership Act, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee today? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would like to continue with consideration of Tabled Document 188-17(5). We would like consider and conclude general comments and then get on to the departments of Human Resources and Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, time permitting. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. We will resume with general comments on the whole budget. Oh, I'm sorry. Mr. Miltenberger would you like to bring the witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Mr. Miltenberger, for the record, would you please introduce your witness.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have with me today Mr. Mike Aumond, deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We will resume with the people who were on the list to make general comments. First I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a few comments to make. Over the last couple of years in the Health department, with the closing of Nats'ejee K'eh we have seen a lot of programs in our territory diminish. I haven't seen the latest stats on how many people are actually going south for treatment, but there is a high demand up in the Beaufort-Delta for on-the-land programs which were promised, but as of today I believe there is only one program offered over the last year. There has to be more done in that department.

Also, under lowering the cost of living, it is good to see some funds going towards that but a good example is fuel prices. All over Canada, anywhere from \$1.03 and lower, yet up in our smaller communities like Tsiigehtchic, Fort MacPherson and Aklavik we are still paying \$1.86 per litre. There is something wrong with that picture. I don't think the cost of transportation is that much. All over Canada, lower prices, except in the Arctic or Beaufort-Delta. That needs to be addressed.

Also, the same thing with the cost of food. It is almost double what it is here in Yellowknife. It's \$8 for one litre in Tsiigehtchic. I hope as we move forward we address that. Also, in moving forward, I hope we can improve the services that we do deliver throughout the communities. A good initiative is the government service officers, as mentioned earlier today. It's really a big help to the community residents, and I hope to see that move forward.

Also, under the economy, it's good to see the Inuvik-Tuk highway going forward and creating a lot of employment, but it's sort of seasonal too. Over the summer months it's pretty quiet in the communities and hopefully within the next month here we do hear more on the Building Canada Plan, but we need a lot more work in our territory. It was mentioned here, the Fibre Optic Link moving forward. That's great. Also, with the hydro, hopefully one day in my lifetime I can see hydro going all the way up to Inuvik and further. If it could be done in the Yukon, I don't see why it can't be done here in the territory.

With that, I just had a few brief comments I wanted to share.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Blake. General comments. Next I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to correct an impression that I apparently perplexed both the Minister and the Premier with. I have been commenting that the science shows we cannot pursue the exploitation of our fossil fuel reserves in the Northwest Territories as a cornerstone of an economic development strategy. Both this Minister and the Premier are, unintentionally I am sure, misconstruing this comment to say that I want a faster shift to renewable energy. I think we all want a faster shift to renewable energy but that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying we cannot build our economy on fossil fuels that science shows we must leave in the ground.

Currently, of course, we import all our fossil fuels, essentially exclusively, so yes, we do need to shift to renewable resources and get off those, but if at the same time the government pushes the extraction of our fossil fuels, the most emissions intensive source of energy in the world, according

to the science, which we know must stay in the ground just to avoid dangerous levels of climate change, and of course, we are taking one step forward and three steps back and shooting ourselves in the foot, so stop pursuing fossil fuel development. Although it's not focused on a lot in this budget because there is very little activity, we're still spending a lot of money pursuing this, including about \$5 million in this budget that could, in fact, given the science, be put in to developing a sound economy that actually is sustainable and provides a healthy future for us as opposed to the one contemplated with the pursuit of fossil fuels that we know should stay in the ground.

I'd welcome the Minister's more informed response, but I just wanted to clarify that both the Premier and the Minister have been misconstruing that comment into wanting to go faster and faster, and they're espousing all the great things that we're doing and our Arctic Energy Alliance and our own government shift to renewable energy, which I appreciate, but that's not relevant to the comment I am making.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Any further general comments? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a few comments. I made some last week, and I will repeat some of them because I think they bear repeating, and there are a few other things about the budget that I would just like to highlight.

I said last week that I am quite concerned that we are going to spend ourselves into a corner, into hot water, I think I said last week. We seem to produce money out of thin air sometimes. Admittedly, we can borrow money, but borrowing costs money, and at some point in time – and we've been talking about this for a number of years and we don't seem to achieve it – we have to get our revenues to equal our expenditures, and we're not doing that. We keep spending. We get a little bit more money from the federal government and we spend it. We have done very little, in my mind, to reduce our expenditures.

Passive restraint has been something which the government has been using as sort of a cost-saving measure for the last several years, and I don't think it has been all that effective. As an example, not necessarily in terms of spending but from the time that we discussed the business plans in the fall and to the time that we see the numbers in the budget that we have before us, there was an increase of, I forget now what the number was, but it was a fairly large increase in our budget, many millions of dollars. It seems that whenever the government needs to spend money, they just kind of find it. We, unfortunately, on this side of the House, though, when we want to spend money, there's never any money available. I have a bit of a difficulty with that contradiction where no, we have no money to

spend when talking to Regular Members but then if the government needs money, well, they just find it, and I think we need to rein in that kind of thinking.

Although it's a capital project, I am concerned about the Stanton Hospital Renovation and Renewal Project. It's going to be a huge drain on our resources. It's some \$35 million a year, and I can't remember the length of the contract. If we do a P3 project, it's going to be a huge drawdown every year for many, many years. I think there is a need for us to consider whether or not a P3 is the right way to go. I've mentioned this before, but I feel it needs mentioning again because that \$35 million a year amount that we're going to have to pay, that's going to be in our operations budget in the future. I think it probably is going to be cheaper for us to do it ourselves. I realize that there are issues with that because we don't have the borrowing room in order to borrow, but I think we have to seriously consider whether or not a P3 is the right way to go. I don't think that it is. I think there are an awful lot of examples of P3 projects, particularly involving hospitals, which have not been all that positive.

I see that this budget doesn't address the need for alternative energy enough. I know there's some money in here to develop alternative energy projects and to look at it, but I don't think it's enough, and I think we have to be spending far more. We should put a greater priority and should be spending far more time and energies on energy. One of the things which drive me crazy is that some six years ago now, I think, there was a trip to Europe. Members came back and said that district biomass heating systems, heat and power systems were in use in Europe, they were readily available and that they would adapt quite easily to the North. We have yet to see one in the North, and there is absolutely no reason why we could not have in the past six years developed a pilot project.

I am glad to see that we have started to record environmental liabilities in a financial sense. We've started, but I think we have a long way to go and I don't think we have yet, in our budget, reached the appropriate number to properly handle environmental liabilities. I don't think we know. I know we don't know because we haven't been able to monitor all the sites yet, but I don't think we have any idea of how much the environmental liabilities are that we're going to be on the hook for and that's pretty important.

I am particularly concerned about junior kindergarten and the fact that there is no new money in this budget for junior kindergarten. I think it's an unfair drain on the larger school authorities and school districts. If we're going to put a new program in place, if it's going to be a new initiative, then we ought to fund it properly, and we're not doing that.

Lastly, I wanted to just comment on, sort of, the perilous situation that we're in, in regard to our land and the drought and the impending fire season, which is not all that far away, unfortunately. We could quite seriously be in the same situation in July and August that we were in in 2014; 2015 could be a repeat fire year. Again, it's going to have an impact on our budget. It's not something that we've budgeted for, so we're going to be having extraordinary expenditures again, and it goes just to my view that we are planning but we're not planning to meet our expenditures I guess. We're not planning to reduce our expenditures; we're not planning for a rainy day to a certain extent.

Two other things and then I'm done. One of them is the Minister has stated that we are going to have flat revenue growth. He has stated it quite often and I appreciate that. I know that our revenues go up and down and they are at the whim of forces that we can't control. However, I think we need to spend; we need to put a lot more emphasis on finding a new revenue source than we do. We have for every year since I've been here said no, no new revenue source, no new taxes, no new levies, nothing. All we've done is to increase. I think we have increased the fees, we've increased our sin taxes and I think that's about what we've done. Maybe put an increase of inflation on some of our fees for licences and so on. That's not enough. We need a revenue source that is going to enable us to do the many big projects that we think we need to do.

Lastly, I mentioned last week and I have to mention it again, and that's the strategy or the plan by the government to bring new residents into the territory. We have yet to see any evidence of that strategy on paper. The Minister has talked about it a number of times, there have been questions; however, I haven't seen anything. If there is something on paper, if there's a strategy that we can look at I certainly would love to see it as I think other Members would like to see it as well. So it concerns me that we are "doing stuff" as the Minister stated in answer to some questions last week, but it just sounds like talking into the wind and I have yet to see any concrete evidence that what the government is doing is going to pan out and get us more residents. So I'd love to see what the plan is for the next four years, apart from what we've done in the last year. I want to know what we're going to be doing as we go ahead.

So, some comments, Madam Chair. I think that's it. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Any further general comments? Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. We appreciate the comments from the Members in regard to the lowering of the cost of

living, which would be a way of improving services. We are very committed to that. I've indicated now quite a number of times, as we look at our borrowing limit we need to make these critical investments that are going to help us lower the cost of living and there are a couple of things that we can do and we are focusing on those. One is the cost of energy generation and look at how we do business. The other one is critical infrastructure that promotes economic development like the Tibbitt-Contwoyto conversion from the ice road to an all-weather road, the next leg of the Wrigley to Norman Wells road where we know that there's going to be a way to help pay this with industry but also promote activity that will expand our economic base.

When Member Bisaro says we need more revenue, the implication tends to be most immediately is somehow we should raise taxes. We're saying that we already have the highest cost of living in the country, that we are far better off to make critical economic infrastructure investments that will help grow our economic base, promote more employment and more wealth, put people to work, more money in the economy. So we believe we can do that. We have started that and we have to continue to work at that.

In regard to the issue of wanting to see more, specifically the significant number of activities that we have underway in regard to the growing the population by 2,000 in four years, I'll commit to the Members that we will have a document for them that pulls together all the pieces of work that have been underway over the last year and we'll have that probably by sometime before the end of April, the beginning of May. There is a significant amount of work that has been going on that we believe will bear fruit, that the first year was a foundational year as we got ourselves organized and looked through the things we need to do both with industry and chamber as well as internally to government. How do we improve how we do business and take advantage of some of the federal changes to the immigrant Nominee Program that Minister Lafferty will be speaking to in the coming weeks?

In regard to Mr. Bromley's comment, just to clarify that we were not misunderstanding his point. I think both the Premier and I understood the Member's concern about any future development of fossil fuel should cease and desist, and what I would suggest to the Member is that that is a very fundamental policy decision. That's a policy decision for this Legislature to discuss and weigh in on and pass judgment on. I don't think it would be appropriate at this juncture just for the government to stand up and say it's no longer going to have anything to do with the development of the fossil fuel reserves in our jurisdiction without a thorough conversation about that, and I think that has yet to take place. I appreciate the Member's concern about

greenhouse gases, which we share, and the millions that we're spending on alternative energy to cut our costs and limit our reliance on fossil fuels, but in the meantime my suggestion would be that's the type of very fundamental policy debate that a Legislature should have and see if there is a consensus that can be reached on that issue, especially given the fact that we have a consensus government.

There was a comment by Ms. Bisaro about no money for MLAs, but when the government wants to spend money it finds it. I can only assume that, if I can use the example of fire season and low water that yes, we found the money, short-term borrowing. We had an emergency response, catastrophic events happening on the fire front, and as I've repeatedly reassured Northerners, we're not going to ground our planes and confine our firefighters to barracks because they have expended their budget. This is a very, very critical issue and what governments are supposed to do: protect their citizens, protect the infrastructure and protect the land to the greatest extent possible and values at risk. Same with the low water. We made a conscious decision that this was a worthwhile investment to keep our costs down so it's not transferred to the power rates and we put that money on the table as a contribution.

All of us, MLAs and government together, know that we have and we've been struggling with our funds. We've listened to Mr. Dolynny's top 10, the issues about the cliff and flat tires and shooting caribou and all of the other eight things that he mentioned about the budget top 10 in his mind. So there are money issues, but yes, for emergencies, to protect our people, we will put the resources to use and if we have to borrow it, we will, and we'll do the same again this summer if we have to. We want people to be reassured that they're not going to be left defenseless in any event.

The P3 projects we will determine. The final determination on the P3 projects will be made once the proposals are in. We will determine the costs, we will look at the value, we will look at is it a renovation. Is one of the proponents going to propose a brand new building on a different site that would meet the size increases, the program increases for the same kind of money that we have budgeted for the renovation? We'll have to see. The P3 is being looked at because we're obligated to under our own policies and directions from the Legislature and strong push from the Members and we want to see if there is value

Yes, there are examples where things haven't worked well, but there are probably as many or more examples of P3s that have worked well, both in Canada and I was just looking at a report from things that have happened in Australia and a

countrywide review that was done there. So, that final decision has yet to be made.

In regards to district heating, yes, folks went to Europe and they took a look where the average mean temperature was somewhere... In the wintertime it was like minus 6. We have one very clear experience with district heating and that's in Inuvik. Madam Groenewegen will remember, as do I, the heated debate, as it were, that took place over the High Temperature Hot Water System in Inuvik. I know how incredibly expensive it was, so much so that everybody, including the government, walked away from it and, finally, NTPC. So technology has improved. I just think we have to look very carefully. It's not a direct line comparison between what may be done in Sweden and what may be done in a place where today it was, I think, 45 below when I was walking to work. I froze my face in about five minutes. So it's not something that's been totally ruled out but we should just recognize that.

The issue of the very specific issues related to health and education I will leave for the Ministers to answer to the Members when they come before the House.

Finally, just to reiterate that we are very committed to expanding our revenues, and our focus is on, once again, creating conditions that are going to foster, encourage and promote economic development that's broadening our economic base; look at recruiting our own students to a greater extent; look at maximizing all the opportunities that are going to come to us under the new Nominee Program to be able to get workers up here, and their families, within a six-month period; work with industry and encourage them to be like Dominion Diamonds and take the incentives for travelling, flying in, flying out, off the table and see what happens and we will pull that all together, Madam Chair, and we will provide that in the form of a more permanent longer term strategy as we go forward here to look at making the reality out of that decision to expand our population by 2,000 in now four years. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Any further general comments? No further general comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Minister's response and will look forward to him leading that debate on leaving fossil fuels in the ground and also sort of explaining to me – I'm just looking for the common sense here – about how we're struggling so hard to get our relatively modest energy demands into renewable energy away from fossil fuels while we're pushing to develop fossil fuels as fast as we can to feed whole nations and generate greenhouse gas emissions that are off the charts compared to the

per capita consumption here. So I would appreciate that and I'll look forward to the debate.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I do not see any further general comments. Thank you. I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witness from the Chamber.

If committee is ready, we will commence with the Department of Human Resources. We would ask the Minister if he would like to please bring his opening remarks. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I am pleased to present the 2015-2016 Main Estimates for the Department of Human Resources. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$688,000, or 2.9 percent, over the 2014-2015 Main Estimates. These estimates continue to support the objectives of limiting expenditure growth in order to sustain the long-term sustainability of the fiscal framework.

Highlights of the proposed estimates include:

- the decentralization of a web technologies specialist position from headquarters to Fort Simpson;
- the addition of one new position to help us meet our French language services obligations; and
- in our role as a corporate service provider, \$4.7 million, or 19 percent of the Department's 2015-2016 funding, is allocated for direct support to departments and agencies through programs to address hiring, development and well-being of GNWT employees. This investment and support also ensures we connect with northern residents to fill our job opportunities.

The proposed Department of Human Resources' estimates continue to support the priorities of the 17th Assembly. Specific activities in support of these priorities include:

- The Department of Human Resources will lead the development of a human resource management accountability framework to align the GNWT with modern best practices globally in human resource management.
- This framework will continue to move the GNWT towards the goals and objectives of 20/20: A Brilliant North, the NWT Public Service Strategic Plan.
- The accountability framework is a strategic tool that supports a modern high-performing public service by maximizing the value of the workforce and developing people's potential to achieve the strategic goals of the GNWT.
- It is fundamental to guiding sound human resource management decisions. It establishes the supporting structure to set clear roles and responsibilities and reasonable performance expectations based on

legislation, policy and regulations and recognized best practices in human resource management.

- It also establishes a foundation for continuous improvement and performance measurement to monitor progress, measure results, perform evaluations and adjust to improve strategic outcomes.
- It is anticipated the framework will have a positive impact on the GNWT's efficiency and effectiveness of business processes by reducing time and maximizing effort spent on human resource management.
- A focus on risk will also help prioritize efforts. Measuring return on investment will also help communicate the positive impact of Department of Human Resources' work on the organization and provide evidence of positive returns on investing in people and in Human Resource programs.
- Developing a strategic business partnership with clients will be a primary focus of the department. Human Resources professionals will continue to add value to line managers in human resource planning and recruitment of a qualified and representative public service.
- Through these modernization efforts, we will continue to build a diverse, competent and well-managed workforce, capable of and committed to delivering high quality services to the people of the Northwest Territories.

Madam Chair, that concludes my opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort Mr. Beaulieu's witnesses to the table.

For the record, Mr. Beaulieu, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my right is Ms. Shirley Desjardins, deputy minister, Human Resources; and to my left, Ms. Michelle Beard, director, corporate affairs, Human Resources.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. General comments on

Human Resources. First I have Mr. Blake, then I will go to Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Moses. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few concerns. As we move forward there are a number of positions that are not filled within the Mackenzie Delta riding. As we move forward this coming year, I would like to see all of those positions, if possible, filled. There are a number of people looking for work in the communities and I feel there is really no excuse for not filling those positions. If we try hard enough, I think we could accomplish that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Next for general comments, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was wondering if the Minister could speak to the number of vacancies we have within the public service at this particular time. Perhaps we can break it down into regions if possible. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. We will save that until we hear from three Members. We are doing general comments right now, and when we have heard from three Members we will turn it back to the Minister to respond to those three Members. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Sorry, Madam Chair. I thought we agreed this morning to use our time in a manner that made sense, where we could go back and forth with our 10 minutes.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay, understood, and if committee agrees with that process then, Mr. Hawkins, we will allow the Minister to respond to your question. Then I probably should have let the Minister respond to Mr. Blake immediately after his comments as well. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps what I will do is I will stand down and Mr. Blake should be able to finish his line. You are the chair, obviously. Can I stand down completely? I will start over and let Mr. Blake continue.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Blake made comments and the Minister could respond to Mr. Blake's comments at this time, please. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will look for the officials to support me in this in a general response. Generally what we could respond to is, any vacancies that are in Human Resources, the Department of Human Resources, and then for the overall vacancies in the government, the various agencies, whether they be health authorities or the education authorities, we would need to have the vacancies responded to by the appropriate Minister. As far as the Department of HR goes, we have seven vacancies that we are

currently in the process of staffing. Only two of those are in the region and five are in Yellowknife. Of the seven vacancies that are on the books now, two of them have been filled and the other five are in the process of being filled.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Anything further, Mr. Blake?

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was specifically talking to the Beaufort-Delta riding and the Mackenzie Delta riding. Yellowknife has hundreds, almost thousands of jobs and my main focus is up where it is really needed and that is in the smaller communities of the Mackenzie Delta riding. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Again, as I indicated, that was the full sum of the vacancies in the Department of Human Resources. We could, I suppose, go through the detail on the rest. We do have a report on the rest of the vacancies for the rest of the departments, but to speak specifically on the processes that are going through, or the plan that the various departments have on filling those positions, I don't have that information with me. Each department, again, is responsible for filling the vacancies. When I spoke about the seven vacancies, that is the full vacancy for the Department of Human Resources.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next I will go to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe I will reword the questions, just so it is clearly asked and can be clearly answered. At this present moment, the Department of Human Resources issued a snapshot which I know they do on a regular basis. How many vacancies in the public service would be recognized in that snapshot? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. The report that we do on a semi-annual basis indicates the vacancy rate and then breaks down which positions are true vacancies where we are attempting to fill the positions. We have 466 positions where we are actually in the process of recruiting. They are at advertisement or they are at the stage where we are preparing to advertise or they could be in the job offering stage after all of the interview processes have taken place. The vacancy rate, which includes positions that are inactive, positions that are filled by casuals and other positions, positions that have been held vacant for transfer assignments and so on, that actual number is 1,038 at this time.

MR. HAWKINS: Does the Department of Human Resources keep any statistics on southern versus what I would call northern hire? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, we do.

MR. HAWKINS: I would ask the Minister, could he elaborate a little more, such as some of the details that they keep?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: It is indicated when we have job competitions, we ask for individuals to give their priority status for the competition. When we go out to job advertisement, individuals will indicate whether they are a priority 1 candidate, Aboriginal indigenous Northerner; or priority 2, non-Aboriginal indigenous Northerner; or priority 3, not having either of those two statuses. In reality, if an individual was here but did not attain any of those two statuses, they may consider themselves a resident of the NWT but would not achieve either of those two statuses or they would be in the same category as somebody that was hired directly from the south. So we have those statistics and we have the percentage in each of those statistics in the public service at this time.

MR. HAWKINS: In the last year is the Minister able to provide statistics on southern hire versus northern hire? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We would have to do a manual count by department, so what happens with our reporting on PeopleSoft is that they give a snapshot in between from one report to the next, so for about a six-month period what it would show would be the change but it wouldn't show the amount of people going in and out to actually create that change. It would show the new number at this point. In order for us to determine how many southerners we hired or non-priority candidates we were to hire in the GNWT versus priority 1 or priority 2 candidates, we would actually have to do a manual count department by department to be able to provide that information.

MR. HAWKINS: Would the Minister be able to epistolize that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Did you say would he be able to crystalize that?

MR. HAWKINS: Epistolize. Write a letter. Respond in writing.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would be able to provide that in writing if the committee wished for us to provide that information in writing. We are also looking at creating a field in this report so that... Right now, this concentrates mostly on the vacancy rate. We're working on creating a field in this report that would indicate overall which the candidates were, either a priority 1, 2 or 3. Just for more clarification, I would like to ask the deputy minister to add to that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. With our workforce planning we are looking at different fields to capture because we do need to identify where the migration of employment is. With our eRecruit system we will be looking at fields to differentiate whether they are northern hires or southern hires for stat purposes.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wasn't sure if the Minister was going to provide that in writing or not. He said if the committee wants that. This is very unusual, in my experience, that we now need the whole committee of the Assembly to request information. Is that the position of the Minister?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. We will provide. What the Member is asking for is that we do a manual count of the change of all the individuals that came into the public service that were priority 1, 2 or 3. I guess I'm not clear on how far back we go. From the last report to this report coming up or is it from the last report that we have completed to the previous year or this government or this fiscal year? I'm not sure exactly what we're reporting on.

MR. HAWKINS: One year would be fine.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I guess, then, we'll take it from one year from the last PeopleSoft report going back a year.

MR. HAWKINS: The Minister had said that there were 1,038 inactive positions, and I was just wondering if we could mine down on that data just a little clearer. He said that there were positions being held for transfer assignments and he had given it some other reasons. What inactive positions aren't being held open for anyone whatsoever?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I indicated that there are 1,038 vacant positions. I guess just to give some numbers, overall vacancies reported in the previous report were 1,226. That dropped to 1,038. The vacancies to be filled went from 527 to 466, as I indicated. The use of casuals went from 15 percent to 18 percent. The positions to be inactivated have decreased considerably from 218 down to 71 positions. Positions that are home position individuals that were on transfer assignment, there were 84 of those types of positions.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate that information. Is the Minister able to speak to how long some of those inactive positions have been kept on the books? If I wrote my number down correctly, I think he said inactive positions had come down from 271 to 218. If I am incorrect, I will let him state that for the record. What type of detail do we have on these

particular positions? I'm more curious on how long they've been inactive. I mean, that's essentially the question and time is up, so I'll leave it to him to answer.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'll have the deputy minister respond to that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now we're working with the departments on the tools on trying to fill these vacancies. We have some criteria that we are looking at all of our vacancies with our client departments as we speak, and we're creating some tools and avenues on filling these vacancies and trying to help them with their workforce planning.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Also, in addition to that, the Member had requested how long the positions were inactive. That is something that we can get department-by-department information. Again, we would have to go back to the departments and determine how long each of those positions, the 71 positions, were inactive, so the department would be willing to talk to the other departments to get that information to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you very much, Minister Beaulieu. General comments. Next on my list I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to welcome the Minister and his staff for joining us today. It's kind of neat, mainly because this is our last budget for the 17th Assembly, and I know the Minister and his staff have appeared before standing committee on numerous occasions and we've had some pretty good dialogue in terms of how this department is managing its action plan but also getting some good input and advice from committee members.

I have a few things that I'd like to try to address here, and I'll try to get it all summarized as my general comments and that way when we go into detail I don't have to try to talk to it then.

I guess the first one, and it has always been important to me, is the Regional Recruitment Strategy and whether or not we can get an update on how this program is working and how many people have we put into senior, more management positions. The second one is this population increase action plan. You've heard it discussed since the beginning of this Assembly, and I just want to know what the department's input into that is and if they have to, in fact, have input into how we are going to get our population increased and if we'll have jobs for people when they do come to the Northwest Territories.

Another update that I'd like to maybe get a little bit more information on is the Safe Disclosure Act. Where are we with that? Has it been utilized, and if not, how can we do a better job? In our region of Inuvik, I know there are a lot of requests for whether it's ROEs or things of that nature, and I do know that with the staff that we have there they do a good job, but I also know that they tend to be possibly overworked sometimes and whether or not we need to create more support for our regional centres.

What has been in the news, as well, is some of our departments that are getting into such scenarios where our employees' safety is put into jeopardy. I wonder what the department is doing working with other departments in terms of creating more safer environments, the type of training our employee staff can do to, I guess, numb a situation that can potentially be harmful to our employees.

I just want to know what the department is doing in terms of recruitment. I know we have a career fair going on up in Inuvik and whether or not the department is going to be having some type of presence there at the high school, especially for students that are looking at a career path that they might want to take, as well as students down south and how we are recruiting students in post-secondary to come back up north.

I did have some questions about vacancies, as well, but I think my colleague did a good job in asking those questions.

I know there is reference also to our 20/20 Public Service Strategic Action Plan. I'm not sure when we last got an update on that, but whether or not the department is doing a good job making progress in those five key areas that were addressed.

I'll just leave it at that, Madam Chair. It is just more of a summary of some of the concerns and updates that I would like to see addressed. I know there are a few of them there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to have a go at responding to as many of these as possible, then have the officials also assist me in that.

Regional Recruitment is a good program. I did anticipate more uptake. We are making some changes that the deputy minister is just going to touch on that we think will improve the uptake as a result of the recent changes that we're going to be making to that program. Right now we've appointed three people and we're in the process of various stages of hiring six more people and we're looking at a total of 16 departmental applications. When we are able to bring people into all of these positions, we should have 16 people under the Regional Recruitment Program.

On the Safe Disclosure Memorandum of Agreement between ourselves and the union, since the agreement has come into effect, which was, I guess, back on April 1, 2013, we've had only one person... There has been just one disclosure, which is under review. We're not sure as to why, but there is not an uptake. We could probably give an opinion on that as well.

For other recruiting processes and the safety, I would like to ask the deputy minister to respond to those.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The departments are responsible for their own safety programs, so if there are any issues specifically that we addressed, HR provides guidance, tools and support to departments on their own safety programs.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: I just have a couple things. One was the departments, whether they have been giving input in terms of the increased population plan that this government is going ahead with and whether or not there will be jobs available, should we have an increase in the population. There were also questions on recruitment and what the department is doing in terms of attending career fairs throughout the Northwest Territories and also looking at recruiting some of our students that are in post-secondary programs down south.

Just making reference to budget dialogue from 2012, there was recommendation in terms of duplication of programs. I think if all departments are doing their own safety protocols, we could potentially have some different safety protocols within departments rather than having one that can do the job, or just creating that little department maybe through HR to go out and do all the safety. That way, duplication, we save money, especially with our fiscal situation. I think that's a good opportunity in terms of looking at cost-savings. So, just following up to those other questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. Maybe I'll start off with this discussion a bit on the open house with Ms. Beard and then go to the deputy.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Beard.

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. To give a brief update, the Department of Human Resources did a variety of open houses, so we had student open houses that took place in the following locations on December 22nd, so they took place in

Fort Simpson, Hay River, Inuvik, Norman Wells, Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Behchoko, and then we had general open houses that took place in Fort Simpson in November on multiple dates, in Hay River in February, in Inuvik in February, Norman Wells in February, Fort Smith in March, Yellowknife in April on multiple dates and in Behchoko in May. The department has been very active in going out to all of the communities and providing open houses for both residents and for students. The open houses were held in all of the regions and the feedback from the public was that the information provided was very helpful. We've worked very hard to make people feel welcome at the open houses and gave them all of the information that they needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Beard. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. You mentioned about the 20/20 action plan. We are looking at the goals towards that and have added additional goals including the accountability framework which will have some more tools to support our clients. Included is the direct recruiting tool, which will give us the ability to look at those vacancies. We're looking at the vacancies with our client departments, determining what the issues are, why are they vacant, or just really scrutinizing these vacancies to determine what is more suitable for succession planning and things like that, because 25 percent of our workforce is going to be retiring. So, we are looking at that more closely with our clients and looking at strategies in filling these jobs.

With the 20/20, it talks about knowledge-building capacity, so we're creating tools internally for our clients to build capacity to be able to support our clients as well. We're really looking at succession planning and workforce planning supports to our clients to fill these vacancies.

The other thing that was mentioned was the Regional Recruitment Program. We're looking at it – it's being reviewed right now – for a better explanation right now. It's at the back end of our recruitment and we're trying to put it at the forefront so that it can be utilized more quickly than after a position has been closed and cancelled because there wasn't any qualified candidates, so we're using it as a more proactive tool.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. My time is up.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I didn't notice the clock. Next on the list, then, I have for general comments, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to welcome the Minister and the department

here today. I'm going to start off by saying, I'm just going to quote a passage out of the opening comments here and it says that we are seeing an increase of \$688,000, or 2.9 percent, versus last year. Now, just that number alone shows me, are we controlling expenditures? As we heard in the operational budget address, we want to keep our expenditures in line with revenues. Here is another classic example. I'm going to be putting every department on notice on this very concept. If we're going to do blanket statements about that in the House, then we better support it with numbers.

It's clear that we're going 2.9 percent over and our revenue streams are only going up by 0.4 percent this year. If you look at the forecast for the next couple of years with our resource revenues and our resources in general, because of our funding formula, because of our population base not increasing, clearly this department is not in line with the expenditures relationship to revenue. I want to point that out. This is very obvious. If we're going to continue to use language of "we want to do things in line," then please, we have to justify that with the numbers. Clearly, this is not going in line with the statement.

Now, I am very pleased that we haven't seen any more increases since the last time we looked at that, since last fall when we first did the first round of budget deliberations. So I'm pleased with the fact that we're not seeing any future growth in expenditures since the fall of last year. But that being said, when I see blanket statements like that, it does beg to ask that question. Maybe the Minister may want to comment on that.

That being said, there are actually five areas I would like to cover. A lot of them will probably be captured in details. I just want to bring those five areas up today in a broader scope, if the Minister wants to comment on it. If I don't hear the proper explanation or thoroughness, I will be bringing them back up in detail for more clarity.

Those five areas, in no particular order, except the last one, the most important, that I will leave for last. Now for the issue of vacancy management. This has been brought up many times in the House by many different Members for many different concerns. We even talked about that here today. What's very puzzling is that we're hearing we have to manually calculate some stuff, we're creating tools and we're building capacity. We've spent millions of dollars on PeopleSoft, millions of dollars. For me to hear we have to do a manual calculation for a simple ask begs the question what did we buy? What value did we get for the millions of dollars we spent of taxpayers' money to bring in what was stated and clearly brought to the House as being the epitome of software opportunities? What did we get if we have to manually calculate responses to Members?

I question the reporting tools of vacancy management. Again, as the Minister indicated, we only see this semi-annually, so twice a year. So what kind of transparency program can you offer Members? What transparency program can you offer the people of the Northwest Territories in the management of vacancy? The Department of HR is really the catch-all. It's the funneling effect of all departments. It sets the tone for every department for vacancy management. So if our tools aren't there or if our tools aren't used properly, we are behind the eight ball on that issue. I really think I need some clarity on do we have the right program, do we have the right software and clearly is there more opportunity to provide transparency with that so we can answer those basic questions of what are our vacancies and all the statutes that go around them?

The second area I want to talk about is direct appointments and the policy in general about direct appointments and it's not talked about in the general comments. To a certain degree, direct appointments are needed. I'm not saying direct appointments should be eliminated. I am saying direct appointments are needed in certain circumstances. In certain parts of our smallest communities direct appointments have value. I want to state that clearly. However, that policy is too broad of a concept to be used as a general panacea for all our government expenditures. When we're looking at potentially 100 direct appointments per year – and I'm probably not far off with that number – that tells me we have a policy issue. When I read Jim Prentice coming on as Premier of Alberta and in his opening address saying we're going to look at direct appointments in Alberta and put on a revitalization to lower them and get them in line so the people of Alberta see a transparent government. These are our brothers and sisters south of us who see it as a potential problem.

We, on the other hand, don't see it at all. We see it as everyday business. I think this is an opportunity that this department, this Minister, has to deal with direct appointments and deal with them in a way that is more transparent. That they can bring more practicality and procedural fairness to our hiring policies so that we're not shutting out people. How many people may leave the Northwest Territories knowing full well their position is going to be direct appointed? Why would they stay? Why would they? We're trying to keep people in the Northwest Territories. So let's think about the competition of jobs as much as possible. Yes, as I said in my earlier comment on this, sometimes it makes sense, sometimes, but not all the time. That's all I want to leave you with on that.

It was talked earlier about our Student and Youth Strategy. This is my third point. I'm pleased, I'm extremely pleased and I have to be honest and

truthful when I see good stuff. This is some good stuff coming from the department. I have seen the recruiting fairs for our students. I've seen students feeling they've accomplished something. They have resumes in hand. They are speaking to different departments. They are leaving these fairs with smiles on their faces and they are feeling optimistic when they return back to school to finish their second term. I just saw that during the Christmas break. So, congratulations. You guys hit a home run with that and I encourage you to foster a better environment moving forward by using some of those principles that I saw with the recruiting program.

However, Madam Chair, the issue of whether we are meeting all the needs of all students, I don't think we are. I think there are lots of students we could be hiring. But because we have a quota – we're not printing money here, we have to be very careful of the money we spend – how many do we turn away? I think there are opportunities to look at and I've said this before. We can look at creations of 0.5 positions, half-time positions within our government, job sharing positions with our students and those students can go back and find jobs within the private workforce and help our private industry. Private industry is saying yes, I like that. So let's facilitate that. Like I said, talk is cheap, whiskey costs money. We can do this if we put our minds together.

The other thing on my list is overtime policy review and reporting. This has been brought up many, many times about our policies and the standardization of our policies on overtime. The number one controllable expense in business is wage dollars. The number one expense in this government is wage dollars. We don't talk about that because it's a taboo subject. I'm not talking about reducing positions; I'm talking about right-sizing our workforce. It's about looking at standardization over time, looking at how we bank and looking at how we do our payouts. Clearly, we need some direction there. I'd like to get the Minister to talk about it.

Finally, Madam Chair, as I see the clock dwindling here, the number one issue, bar none, is our Occupational Health and Safety Program, or should I say the lack thereof. I have spent a lot of time in this House talking about our safety culture or the lack of a safety culture in the Northwest Territories for our government services. The fact remains that there is no standardization out there. We have no clear, definitive program of a safety culture and clearly this has been backed up by the courts. The courts have said, "GNWT, wake up." How many more guilty pleas and cases are we going to have to undertake and paying fines before this government wakes up and says we have to do something? Just having an active or valid WSCC certificate is by no way, shape or form a safety

program. It just means you've paid your fees. I want to look at that as an opportunity within the boundaries of this department for this next fiscal year. I haven't seen it thus far and I think there's huge opportunity.

We have an opportunity to improve upon our safety culture. I'm hoping that it's not the courts that will decide that in due process. I'm hoping that all department officials listening today, all department officials are going to be going back and reading the transcripts today, hear me. The day of reckoning is coming and it's coming very close, Madam Chair, that senior people within our government will be held liable and accountable for wrongful issues involving safety and I don't want to see that happen. I want to see some commitment moving forward.

Madam Chair, those are my five areas of general comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Member Dolynny. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$688,000 increase is increases and decreases that appear in our business plan. The majority of that increase is the Collective Agreement increase which is \$689,000. Also this year, we are going into the next contract so we have to bring some people in to negotiate the next contract and we budgeted \$434,000 bringing people in for the contract.

PeopleSoft maintenance and support, we've budgeted \$21,000. So those are increases of \$1.1 million.

We also bring in French language communication services, as I indicated in my opening comments. We also are requesting more money on devolution items, so an additional \$170,000. However, we are transferring \$268,000 to Finance and we have some other adjustments, a couple of reductions for about \$358,000.

In reality, moving this money around, the majority, I guess all of the increase could go to collective bargaining increases, so that's something that is negotiated. It's year four of that agreement, plus, like I indicated, another big chunk of the increase is that we need some legal representation as we move into the next round of negotiations.

Vacancy management is an interesting term. We try to recruit and retain the public service as much as possible. We support the departments to recruit and retain individuals. We do actively work with the vacancy rate in the government. As the Member can see, I indicated in one of my other responses that it has dropped by over 200 people from the last vacancy report until this.

PeopleSoft is a snapshot report that is outdated the day after the report is printed. We have a lot of moving parts. There are 5,000-some-odd public

servants in the system, so the next day if somebody retires or resigns or gets hired, it's outdated the very next day. So what we do is PeopleSoft gives us a snapshot – it is expensive – twice a year and that's what we pay to do. So it does what it intends to do. It gives us numbers that we work with.

Each department is responsible to look at their vacancy rates and work with what they have, and that's, to me, the management of vacancies, using that term as a responsibility that lies from department to department.

Direct appointments, again, is a Cabinet policy. We are different than the jurisdiction the Member refers to. We have an Aboriginal population of about half of the people in the Northwest Territories. We have an affirmative action. We have a goal to have a representative population in the public service, so our public service should be representative of the population, and it's not. We use direct appointments for various reasons and we consider it to be a good tool.

So far from January 1st to December 31 2014, there was – when you talk about the public service actions, we're talking about promotions, hires, transfer assignments and so on – about 1,950 people moving around in the public service. Many of them are new hires. We had 246 direct appointments during that time. So, when we talk about the affirmative action it has been one of our better tools to attract affirmative action candidates to the government. Forty-eight percent of those direct appointments were people that had affirmative action status.

The youth and student point that the Member makes about how many actual students we are turning away, the fact is we get about 600-and-something applicants each year and we are hiring about 300 students. The idea of hiring some on six hours, four hours, and then allowing individual students to go out and make the rest of their income in the private industry is something that has a lot of merit. We would have to again discuss that department by department. Departments are responsible for hiring summer students. The departments are responsible for using that bit of vacancy rate that they have in their own departments and that allows them to free up the money in order to hire students. So the department comes and says, well, instead of hiring 20 students this year, we're going to hire 40 on a half-time basis and the students will have to go out and find jobs in the private industry to supplement their incomes for the summer so they have money to go back to school with, and we're okay with that. Any of those types of innovative things that the departments wish to do with student hires are something that goes department by department. I could discuss that possibility with the departments that I'm responsible

for. We think it's a good idea and has lots of merit there in the comments.

On the occupational health and safety, I would like to have the deputy minister just touch on that again. More of a departmental issue, but I'll have the deputy respond to that, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Deputy Minister Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The department has its own safety program. Each department is responsible for their safety program. Our role is to provide advice and guidance and tools to our departments, and each department has coordinators that are responsible for their own programs.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. General comments. Next I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess most of my colleagues have covered a lot of the issues we're talking about, so I'm going to focus in on one issue. I think Mr. Dolynny skated around the issue I have. I want to talk about students and the vacancies that we have, and I'm talking about students that are getting a post-secondary education, whether it's in the Northwest Territories, whether it's in southern Canada.

Have we worked out the ability to contact students and tell them about job postings that are in the Northwest Territories for them to take advantage of? Have we straightened out that issue with student financial assistance and be able to contact students directly on how we can give them the information; these are job postings, these are potential jobs that we have in the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that in the past it has been difficult for officials, or Ministers for that matter, to go down and meet with students because there is no pre-consent from the students in their privacy. We can't just come into a community, phone the students up and invite them to meet with us and so on.

We are actually working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in predetermining from the students to indicate that they have no issue with officials or politicians like ourselves coming down and meeting with students, and that's something we think is going to have some merit and will bear fruit.

When we attended NWT Days, three of us had an opportunity to meet with eight students down in Ottawa: five students from Yellowknife, one from Hay River, one from Fort Providence and one from Simpson. They were very excited. The students

had an opportunity to speak to us. I think that each of those students had an opportunity to speak to Ministers Lafferty and Miltenberger, and I spoke to each of the students as well. They of course want to return, come to work for us during the summer and ultimately come to work in the Territories. Each of them have indicated to me what their field of studies has been and where they would like to work and I think they were very pleased that we had talked to them, took them out for breakfast and an opportunity to advise them that perhaps they could return to a full-time job and then for sure a summer job this coming summer.

I'm sorry about that. I would like to ask if the deputy minister could add something to my comments as well.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are also looking at various methods of communications to students because not all students are on SFA that are from the Northwest Territories, so we are looking at various options like connecting with the Aboriginal groups so that they can spread information out to students that may be financially funded by them or they have other avenues. We are looking at all the co-op programs across Canada as a tool for part of our succession planning and our rural recruitment retention that would be available for our clients. We are looking at other various methods in working with ECE, in collaborating with programs that target at a younger level rather than at just the university level.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. My next question, I guess, is more specific to that linking in that I would like to see us implementing a mentoring program. I know from my personal experience when I was doing a post-secondary degree I had an opportunity to get on a mentorship program, a training program where in my third year, once I was done my third year I got a position with the GNWT, so in my fourth year, when I was down in Lethbridge, I didn't even bother looking for a job anywhere else. I knew I was committed to the Northwest Territories, coming back.

Are we working on programs, I see HR is the link for this for all of the departments, is there a way to mentor or offer these students positions before they are done their degree, before they have been in their last year of university and before they are being recruited by the big shell companies before all these other companies in the South that are looking for employees, skilled educated employees? We should be doing the same thing.

Obviously, all that communication we have just been talking about I think would be very important

for us to link that and try to get them in before, get them into our government realm before they start looking for a job. It gives them the confidence, gives them the direction that they know they are going to come back. I think it goes hand in hand with our goal of bringing 2,000 people to the Northwest Territories. If you already have those people committed to a job, and we have a large vacancy so I can't see why we are not doing more of this to mentor, to train, to training positions. Some of these people are very, very highly skilled, so I wouldn't see them just coming in as juniors. Some of them could be coming in to middle management, depending on their degrees, or skilled labour, a skilled workforce. Is there anything that the GNWT is working on in that direction?

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

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now the department is looking at best practices, looking at the different kinds of programs that would attract and retain young people. They have a different frame of interest that we are trying to capture to incorporate into our culture in the government and we are looking at the different kinds of programs that include the mentorship to tap into the young students to come back to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering what it would take for the Department of HR to – and again I see HR as the lynchpin for all the departments – to implement this and say this is the type of mentoring program that we want all the departments to look at when they are hiring positions. If you have a large vacancy to use, even engineers in transportation, for example, there are all kinds of different examples and we hear them all the time, we talk about it to students wherever we go, they are talking about deciding whether they are going to go back north or taking a job in the South. If that person already has a job in their third year before they are done their schooling and they already know they are committed to come to the North and they are from the North, they understand the realm and the considerations that are involved, but they already know they are coming back, so they are not job searching in the South. They already have a commitment. They are comfortable. If we can give them some sort of assistance from their job position, it is something that we need to implement, I think. To use that to leverage students to come back, it is going to basically give them the comfort, give us the comfort that we have Northerners, that we have people from the North.

When they come back here, they tend to stay here. We are not hiring somebody from the South that

has to learn what the Northwest Territories is about, be concerned about the weather, or be concerned about the communities they are coming into. Most of these Northerners will know that. They will understand where they are going to if they are going to one of the smaller communities or if they are coming into Yellowknife or Hay River. They know exactly where they are going. They understand the whole thing, so this mentor program is something I strongly feel is a good avenue for us to make our students come back to the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I am going to speak a bit about what we are doing to attract summer students; however, I think we will stay with the idea that the Member is referring to a mentoring program.

We think there is merit in such an idea. Again, it is something that once we have gone through the process of retaining the student or recruiting the student to the GNWT, then it would be the responsibility of each department to determine what type of mentoring that the student would go through, what type of mentoring that student would need in order to succeed in the job that they are being targeted into. That is something that the departments can look at.

I am going to have the deputy minister add a bit to that on the mentoring. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Desjardins.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The department is currently researching all kinds of different methods on targeting students. We are looking at best practices for tools that will be supported for our clients. If it is something that employers are doing in other public sectors, for example you mentioned engineers. There are provinces that do engineers in training so that they actually are very proactive in targeting people right from university. Those are the kinds of things that we are researching for tools for our clients so that we can tap into the younger students as soon as they graduate and see what other employers are doing so that we can be creative and innovative in our hiring for these students to come back to the North.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Desjardins. Any further general comments on the Department of Human Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Detail. I will begin with detail. If you could turn to page 227 of the document, please. We will stand down until we have considered the information items in the

activity detail. Moving on to page 231, Human Resources, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$4.504 million. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under directorate, this activity has a lot of hierarchy in terms of the overall mandate of the department. With that I need to elaborate on three areas, one of which I talked about earlier in my general comments that was unfortunately not responded to by the Minister. That was the issue of standardization of the overtime policies and again controlling our number one expense, which is wage dollars. With that, I believe that there is a concern about the standardization amongst departments, amongst the different types of occupational groups and how we bank, how we report, how we pay out. Does the Minister see this as being a problem, and if so, what can be done to look at improving that so that, as I said, we can look at some of those high level questions? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask Ms. Beard to respond to that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Ms. Beard.

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Human Resources has a policy itself on the use of overtime, has proper forms, we have information that we provide to clients that is in our HRM as well. The use of overtime for other departments is, of course, departmental-specific on operational needs and obviously would relate to 24/7 operations, but the Department of Human Resources itself does have strict overtime.

We have encouraged our clients also to use the overtime forms as well as to use the PeopleSoft information system as a mechanism to record reasons for overtime so that we can monitor and report on it. The use of overtime is within the Collective Agreement and each department is responsible for tracking and monitoring their overtime for operational needs.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. We're at Human Resources, directorate, operations expenditures, \$4.504 million. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to continue on my questions here regarding this activity under the topic of overtime. I agree with what I'm hearing here today. But what steps does the Department of HR provide all the other departments in helping all the managements apply that the overtime rules are applied consistently? What tools are being used by HR to provide that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Ms. Beard.

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have provided tools to the departments similar to what the Department of Human Resources uses. As I mentioned, there's a comment section in the PeopleSoft information system that we have encouraged departments to have employees fill in for reasons for overtime. We've also encouraged departments similar to our own department to have preauthorization of overtime in the form of an e-mail message or we've provided a prescribed form that departments can use for overtime as well. We've clearly articulated to our clients that overtime needs to be approved in advance for operational needs and we've provided them with a system in our PeopleSoft system so that they can have it electronically recorded, as well, for approval. We've communicated this out to our departments through our client service managers and we maintain the same system ourselves in the Department of Human Resources.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Beard. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: I do appreciate the response. I guess there would be no problem, then, for the Department of HR to provide this Member a complete list of all reporting documents that PeopleSoft has in order to report overtime banked hours as well as payouts, and would we be able to get a sample of each one of those reports and a description of what those reports can offer? Would the department commit to that?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We would go to the departments. It's department-specific information, so we would go to the departments. Each department would have to provide that information.

On this specific item that we're discussing, there is an increase of \$99,000. With some adjustments, all of that increase, essentially, is from the Collective Agreement; \$107,000, actually, was the increase in this area, so the increase itself is more than the increase we're presenting here today.

MR. DOLYNNY: Just so I can get proper clarification, the Member here wasn't asking for detail reports from each of the respective departments. The Member is asking for a template of what type of report is available that describes the type of information that could be extracted if asked for. I just have to get a feeling for what PeopleSoft can offer, and I need to get a feel exactly what are the parameters of reporting available to us so that we as Members or committee can provide the proper oversight and transparency for public dollars. That was my question as I think we needed clarification on that.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We can provide that information to the Member.

MR. DOLYNNY: Keeping with the theme of the directorate, as it says provides expert financial advice, as the Minister indicated in his opening comments that the large percentage of the \$688,000 or the 2.9 percent of the expenditure growth was due to the collective bargaining increases or annual increases. I would assume that these increases are not a surprise on an annual basis. I know these are negotiated over a tenure. We saw these increases coming. This should not be a surprise to the department. That being said, by what virtue, if we know these increases are coming, we know our revenues are only growing at 0.4 percent, is there anything that the department could have done to mitigate? Knowing full well that a large portion of this was forced growth that was going to be hitting the ledger, could this department have done anything to negate that so that it was in line with the revenue?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: It is not a surprise. The Member is correct; however, each year on a four-year contract we do add in the Collective Agreement and it's the increases. If the Member is asking whether we could have reduced programs or reduced in other areas in order to make up for the collective bargaining increases, I think that was something that we wouldn't consider at this time. We think that departments are right-sized as far as personnel go and that these are the increases to the approved positions in this business plan.

MR. DOLYNNY: I guess it's a simple question. Again, we know that if the department feels that it's had the right number of people working within that department I will abide by his stewardship. The question is that we knew, the department knew that this collective bargaining increase was imminent. It wasn't as if this was something that was coming out of thin air. We know every year there's an increase. What is the department doing to mitigate that increase to offset so that we're not increasing our forced growth expenditures by 2.9 percent? What could we have done differently to bring our expenditure growth in line, as we keep hearing, with revenues growing at only 0.4 percent? Where could the savings have been?

If I look at the directorate in terms of operations expenditure summary, I've seen no savings. If you look at the different expenditure categories, we're spending the same amount we spent last year. In fact, we're spending, in some cases, the same amount we spent in 2013-14. The question is: Were there savings, could there have been savings in design, and again, moving forward, can we find those savings?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I will try to have the director provide some detail on the increases and

whether or not we are in a position to look at savings elsewhere.

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

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to provide detail, these are negotiated fourth year collective bargaining increases that, yes, the department was aware of but has no control over because they're part of the negotiation process. Just to note, the Collective Agreement increases for the Department of Human Resources were \$689,000, but one of the points to note is \$268,000 of that was transferred to the Department of Finance. Because these collective bargaining increases were negotiated and we knew what they were before, if the Member remembers last year, a portion of the Department of Human Resources employees were transferred to the Department of Finance, but because the forced growth budget was already loaded, it loaded the full amount of the \$689,000, but we need to reflect that \$268,000 was transferred to the Department of Finance for their collective bargaining increases, so it's not the full \$689,000 that goes to the department.

As far as savings, the department, as with all other departments, has put aside money for the passive restraint, so the Department of Human Resources has set aside \$358,000 as a passive restraint measure to hold the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Beard. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the passive restraint program is in full effect, what we're hearing is over 350-some thousand dollars. I guess the question is why still the overall increase overall. I mean, these are your numbers, not my numbers. We're still at 2.9 percent in growth. I guess that's the question. We don't have an endless supply of money. Our revenues, as we heard from the Finance Minister, are dismal and they're not looking any more favourable for the next two to three years. Are we going to continue to see forced growth at three or four times greater than our revenues for the next budget years?

Again, we have a Collective Agreement that's going to be pending for next year. I know that, but at the end of the day when the dust settles, I run an equal sign on the ledger and I'm saying why are we still growing three times greater than our revenues with this department even though I'm hearing we have passive restraint. Could we have done anything more to bring that expenditure growth in line with revenue growth of the government? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We made the reductions in training and development. We feel that we followed the

processes here. We've made the reductions in spite of the fact that we had increases of over \$1 million that were forced growth increases. That was the Collective Agreement and the fact that we needed to have individuals working on the next collective bargaining process, we still managed to hold the growth to \$688,000 by reducing in other areas such as training and development. So that's what we've done. We've reduced by that amount.

So I'm not sure that... Well, I think I am sure that the Member is asking us to decrease by the other \$688,000 in order to bring the increase to zero. I guess that's something that we would take some advice from the committee on.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to follow up on where Mr. Dolynny left off for a bit. I may have mentioned in my general comments about passive restraint and that I don't think it's working. On top of the fact that there's an increase to this budget, and I see in this department or this section alone under directorate it's about \$100,000. But there was a transfer from HR to Finance of a number of employees. So in spite of the fact that we had a section transfer out of this department, the department still went up overall some \$680,000 and in this particular section \$100,000.

I really have to say, and I think it applies to every department in this government, that passive restraint really isn't working. In this particular case, I don't see where passive restraint had any effect at all. I'll leave that as a comment. If the Minister wants to try and explain it to me, that would be great, but I haven't heard an explanation yet.

My question has to do with safe disclosure. We have set in place a Safe Disclosure MOU with the union and my understanding is that there hasn't been great uptake on that provision, which is unfortunate. I would encourage the employees to take advantage of it; that's why it's there. I believe we were advised that there was going to be some work done on legislation.

I'd like to know from the Minister where legislation is in the grand scheme of things and what work has been done. When can we expect to see a legislative proposal and/or the legislation itself? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the safe disclosure, I will have Ms. Beard talk a bit on that and respond on the budget. I really don't understand exactly what it is that the Member is saying.

We've had forced growth, which means we are forced to grow in the area of collective bargaining

and Collective Agreement increases and collective bargaining negotiations and also in the PeopleSoft maintenance, so those are three areas that we grew in. We've legally had to provide French language communications and services. We grew in that. There was an increase in devolution and then we had transferred to Finance a certain amount.

When we are sitting here with a budget in front of us that is growing much less than the Collective Agreement and the other initiatives that we present here, then I don't understand how that fact that people were moved... A bunch of people are moving. This was accounted for. The 71 positions that went to Finance were accounted for. We didn't keep the same money that we did when we had the 71 people working for us. When they went to Finance, the money that associated with those positions was also transferred and then the mains are adjusted, too, so that when we go back to the actuals in 2013-14 they are adjusted with those positions moving over. I don't know how those positions moving to Finance have any impact on the budget that we are speaking of here today.

I will have Ms. Beard talk a bit more on safe disclosure. Thank you.

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

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Regarding safe disclosure, we currently have a legislative initiative that is in effect that we've been working on. One of the things that we're doing is we're awaiting preliminary results of a review of our Public Service Act. We are looking at – we've spoken to this before – modernizing our Public Service Act. Before we move forward with stand-alone safe disclosure legislation, we just wanted to do our research on the modernization of the Public Service Act.

Other jurisdictions have safe disclosure within their acts, so the department is just conducting research to see what would be the best practice, whether or not it would be stand-alone legislation or whether or not we could roll it into the amendments and modernization what we're doing on our Public Service Act. We're in the middle of doing that as well as working towards comprehensive consultation with unions and stakeholders. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to Ms. Beard for that info. I guess I would be interested in knowing when this review of the Public Service Act might be done, when we the Assembly could expect to see some kind of concrete either Public Service Act LP and/or stand-alone Safe Disclosure Act LP.

To the Minister's comments, I'm a little confused. The Minister talked about adjusting mains. I have to say, when I look at this document in front of me, I see that the budget for HR – and this is just in the directorate – in 2013 was \$3.78 million, in 2014-15 it was \$4.4 million and in 2015-16 it's \$4.5 million. But in that time, somewhere in there we moved 71 people from HR to Finance, so albeit with forced growth and everything else, I'm not understanding how this budget has gone up. If the Minister is telling me that the numbers have been adjusted, then this is more evidence of smoke and mirrors that I constantly talk about.

What adjustment is he talking about in terms of the mains? Where is the cost for the 71 employees who went to Finance? Has it not been removed from the dollar value for the '15-16 main estimates? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That money has been removed, but it didn't impact directorate. This was a whole section on pay and benefits that was in Human Resources that moved to Finance, and all the people that were in the management and the whole group from there moved over but it didn't impact on the directorate specifically.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I will say okay, fine, but I look at page 227 when we are looking at the whole department and again the whole department has gone up.

So if we have gone from '13-14, \$19.5 million to \$23.7 million in '14-15 and \$24.3 million in '15-16 and presumably the 71 positions have been accounted for in this budget on page 227, the loss of them, and yet the budget still goes up. This is where I am having difficulty and I suspect my colleague is as well. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Had we left the 71 positions in the budget, then you would have seen a huge decrease, so what we did so that we're able to compare apples to apples, was to remove completely retroactively to those positions left. It has no impact at all. Maybe what I am going to try to do is try to get Ms. Beard to add some of the details on how that had occurred. It is like we are comparing the... I think the department has 119 people, so we're comparing that all the way along, not the 190 people that were in the department previously. It is as if those 71 people had never existed in the system. I think it is 78 people actually. Sorry, I don't have that number here, but it is like they never existed as far as this main estimate goes.

If the chairman is okay, I will have the director do more response.

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

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Minister has stated, what the Department of Human Resources budget was decreased by, to reflect the transfer of those employees to Finance, the Department of Finance budget went up by the exact amount, so there is transparency there. It is shown throughout the movement from one budget to the other.

To provide a little bit more detail on the expenses that are going into the department, the increase to the Directorate is a reflection of the collective bargaining increases. That is the only increase that has gone in there. What the Minister was referring to, with the transfer this year, was it is simply a timing difference.

When the budgets are loaded for forced growth for the collective bargaining increases, they were loaded into the Department of Human Resources, so the Department of Human Resources then had to transfer the '15-16 collective bargaining increases to the Department of Finance, so the detail of the budget overall growth for the department is really only reflected in the collective bargaining money that we got through forced growth for the actual implementation and negotiations that we are going to have to do for the upcoming round. We do have \$434,000 overall.

We do have the collective bargaining increases for year four which was stated, the \$689,000. Of that, \$268,000, which is what the Minister was referring to were collective bargaining increases for year '15-16 for the Department of Finance, those were transferred over. The only other true increase to the budget is we were awarded one position change, so there is a senior French languages human resources officer that we have hired this year to help us meet our commitment for the French language. Other than that there isn't a huge increase to this budget and we do have, as previously mentioned, \$358,000 that we have set aside for passive restraint, so overall the net effect is \$688,000, but it truly just reflects the Collective Agreement increases for year four. The collective bargaining negotiation money that we got and the one position for the French languages senior human resources officer. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you Director Beard. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank for the explanations. Just a comment, I am pretty much floored by the fact that the numbers that we have in front of us for this department were not comparing apples to apples basically. These numbers have been fudged, so to speak, to remove the 71 positions from the previous year's estimates so that the numbers can look good. I'm having difficulty following this, so I can only imagine what somebody

in the public is going to be doing in looking at this. They are going to think everything is just grand.

There's no reference in here to the fact that the numbers have been adjusted for the 71 positions. There should be a comment, for heaven's sake, somewhere in the budget which says that there should be a corresponding comment in the Finance section, and yet this basically looks like everything is the same from one year to the next and we absolutely know it's not. The Minister mentioned I forget however many hundreds of millions of dollars that it is off, so just a comment. I really would recommend that we don't do this again. Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those position transfers were reflected in the '14-15 budget year. That was the year that those occurred. The removal of those positions from this process is proper accounting procedures.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): No further comment, Ms. Bisaro? Committee, we are on page 231, Human Resources, directorate, operations expenditures, \$4.504 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 232, directorate, active positions, information item. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 234, Human Resources, labour relations, information item. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. We will go to page 235, labour relations, operations expenditures, \$3.291 million. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 236, Human Resources, labour relations, active positions, information item. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Agreed. Page 239, Human Resources, recruitment services, operations expenditure summary, \$4.393 million. Questions? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of questions. The first one has to do with direct appointments and I think there was some discussion about direct appointments earlier. My understanding is that we have changed how we are using direct appointments recently. I would like to know from the Minister if he could explain what that change is and why. Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There has been no change to the Direct Appointment Policy.

MS. BISARO: Okay. I am not quite sure how to get around that one, but I will ask a different question. This department, I presume, is involved in the issue of decentralization, a policy that this government has put in place in the last couple of years. I would like to know how the Department of HR is involved in the decentralization process. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The department supports the other departments by trying to increase and implement opportunities in the decentralized positions. We work with the departments to attract and develop a labour market where it is needed, where we are decentralizing positions. We work with them to recruit those positions. We work with the departments in trying to develop excellent terms of employment to retain those jobs and we ensure that the division that is in the 17th Assembly is something that we try to reduce results by making sure that whenever there is a decentralized position identified by the departments in the overall government when we identify positions, then as Human Resources, we support the departments to recruit for those positions.

MS. BISARO: If I heard the Minister correctly, a position has been identified by another department and the Department of HR then assists in recruiting for the position that has been decentralized to another community. That suggests to me that these are unfilled positions that are being transferred. Is that correct?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: It's kind of an interesting comment. An unfilled position would be the only reason that we would be trying to fill it.

MS. BISARO: To the Minister, then, maybe unfilled is the wrong term. What is the policy for decentralization? Do we decentralize positions without somebody in them? When the PY is moved from one community to the next, does the person not go with it? That's why I'm asking if it's a vacant position, or if it's a new position that would then suggest to me that it needs to be filled. What is the policy for decentralization?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The details on position of decentralized positions can be best answered by the Premier.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When positions are identified for decentralization, obviously we would prefer if the incumbents, if there are incumbents, would go with the position. The most recent examples where we've identified decentralized positions, the incumbents have chosen not to move with the position. HR, we have a policy that those incumbents that are in positions

to be decentralized become part of the priority hiring list so that they can be matched up for jobs, and the decentralized position, if they're vacant then HR helps with the recruitment on the other side when the decentralized job is moved into other communities.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we look at moving positions, decentralizing positions, is there any consideration given to whether or not that position is vacant or new? Is there any consideration given to the impact on an employee who was told that their job is moving?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: It's a program decision. It's not based on whether a position is filled or vacant. It's what's in the best interests of fulfilling this decentralization priority of this government.

MS. BISARO: I guess I would suggest that it sounds as though what's in the best interests of a policy is going to be followed through, never mind the best interests of the employee and/or their families, and I have a problem with that.

Last question has to do with the length of time for us to complete competitions. I believe that the department has an eight week target length of time to complete competitions. I'd like to know from the Minister whether or not they have been improving on the length of time to complete competitions in the last year or if they have actually had an increase in the length of time to fill competitions.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to have the deputy minister respond to the question.

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

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The department is looking at different various tools and options for clients to expedite the recruitment process including the accountability framework where we're looking at streamlining our processes to make it more efficient and quicker in the tools that we provide our clients and looking at our metrics that would help expedite the process.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Have we gotten better or have we gotten worse?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this time, the time frame for recruitment is the same.

MS. BISARO: What is that time frame? Eight weeks? Six weeks? Ten weeks? Twelve weeks?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The time frame is between six weeks and eight weeks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Committee, we're on page 239, management and recruitment services, operations expenditures, \$4.393 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Management and recruitment services, active positions, information item. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 243, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, \$3.397 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 244, regional operations, active positions, information item. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 247, strategic human resources, operations expenditures, \$8.339 million. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The issue of workplace safety comes under this activity summary, and with that my question goes to the Minister here. What does the GNWT do, specifically the Department of HR, to support a culture of safety within the GNWT?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Deputy minister.

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Currently, we are looking at different kinds of communication to enhance the culture of safety with this government to provide some support and services to our clients, as well as looking at other communication strategies for this culture shift of safety in this government and working with other stakeholders on tools and services that we could provide for clients to make safety as a number one priority for us in HR and communicate that across to our client groups.

MR. DOLYNNY: Besides working on communication, what is the department doing to establish government-wide occupational health and safety training programs?

MS. DESJARDINS: Safety, according to the act, is based on the needs of the positions and why you do risk assessments, so it's really the departments that assess what their risks are to implement safety. We do have some programs that are provided through one of our contractors and we have safety for supervisors and employees as well.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm hearing a bit of a tonality of defiance here that it's not my job to be doing this, which is quite puzzling, because HR, really, is the funnelling aspect that departments look upon to create this so-called safety culture net.

We heard about a contractor. Is this the gold standard? Are we using this contractor to provide these training programs, and if so, are these training programs system-wide for all departments to use?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Department of Human Resources is committed to health and safety and wellness of its employees and to providing a healthy and safe work environment that minimizes risks in the workplace injuries, minimizing risk to workplace injuries, accidents and illnesses. HR is currently developing a robust occupational health and safety program that meets legislative requirements under the Safety Act and general Safety Regulations. The program is near completion and will be available within the coming months for HR staff. The complete program is intended to be shared with other departments to give our stakeholders tools and resources to ensure they are meeting compliance and legislation. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Chair, I do appreciate that paid political announcement.

Can the Minister indicate how many coordinators that we have in our government dedicated to safety? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Chair, each department has a health and occupational safety coordinator, but it's not that individual's position. It would be a position where a person in the government is responsible for that position. Each department has one. Some of the departments that have maybe more... Some of the positions where we've had more incidents for, health and safety would have an actual health and safety occupational coordinator position, but I could maybe add to that by just asking the director to indicate which departments would have their own.

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

MS. BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the current list in front of me, but as the Minister stated, each department has a representative that is their occupational health and safety representative for the department. For example, as the director of finance for the Department of Health, occupational health and safety is with me and I have a coordinating role and position. In departments like Justice where it's a 24/7 operation, they have higher needs than the Department of Human Resources. They have a

dedicated person who is an occupational health and safety coordinator. Most of the departments that are 24/7 – Transportation, Justice and, I believe, Health – we can certainly provide the Member with a list, but off the top of my head I know most of the 24/7 operations have a dedicated individual for occupational health and safety. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Director Beard. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't realize that that was going to be such a complicated question to respond to and I do appreciate the information forthcoming from the department.

I believe we have some coordinators out there dedicated to occupational health and safety. I also believe we have a lot of coordinators out there that run this on the corner of their desk. That is not their entire position. I think we're doing a disservice if we are not giving that proper consideration. So I will be asking the Minister if he can provide a complete listing of how many coordinators that we have by department, including his own department. Are they dedicated 100 percent to that position and only that position or do they share it with other types of responsibilities? Would the Minister be able to provide that detailed information to the Member? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can provide that information to the Member.

MR. DOLYNNY: My final question, Mr. Chair. As we heard earlier from the Minister on his paid political announcement that we have a program forthcoming with respect to some form of a safety training program that is somewhat coming down in the immediate future here, would we be seeing this program implemented before the life of the 17th Legislative Assembly? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Chair, yes we will.

MR. DOLYNNY: With that last question, if we are going to be implementing something of that magnitude, I would assume that there's going to be some program dollars associated with it. Looking at this activity as being the guiding directorate for this activity, I don't see much in terms of allowances for this new program to roll out, that it would go through the proper performance-based management assessment, putting all the risk matrix, everything that has to go with a program rollout of this magnitude.

Can the Minister indicate to me where he will be seeking these funds in order to create this new program? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman, we have found ways within the passive restraint to roll out the program without increasing the budget.

MR. DOLYNNY: In the fulsome of time, I will leave it at that. I'll be following up with this during the course of the year.

I only ask my final comment, does the department communicate all aspects of this occupational health and training in terms of how the government will be undertaking a revitalization, from what I'm hearing, as their safety culture? The only reason I say this is that I fear that we have a number of court cases pending within our territorial court system in which we are defending our four walls. We've lost one case already. We've been fined heavily and received a scathing report from Judge Malakoe. I'm concerned that with the four or five cases pending that we're going to be seeing more fines levied on this government until we get our house in order. I will leave it at that for a final comment. I wish the department good luck with this implementation. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of questions here. My first question has to do with the desire to draw people into our workforce. We have had, between the two trips to Ottawa, at least one career fair. There have been career fairs, I believe, held across the NWT.

I would like to know from the Minister whether or not there has been any analysis done of the effect to the impact or the effectiveness of career fairs, whether they've been held outside of the NWT or whether they've been held inside the NWT. Have they been successful and have you done some kind of an evaluation of these particular actions? Thank you.

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

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the accountability framework, part of the framework is to evaluate effectiveness of programs, so all of that is actually being researched as we speak to some of the programs and career fairs that we've attended or open houses to determine where it's best to target, based on these occupational groups and where we're going in the future. So it is actually being researched. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the deputy minister. My other question has to do with retaining employees. There's been a fairly large emphasis, I guess, from what we hear from the department and what we sort of see in the budget, an emphasis on recruitment, but I would

like to know what we are doing in terms of a retention strategy. Do we have one and what efforts is the department making to keep people in the workforce as opposed to losing them? Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As far as an actual retention strategy, I could maybe have the deputy speak to that. Our best tool for retaining people in the public service really is having the work environment that the GNWT has and also the benefits package that we're able to offer to individuals working in the public service.

We would pay equal attention, department by department, on wishing to retain our staff, and our turnover rate has not increased over the years. In fact, it may have come down just a bit. As far as the retention strategy or retention plan that we have, I will have the deputy minister touch on that. Thank you.

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

MS. DESJARDINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With our strategic HR plan is the strategy that has all the initiatives that we have been working on over the last years. Included in there is the Knowledge Retention Initiative and Framework that will help support us and realign how we move forward into the recruitment initiative we are doing. We are doing research on best practices and tools for our clients, really studying our vacancies and analyzing, as part of the accountability of our organization, the vacancies and how to fill them to support our clients in getting these positions filled. We're also looking at succession planning tools and initiatives to support our clients.

So, we're refocusing our work to support our clients in looking at the needs of our workforce in the future.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, deputy minister. Noting the clock, I will rise to report progress. Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder to the motion? Mr. Blake.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 10, 2015, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Replies to Budget Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 44, An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016
 - Bill 38, An Act to Amend the Jury Act
 - Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Partnership Act
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 10th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

