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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, March 5, 2015****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 175-17(5):
SAFE COMMUNITIES**

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, three years ago the 17th Legislative Assembly made it a priority to establish sustainable, vibrant, safe communities. Today I want to speak about some of the work being done by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to help reach that goal by strengthening community emergency preparedness and fire protection.

In the past 12 months, NWT communities have experienced some extreme events that have tested their ability to respond to natural disasters and community fire incidents. These events can occur at any time and in any place, with or without warning. Effective response requires a continual planning and capacity building.

Mr. Speaker, emergency preparedness and community fire protection are critical. Our collective efforts need to focus on helping communities reach a suitable level of readiness. To this end, MACA is committed to several important goals that will help create and sustain a foundation with which to support and strengthen community preparedness and response.

MACA continues its efforts to help community governments improve community emergency management capacity. This includes the delivery of community planning workshops and tabletop exercises. Since 2011, 20 communities have updated their existing emergency response plans or created new ones. Last year MACA launched a new tabletop exercise in Whati, which is now available to communities to help validate emergency plans.

Mr. Speaker, work continues at the territorial level as well. Recently, MACA began a review of the

government's civil emergency response efforts from last summer. The review will identify gaps and deficiencies in last summer's operations and allow us to improve procedures and plans. It will also inform work to update the territorial Emergency Response Plan that will commence in the spring.

MACA is also coordinating the GNWT's participation in Operation NANOOK 2015, which provides a great opportunity to practice and evaluate components of the NWT's emergency measures regime. This annual Canadian Forces live exercise is scheduled to take place in August and will involve working with key partners to respond to a simulated wildfire event in the vicinity of Fort Smith.

Last summer the department completed a territorial hazard identification risk assessment which provides communities guidance concerning risks that pose the greatest threat to people, property, environment and the economy. This tool can be used to update community emergency plans, develop municipal disaster risk mitigation plans and guide development of emergency response exercises.

MACA also started work on modernizing the Civil Emergency Measures Act to ensure it provides the GNWT and community governments with effective tools to respond to our current hazard environment. Work is well underway and it is hoped that we can pass in the 17th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, not all emergency events occur from natural disasters. Many originate in our own homes and have a profound impact on families. According to the National Fire Protection Association, households can expect a home fire every 15 years. While most will be small fires resulting in little or no damage, some will be greater. This means effective community fire protection needs to remain a high priority for the department and community governments.

In 2014 MACA continued implementation of an NWT Community Fire Protection Plan, focused on key priorities identified by fire protection stakeholders. The department recently worked with partners to implement a territorial-wide Carbon Monoxide Awareness Campaign and a volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention tool kit for community governments. These efforts combine to

help improve the efforts of smaller communities with limited equipment, capacity and volunteers. Future efforts will continue to build on local capacity by providing templates and tools that can be implemented by fire departments in communities across the NWT.

To help ensure adequate first aid skills, MACA is delivering first responder training to community volunteers and staff. Since June 2014, six communities have received training, with several more sessions planned for the remainder of the year. This effort has been combined with a unique opportunity to increase public access to automated external defibrillators. Working with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, we are combining efforts to place more than 60 defibrillators in recreation and public facilities throughout the North and to deliver user training to volunteers.

Central to this goal are our continued efforts to help community government staff and volunteers achieve certification and accreditation as firefighters. In 2014, eighteen individuals were certified as fire instructors and eight individuals as fire investigators.

Mr. Speaker, improvements in community fire protection require a sustained effort and effective collaboration on behalf of all stakeholders. It also requires an effective foundation with which to ensure adequate oversight and authority for all levels of government. To this end, MACA is making good progress towards an updated Fire Prevention Act that will reflect our true operating environment. A draft bill is expected early in the 18th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend community governments for their continued efforts in this important area and to thank our partners for their ongoing support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 176-17(5):
SUCCESS OF THE NWT'S RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOLS CURRICULUM RESOURCES

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, it makes me very proud to share an important milestone with this Legislative Assembly. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in Inuvik in 2011, I committed our government to educating students and teachers in the Northwest Territories about the history and legacy of the residential schools.

For the year following that TRC event, Education, Culture and Employment staff worked closely with the Nunavut government, the Legacy of Hope Foundation and, in particular, former residential school students, to complete a resource package of teaching and learning materials.

In October of 2012, all NWT northern studies teachers were introduced to the new teacher's guide. At this in-service, many survivors shared their experiences with our teachers. The experiences shared during this in-service helped the teachers not only in their delivery of northern studies but in their understanding of their students and the communities they are working in.

Since this initial launch, I committed our government to train not just the northern Studies teachers but all K to 12 teachers in the NWT on the history and legacy of residential schools. It has taken us over a year to accomplish this goal, and as of February 19th every NWT teacher has participated in an in-service. We will now be offering this in-service to all new teachers arriving to the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important accomplishment, and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank several groups. I want to thank the principals and teachers who listened respectfully to the difficult truths.

I want to thank the Vision of Hope and Health Canada for supporting the process through their counselling services and attending every in-service. They also provided follow-up support for those who needed it. I want to thank Maxine Lacorne who is an intergenerational survivor and also travelled to many communities and provided hope through sharing her experiences and journey of healing. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge and thank the many former residential school students all over the NWT who graciously shared their experiences with open hearts.

In June I will be hosting meetings with my counterparts from across the country, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada. At these meetings we will be discussing how to make it a requirement in every province and territory across Canada for all teachers to be familiar with the issues related to the history and legacy of residential schools, regardless of where they study or where they teach. Together, we are understanding the past and seeking reconciliation to build hope for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories can be very proud of the leadership role we have played right across this country in assuring that never again will another generation be able to say, "I didn't know." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 177-17(5):
SOCIAL WORK MONTH

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, each year we celebrate March as National Social Work Month. Social work is a profession for those with a

passion to help improve people's lives. Social workers help individuals, families and communities by providing support and resources and working through challenging and complex circumstances.

Social workers can work directly with individuals to provide counselling services or other supports. They also contribute to the broader improvement of our territory through policy development and helping to improve the way services are provided and delivered at the community level.

Social workers have an ethical obligation to advocate for broad social change to address social inequalities that will benefit the marginalized members of our communities and, ultimately, all of us.

When families are in crisis, social workers are there to help people get back on their feet. Social workers show outstanding dedication and professionalism to help people achieve success and realize their best selves. The hours are tough, as help is required around the clock.

Social work requires determination, devotion and a sense of purpose to make a real difference for people in need, and I have seen many positive outcomes as a result of social workers' efforts.

For these reasons and many more, social work is being celebrated this year as a profession of choice. As the Minister of Health and Social Services, I want to express how much the Government of the Northwest Territories appreciates professional social work not just during Social Work Month but every day.

I am pleased to have this extra opportunity to celebrate these outstanding professionals and express the Government of the Northwest Territories' recognition and thanks for all their hard work on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL WELLNESS CENTRE AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. MENICOCHE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Stanton Territorial Hospital Renewal Project must include a wellness centre that beats for the hearts of all Aboriginal people and culture. Our territorial hospital, when renovated, has to incorporate the Aboriginal identity that over 50 percent of our population has. "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come," said Victor Hugo, the famous writer. I believe it's true in this case.

Colonialism and, consequently, the residential school system for Aboriginal peoples in Canada has resulted in the loss of control over their lives and culture and they continue to struggle for self-determination on almost every level, including the health care system.

Aboriginal people die earlier, live in conditions comparable to Third World countries, experience housing and living crises, obtain lower education levels, experience unemployment and poverty and are at increased risk for suicide, tuberculosis and diabetes.

Improving and recognizing a unique Aboriginal health care model is beneficial because it has been shown in other jurisdictions that having close Aboriginal ties to traditional healing works wonders. Cancer rates decrease, diabetes rates decline and the general health and well-being improves because our people are comfortable and relaxed in a setting they recognize.

Francois Paulette, chair of the Stanton Elders Council, has recently called upon the Department of Health and Social Services to include an Aboriginal wellness centre at the Stanton Territorial Hospital. I support this and I will look to all my colleagues to support it as well.

He and all the members of the Elders Council envision a facility that would blend traditional and western medicine at the hospital to enshrine and recognize Aboriginal culture and traditional healing practices to complement our NWT health care services.

The council has seen how this works by observing other hospitals that incorporate traditional healing into their facilities. Two unique northern examples are the Alaska Native Medical Center which is home to one of North American's most unique health care environments, the place where the highest quality care and cutting-edge technology meets special Aboriginal cultural and traditional services and patient experiences.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. MENICOCHE: Then, in the Yukon, the First Nations health programs promote the provision of quality culturally sensitive holistic health care to Aboriginal people by providing social and spiritual support as well as access to traditional food, medicine and healing practices.

I am pleased to hear that the Department of Health and Social Services is supportive of the concept and has identified and set aside land at the Stanton Territorial Hospital. Regrettably, an Aboriginal wellness centre was never included in the Stanton Renewal Project. But with political will, no army can stop us from including it in the plan. We must find a

way to provide funding for a business plan and get this facility on our books and into the Stanton Renewal Project before we complete it in five years' time.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services during question period. Thank you.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT
COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO PROVIDE
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reading about a WSCC stop work order of the Fort Resolution fire department in December of 2014 did leave many asking how. How did this hamlet get itself in this predicament?

Although little was said or reported, the concern was about the safety of the volunteer firefighters. But what was never discussed was the root problem of why there were so many safety deficiencies, training and equipment maintenance issues.

Armed with more questions than answers, I attempted to peel back the layers surrounding this concern. Interestingly, through my findings, this is not an isolated case in the Northwest Territories. Actually, many, if not most communities in the NWT, struggle with the capacity to provide reliable fire service. For the most part, there appears to be a lack of buy-in for a proper fire safety culture. There are few volunteers, constant turnover, very little training, let alone recertification, unmaintained equipment and what appears to be insufficient budgets. Researching further, we know that training modules have been developed, but there is a gap in whether competencies are being tested.

So I'm concerned, should this be left as is, we are putting our residents at grave risk. So, when this government is supporting a global presumption of basic emergency services at community levels are working safely and efficiently, this, in my opinion, is wrong.

We should be asking our leadership, when was the last time communities were assessed for their ability to deliver emergency services? Where can we find community information that indicates compliance to codes and standards of emergency services? Where is this report and are the findings made public? Is money being wasted? We are not sure, but it is clear we are surrounding this issue with too much politics and drowning it by design.

I will be discussing this topic later today with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT
REGULATING THE MOREL
MUSHROOM HARVEST**

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A silver lining may emerge from a catastrophic fire season the Northwest Territories experienced last summer. A bumper crop of morel mushrooms is anticipated this spring. Buyers of these delicacies will be again on site, bringing millions into the NWT economy.

While the potential abundance and ease of access are welcome, potential administrative and other nightmares could derail the industry. Members have called for regulation of the industry, and the government may be responding with legislation governing the mushroom harvest in the NWT. This is welcome only if timing issues do not undermine this new industry start-up.

Buyers and pickers will be at harvest sites by early to mid-May as the early harvest begins at that time. Buyers and pickers will be, of course, unaware of any law brought into effect after the 1st of May, being out in the forest doing their job. Harvesters working in the forest will not have the communications to find out about new requirements for business licences or permits, should they happen.

If legislation calls for registration and permits, these must be available prior to May 1st. If not, we will unintentionally put buyers and pickers into a situation of being offenders of the law. Buyers could leave and the industry fail.

This is a potential recipe for disaster and I expect the Ministers of ITI and ENR to be aware of this situation and to take steps to avoid it. Proper planning and implementation of any new law and regulations can avoid unnecessary and costly confusion. Licence and permit forms need to be designed, printed and distributed for this industry to key communities by May 1st and as readily obtainable as a fishing licence. Communication of the new rules will need to be proactive with signs posted along the highways from the south, alerting harvesters to their new responsibilities. User-friendly visits to picking sites by renewable resource officers to explain new regulations and issue the required permits will be needed.

Finally, consideration needs to be given as to where picking should be encouraged and what areas should be restricted. While most edible mushrooms are clean and safe to eat, those from some areas have been found to carry contaminant loads including lead and arsenic.

To foster and safeguard the industry and consumers, it is essential to have the technology to test soil samples in the first mushrooms from possible picking sites prior to the harvest. With proper timing and communication of regulations and responsible testing of soils and products, a

sustainable mushroom industry can contribute to the NWT economy for years to come. I will have questions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WEAVING OUR WISDOM –
TERRITORIAL WELLNESS GATHERING

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon I had the opportunity, along with my colleagues here, to attend a luncheon over at the Explorer Hotel with participants who are attending this year's Weaving Our Wisdom Gathering, a territorial wellness gathering. I just want to say it was a really great opportunity to meet and catch up with old colleagues who I used to work with in the Department of Health as well as the Department of MACA, and also look at some of the leaders who were at the event itself.

It was really unique in the sense that the Department of Health put on this conference. We had volunteers, we had elders, we had community leaders, chiefs, mayors all speaking with one another about how we make our health systems and programs and services that we provide better, and how we work together to create healthier individuals in the Northwest Territories.

One other thing that was really great to see was all the youth who were in attendance. I think there were youth representing all the communities across the Northwest Territories, bringing their voices to the table, like I said, with mayors, with chiefs and with community leaders all striving for the same goal and objective.

One thing that was really great to see in these three days of meetings that they had was they had an online webcast. So if people couldn't come in for the conference, or it was already at capacity, then people could participate online, something that this government hasn't really done before. They were able to listen to presentations, download the presentations from the site, ask questions in real time and just be part of the conference from up in the Beaufort-Delta, to the Sahtu and the Deh Cho. I'm not sure what kind of uptake was on that website, but that's where we need to move in order to get the information out, to have people from the Northwest Territories participating on how we do business, how we create action plans and strategies moving forward.

I think the Department of Health did a great job, an excellent job in providing this gathering, Weaving Our Wisdom, to everybody in the Northwest Territories. I'm sure it was even available to people down south. I heard the presentations were great, the keynote speakers were great, and I applaud the

Minister and his department for doing such a great job on this gathering here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
IN THE WORKPLACE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a lot in the House about GNWT jobs and vacancies. But something not often spoken about that is a huge drain on our resources, both human and financial, is absenteeism.

According to the NWT 2013 Public Service Annual Report, the work absence rate for the GNWT public service was 12.3 days per employee. This is a decrease from 2012, when it was 13.2 days, and 2011, when it was 14.7 days. I guess it's a good thing that that number is going down, but this statistic means that every NWT employee was absent from work one day every month of the year. That's a lot of days off.

The reasons why people are absent are many, but one we seldom talk about, and hardly ever admit to, is days away from work because of poor mental health or mental illness.

A 2011 study showed that one in three workplace disability claims are related to mental illness. Many of those claims are stress related. Stress is causing disability due to mental illness in many people.

Of those 12.3 days absent per employee in 2013, how many were due to poor mental health or mental illness? I'm sure all of us know people who have taken mental health days away from work, whether they were really mentally ill or just taking advantage of their sick days allotment. Either way, it's a day away from work when the work did not get done.

Any illness at work can have a significant effect on employee morale and productivity, so it's advantageous for the employer to protect its biggest investment: its people. Physical illness we talk about, but mental illness we do not. Four in 10 people say that they would hide or ignore a mental illness from their workplace, and less than 25 percent of people would talk to their employer about their mental illness.

The stigma around mental illness and the shame that people feel because they have a mental illness prevents their mental health concerns from being properly addressed. We must change that. We have to start talking about it. We need to accept mental illness as an illness as normal as any physical illness and we have to de-stigmatize mental illness in our conversations. We need to make it normal to talk about it and to ask for help with mental illness, just like a physical illness. If we do that, there will be a greater understanding and

support for our co-workers who suffer from mental illness, and if we get that greater understanding and provide greater support we will create a healthier workplace with reduced absenteeism.

I will have questions for the Minister of Human Resources at the appropriate time.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REPLACING MOOSE KERR SCHOOL
IN AKLAVIK**

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moose Kerr School was constructed in 1969, exactly the same time as Samuel Hearne High School was built in Inuvik. Samuel Hearne was demolished and replaced a couple years ago. My constituents would like to know why is Moose Kerr School still standing. At 46 years old it's overdue for replacement. The Minister of Education stated in the House that Moose Kerr School is slated for replacement or renovation in 2019. That's four years from now.

I'm concerned about potential safety hazards at the school, specifically whether asbestos poses a risk to children's health. Asbestos was routinely used in building products until the 1970s and 1980s, so a building like Moose Kerr School, constructed in 1969, very likely contains asbestos. Indeed, Samuel Hearne was built at precisely the same time and in the same region of the Northwest Territories, and it contained asbestos.

There is scientific consensus about the harmful effects of asbestos. Whenever material containing asbestos gets disturbed, the tiny microfibers are released into the air. When they are inhaled, they can become trapped in the lungs and stay there for many years. Over time, the fibers can cause serious health problems such as lung disease and cancer.

Now is the time to start planning for the replacement of Moose Kerr School.

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

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRANSBOUNDARY WATER AGREEMENTS**

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk to the issue of the transboundary water agreements that this government has undertaken since the Minister has taken the lead on this. The transboundary water agreements are very important, especially from our neighbours in the south of the Northwest Territories, specifically Alberta, because of the development that's

happening in the Alberta province and that the flow from these rivers have come from the majority of the rivers here.

I want to talk because in the Sahtu Land Claim Agreement it speaks to a chapter where the quality and the quantity of our waters would not be altered by any type of development and we would know for sure that our water will remain the same as it was when we started to negotiate our land claim agreement.

I understand that the Minister has been working very hard and the staff has been doing some excellent work on concluding some of the agreements, and I wanted to ask the Minister how this will affect our land claim and people's water in the Northwest Territories, especially around the area of Great Slave Lake, coming down the Mackenzie River with the recent spill of the coalbed incident last year and the water monitoring stations along the Slave River, around the Great Slave area up around the Mackenzie River. This agreement will have an impact to ensure that future generations will have clean quality drinking water. A lot of the animals rely on the Mackenzie River, people who live and trap along this great river.

I'll have further questions to the Minister on the transboundary agreements with the provinces that we're dealing with. Thank you.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HAY RIVER MIDWIFERY PROGRAM**

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority is excited to announce the birth of the first baby in Hay River with our new Midwifery Program.

---Applause

On Wednesday, February 25, 2015, the first Hay River mother who planned her birth in the community with a midwife delivery delivered a healthy baby boy, 7 pounds, 9.5 ounces. Mother and baby are doing well and were able to return home after 24 hours.

The staff at H.H. Williams were welcoming of the new child and honestly were very excited that they've been trained to take on this new responsibility and were excited that Hay River is going to be back on birth certificates.

I'd like to thank everybody in the House here that supported midwifery. We look forward to seeing Hay River on the birth certificates out there. Thank you very much.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT ON
CORRECTIONS IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES – DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of days ago the Auditor General released a report on the correctional facilities in the Northwest Territories. I've heard people refer to the North Slave Correctional Centre as a country club. They say the facility doesn't punish people but instead rewards them for the terrible things they've done.

There's some superficial truth to the country club, but it doesn't capture the whole story. Beneath the surface, things are more complicated. My experience is that many inmates are actually very good people, very good people who do very bad things when they're drinking. When they are sober they are reliable, they are out on the land, they are raising families. Under the influence of alcohol, though, these same people show a completely different side time and time again. A Jekyll and Hyde pattern shows itself.

The Auditor General found some serious deficiencies in the rehabilitation of inmates. Even when inmates are identified as needing long-term individualized treatment to cope with alcohol dependency, they don't receive meaningful support during the period of incarceration. That means inmates are not prepared to live clean or sober lives when they go back into the community. Without support, many inmates only return to their communities hardened by their prison experience.

Why does this matter? It matters because the government has a responsibility under the Corrections Act to provide treatment and rehabilitate offenders. However, many inmates are returning to their home communities without having received an appropriate level of aid and rehabilitative programming.

At the appropriate time I will ask the Premier to account for these failings. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PROMOTING HAY RIVER

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before we came into the House today, my colleague from Hay River North took me to a website on his computer which indicated a gentleman who has set up a special kind of Hansard, and in that Hansard you can put in key words and it tells you how many times those words were mentioned by certain Members.

I was dismayed to realize that my colleague has mentioned Hay River 40 more times than I have during this session.

---Interjection

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Forty-five, oh right, because of his statement today.

So, I cannot let that be the truth. So, Mr. Speaker, I represent Hay River. I live in Hay River. I will grow old in Hay River. I invite people to visit Hay River, especially this weekend for Kamba Carnival. I invite this government to plan meetings, gatherings and conferences in Hay River and enjoy all of the amenities that Hay River has to offer.

Hay River is the NWT's second largest community. Hay River was built there because of its proximity to the lake and to the Hay River. I want this government to be fair to Hay River residents when they hand out government program services and resources.

Hay River has an amazing business community on the leading edge of things in the area of manufacturing service and retail sectors. Hay River has outstanding volunteers and service clubs and sports organizations. To prove it, Hay River is home to our Olympic athlete, Brendan Green.

Hay River has exceptional schools with educators second to none. Hay River is the headquarters of the territorial library services. Hay River is headquarters to the NWT Liquor Commission. Hay River is headquarters to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and, Mr. Speaker, Hay River is many, many more things, but I think I might have caught up by now. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees, Mr. Nadli.

**Reports of Standing and
Special Committees**

COMMITTEE REPORT 11-17(5):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 12:
NORTHERN EMPLOYEES
BENEFITS SERVICES PENSION PLAN ACT

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of Bill 12: Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act, and commends it to the House.

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations – “the Standing Committee” – is pleased to report on its review of Bill 12, Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act.

Bill 12, sponsored by the Department of Finance, sets out the legislative framework for the continuation of the Northern Employee Benefits Services, NEBS, Pension Plan as a multi-employer, multi-jurisdictional pension plan for employees of

approved public sector employers in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Bill 12 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on February 27, 2014, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Background

NEBS has been in existence since 1979 and was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in 1999. At that time the plan was regulated under the federal Pension Benefits Standards Act, PBSA. In 2004 the federal office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, OSFI, determined that the NEBS Pension Plan no longer qualified for regulation under federal legislation. This decision meant that member pension contributions were no longer protected from creditors and locking-in provisions and plan portability outside the Northwest Territories and Nunavut were lost. Additionally, while the NEBS Board of Directors continued to govern the NEBS Pension Plan in voluntary compliance with the PBSA, they no longer had the legislative authority to govern and manage the plan with certainty.

In 2009 the GNWT enacted the Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act, as did Nunavut, which provides protection from creditors for member contributions. However, this still left NEBS conducting business in the absence of a legislative foundation. Bill 12 represents the collective efforts of the Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Finance and the Government of Nunavut's Department of Community and Government Services, working in collaboration with NEBS, to resolve that problem.

The multi-jurisdictional nature of the proposed legislation governing NEBS has presented unique challenges related to the development and review of Bill 12. It has created a situation in which two distinct, sovereign Legislatures are simultaneously considering amendments to two separate, but virtually identical, pieces of legislation governing a single body that conducts business in both jurisdictions. Therefore, at the same time that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has been considering Bill 12, our counterpart in Nunavut, the Standing Committee on Legislation of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, has been considering Bill 1.

While the circumstances that have given rise to two different Legislatures in two independently-governed jurisdictions considering "mirrored" legislation are unusual, they are not without precedent. The last time this situation occurred was in 2007, when both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories considered a new Workers' Compensation Act. Passage of this act allowed both jurisdictions to continue to share a single Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

and to enjoy the economies of scale that come with doing so. It is in this same vein that the NEBS Pension Plan Act has been developed and is being considered, to allow employers and workers in both jurisdictions to participate in a single pension plan.

Given the complexity of the bill, and the high degree of collaboration required between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories to facilitate concurrent reviews of Bill 1 and Bill 12, respectively, both committees determined that additional time would be required to complete their reviews. Consequently, consistent with each Legislature's own rules, each standing committee sought to extend the review period for its respective bill by an additional 120 days. On October 27, 2014, the Government of Nunavut passed Motion 012-4(2): Extension of Review Period for Bill 1, Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act. On October 29, 2014, the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, in accordance with Rule 70(1) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, requested in the House, under reports of committees on the review of bills, an extension by 120 days to the period of time allowed for the standing committee's review of Bill 12.

The committee wishes to take this opportunity to thank their counterparts and officials in Nunavut for their timely cooperation and spirit of collaboration which contributed to the successful review of this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I'll ask Ms. Bisaro to continue with the report. Mahsi.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Public Review of Bill 12

The Standing Committee on Government Operations held a public hearing on Bill 12, in Yellowknife, on September 25, 2014. The committee anticipated that there would be some degree of stakeholder interest in Bill 12, owing to the importance placed by most individuals on matters related to their pensions. However, the turnout for the meeting exceeded the committee's expectations. The committee wishes to thank everyone who attended the public hearing, especially for their forbearance regarding the somewhat crowded committee room.

The chair of the standing committee opened the meeting, followed by opening remarks by the Honourable J. Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Finance, and Mr. John McKee, president/chairman of NEBS. Opening remarks were followed by presentations made by Mr. Mike Aumond, deputy minister, Department of Finance; and Mr. Shawn Maley, chief executive officer, NEBS.

The following individuals were also present as part of the delegations:

- Mr. Jamie Koe, director of corporate services, Department of Finance, GNWT;
- Ms. Kelly McLaughlin, director, legal services, Department of Justice, GNWT;
- Mr. Carl Bird, director, NEBS;
- Mr. Jeff Renaud, director, NEBS; and
- Ms. Nicole Pintkowsky, director, program operations, NEBS.

The committee received oral and written submissions from:

- Mr. Dennis Adams, a retired NEBS pensioner and former CEO of NEBS, writing as a member of the public;
- Mr. James Anderson, a member of the public;
- Mr. Jack Bourassa, regional executive vice-president, north, Public Service Alliance of Canada;
- Ms. Mary Lou Cherwaty, president, Northern Territories Federation of Labour;
- Mr. Metro Huculak, superintendent, Yellowknife Education District No. 1;
- Mr. Kevin Hynes, president, International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 2890;
- Mr. James Infantino, pensions and disability insurance officer, national programs section, membership programs branch, Public Service Alliance of Canada; and
- Ms. Gayla Meredith, president, and Mr. Dave Roebuck, executive director, Northwest Territories Teachers' Association.

Outside of the call for submissions, the committee also received correspondence related to Bill 12 from:

- Ms. Sara Brown, chief executive officer, NWT Association of Communities; and
- Mr. Shawn Maley, chief executive officer, NEBS.

All submissions received by the committee are appended to this report.

What We Heard

It is clear from the passion with which presenters spoke that pension security is an emotionally-charged subject matter and one that is very important to those who work hard to save towards their retirement. The standing committee found all of the submissions it received to be thoughtful and carefully considered and wishes to thank everyone who took the time to provide a submission on Bill 12. While the comments on Bill 12 were broad-

ranging, the following themes emerged from the submissions:

1. General Support for NEBS Legislation but Calls for Withdrawal of Bill 12

All of the submissions we received acknowledged the need for and were supportive, in principle, of legislation to govern NEBS. There was no one who expressed the opinion that NEBS should continue to be administered in the absence of a legislative framework.

Despite the support for legislation in some form, the degree of support for Bill 12 varied and all of the submissions raised concerns regarding aspects of the bill that were considered to be problematic.

Of the eight submissions received, one was supportive of Bill 12, but acknowledged those parts of the bill that were likely to be contentious and offered suggestions as to how those areas of concern might be addressed. One was supportive, provided that NEBS remained a "defined-benefits" pension plan. Three submissions called for Bill 12 to be withdrawn, or abandoned in its current form, on the basis that inadequate consultation had taken place with pension holders and called for a meaningful consultation process to be established in place of Bill 12.

Ultimately, after considering all of the input received, the standing committee felt that the withdrawal of Bill 12 would be counterproductive. The committee felt that the key concerns of stakeholders could be addressed with appropriate changes to Bill 12. It is on this basis that committee proposed 12 motions to amend the bill which are discussed in greater detail under the section of the report titled "What We Did."

2. Lack of Consultation with Pension Beneficiaries

Going into the public hearing on Bill 12, the committee was concerned that pension beneficiaries had not been adequately consulted during the preparation of Bill 12. This concern was substantiated by several of the presenters, some who confirmed that no consultation was undertaken with the bargaining agents representing pension beneficiaries and some who noted that, as pension-holders, they had received no information or meaningful consultation on the proposed legislation.

When asked specifically about the government's consultation efforts, Minister Miltenberger spoke about the consultation that took place with the Nunavut government and Mr. Aumond added that the GNWT consulted with the NEBS Board. Mr. Maley described the consultation effort by

NEBS as “extensive,” adding that NEBS made a point of telling beneficiaries what is going on with the development of Bill 12.

The committee was persuaded that Bill 12 was developed in the absence of meaningful consultation with pension beneficiaries. Meaningful consultation depends on those being consulted having adequate information, time to consider it and the ability to have input into decisions before they are made. The committee has no reason to doubt the truth of Mr. Maley’s claim that beneficiaries were provided with information about the legislation as it was being developed. However, merely providing information does not constitute consultation.

In this regard, the committee feels that, ultimately, it is the Minister of Finance as the sponsor of the bill who has a duty to ensure that adequate and appropriate consultation takes place with all stakeholders, including pension beneficiaries. By restricting their consultation efforts to the Government of Nunavut and NEBS Board members and officials, this duty was not met by the Department of Finance.

3. Retroactive Reduction of Accrued Ancillary Benefits

Clauses 15(1)(a) and (b) of Bill 12 authorize the Pension Committee “at any time, from time to time,” to retroactively reduce accrued ancillary benefits and to reduce core pension benefits on a going-forward basis. Serious concerns were raised regarding this provision because it was seen to be giving the Pension Committee this power under circumstances in which a majority of the Pension Committee members represent employer members of NEBS, not employee pension holders. These concerns were exacerbated by the fact that the definition of what benefits are considered “core” versus “ancillary” is not included in the legislation, but is instead left to be defined in the plan documents.

NEBS representatives responded to this concern by noting that ancillary benefits would be defined narrowly as cost of living indexing benefits and that the Pension Committee has no intention of reducing ancillary benefits accrued before the coming-into-force date of Bill 12.

The committee believes that the representatives of NEBS who appeared before the committee were well-meaning and sincere in their efforts to develop legislation governing the NEBS Pension Plan. The committee has no reason to disbelieve the information they were provided, which included assurances from NEBS representatives that they have no intention of reducing any benefits. These assurances notwithstanding, the committee is aware that the legislation has the potential to long outlast the

current NEBS Board and administration and that, as drafted, Bill 12 provides the authority for the retroactive reduction of accrued ancillary benefits and the future reduction of core benefits not yet accrued.

As a result of the concerns heard, the standing committee moved Motion 6 which, among other things, removes the ability of the NEBS Board or Pension Committee to retroactively reduce any accrued benefits. Motion 6 is discussed in further detail below, as are Motions 8 and 11, which are related to Motion 6.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass the reading of the report to my colleague Mr. Dolynny.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Ms. Bisaro.

4. Defined-Benefit versus Target-Benefit Model

Closely related to the proposal allowing the retroactive reduction of ancillary benefits is the issue of how Bill 12 would affect the nature of the NEBS plan. Presenters who spoke against Bill 12 expressed the view that the NEBS plan is a defined-benefit pension model and that the provision allowing the retroactive reduction of ancillary benefits, if and when put into effect, would effectively shift NEBS to a target-benefit pension model.

A defined-benefit pension plan is a type of plan which pays a guaranteed, predetermined benefit on retirement. The plan is ‘defined’ in the sense that the benefit formula is specified and known in advance. On the other hand, a target-benefit pension plan is one in which future benefits are based on affordability projections and may vary as a function of the funding status of the plan. Plan members, therefore, share a greater degree of plan risk through adjustments to their benefits.

Committee found the discussion around this point to be complicated by the fact that participants did not have a shared understanding of what constitutes a “defined-benefit” plan. Both the Department of Finance and NEBS representatives put forth the proposition that by continuing to protect “core” benefits from reduction, the nature of the NEBS Pension Plan under Bill 12 remained a “defined-benefits” plan.

The bill’s detractors expressed the view that giving the Pension Committee the authority to retroactively reduce any accrued benefits – core or otherwise – would have the effect of changing the NEBS plan from a defined-benefit to a target-benefit model. Participants referred to this as “sacrilege” and “breaking the pension

promise,” arguing that NEBS employers had entered into a covenant with employees to provide a set pension benefit based on their contributions, and that to reduce this retroactively is tantamount to renegeing on this covenant.

In order to understand the significance of the shift from a defined- to a target-benefit model, committee found it important to look at trends in pension reform in the larger Canadian context. Committee’s research showed that, across Canada and in other industrialized nations, there has been a movement in recent years away from defined-benefit pension models to models in which the benefits are targeted. This shift has been precipitated by the challenges faced by both public and private sector employers in keeping their pension funds solvent. The movement to a target-benefit model is one approach being employed to address the problem of pension solvency. However, it is not without its critics. Views and perceptions around target-benefit pension models have the potential to be polarizing, depending upon one’s position.

The committee did not feel that it was necessary to reach agreement regarding what constitutes a “defined-benefit” pension. Regardless of the label used, it was clear to the committee that the retroactive reduction of any accrued benefits, whether considered to be “ancillary” or “core,” was something that pension beneficiaries did not want to see happen. At the same time, the standing committee is cognizant of the need for the NEBS Board and Pension Committee to have tools that allow them to maintain a solvent plan otherwise all beneficiaries are ultimately at risk of receiving little or no pension whatsoever.

To address these concerns, the committee moved Motion 6, which has the effect of ensuring that the NEBS pension remains a defined-benefit plan. For further certainty, the term “defined-benefit” is incorporated into the bill through Motion 1.

5. Pension Committee Governance Model

Section 11 of Bill 12, as originally drafted, authorizes the composition of the NEBS Board to be set out in the NEBS bylaws. It also gives the board the exclusive authority to appoint members or set the rules for their election to the Pension Committee, in addition to determining their numbers and length of term. Section 12 specifies that there must be at least two members on the Pension Committee who are independent to the extent that neither is a member of the board or an employee of a participating employer. Sections 11 and 12 also establish the authorities of the NEBS Board and Pension Committee respectively.

A good deal of the input heard by the committee pertained to this governance model established for the NEBS Pension Plan by Bill 12. The committee was told that the legislation “fails to establish good governance;” that “the governance model is seriously flawed;” that it “imposes a flawed administrative process with no effective voice for the parties that bear the risk;” and that it “leaves all major decisions in the hands of the NEBS Board and Pension Committee, which are dominated by employers.”

In illustrating this point, presenters made specific note of Section 15(3), which effectively gives employers, represented by the NEBS Board, the power to opt out of contribution increases, thereby placing the burden for an under-funded plan fully on employees.

These submissions called for the implementation of a joint-governance pension-plan model. The standing committee considered the implications of this and determined that such an approach would likely necessitate a rewrite of the bill, which would delay the implementation of pension legislation for NEBS possibly beyond the life of the 17th Assembly. The standing committee opted to focus its efforts on making amendments to the existing bill, with the hope and expectation that it could be amended to address the major concerns raised, without unduly delaying the bill’s passage.

One submission expressed the opinion that it is unnecessary to change the governance structure of the plan to ensure that the needs of pension beneficiaries are considered, because the fiduciary duty of the Pension Committee members requires them to act on behalf of beneficiaries. The Minister’s staff and NEBS representatives also made this assertion that NEBS pension committee members will act in the interests of pension beneficiaries because they have a fiduciary obligation to do so.

The standing committee gave a great deal of consideration to this view. While standing committee members acknowledge the importance of the fiduciary obligations of Pension Committee members, the existence of this obligation alone cannot overcome the biases inherent in a governance design that favours employer over employee interests. If that were the case, observed the standing committee, then fiduciary duty would have resulted in a more meaningful consultation with employee pension beneficiaries during the development of Bill 12.

In response to concerns heard, the standing committee moved Motion 5 to mandate in the legislation the composition of the Pension Committee. Motions 3 and 4 are also related to

the powers of the Pension Committee and are discussed in further detail below.

6. GNWT Powers Under Bill 12

A number of presenters raised concerns about sections of the bill that they viewed as giving the GNWT too much power and influence over the NEBS plan and/or the NEBS Board and Pension Committee.

Section 9(1)

Some presenters expressed a concern that Section 9(1) of the bill, for example, “invests enormous and far-reaching powers to the Minister, with no recourse except to the courts,” thereby giving the GNWT too much power to override decisions.

The committee considered these concerns but recognized that the removal of this provision from the bill would leave the Minister unable to act in the event that there was a failure to manage the NEBS plan in compliance with the act.

The committee looked to other pieces of legislation providing similar powers to the Minister to step in and act in the event of a problem. One example is offered by Section 156 of the Cities, Towns and Villages Act, which allows the Minister to intervene in the affairs of a municipal corporation. In this case, the Minister may only act in unusual circumstances to address problems that have arisen. Similar powers are contained in Section 17 of the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act which allows the Minister to appoint a person to act as a public administrator of a health or social services facility under specific circumstances where care is jeopardized.

Having reviewed similar provisions in other legislation, the committee is of the view that the powers provided to the Minister in Section 9(1) of Bill 12 reasonably afford the government the authority to enforce its legislation, and only in the event that specified problems arise.

Section 10(2)

Similar concerns were raised regarding Section 10(2) of Bill 12. This clause specifies that in the event that the GNWT becomes a member of NEBS, then the GNWT must adhere to the requirements of a participating member. Some presenters felt that this clause allows the GNWT to become a plan member, with too much power under Section 15(2) and (3).

The committee considered this concern but determined that it was based on a lack of understanding about the purpose of the clause. The intent of the clause is to give greater certainty that if the GNWT were to join NEBS, it

would enjoy no special privileges as an employer member. This clause was described by a member of the Department of Finance delegation as a comfort clause included at the request of the NEBS Board.

The existence of clause 10(2) does not “permit” the GNWT to join NEBS. In fact it is Section 22, which defines a “public sector employer” as including “a territorial government,” that permits the GNWT to join NEBS. Therefore, the removal of clause 10(2) does not prevent the GNWT from joining NEBS. Its removal does, however, eliminate the certainty provided by the clause that the GNWT must follow the rules in the same manner as any other member employer. For this reason, the committee determined that the clause should remain in the bill.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass this to my colleague Mr. Moses. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Dolynny.

Other Issues

1. Solvency versus Going-concern Valuation

Section 31 of Bill 12 sets out the requirement that the NEBS plan be funded on a going concern basis, rather than a solvency basis.

Although this was not raised as a concern in any of the submissions received by the standing committee, the committee gave consideration to this section of the bill, which represents a change in the way NEBS has conducted its business in the past.

A solvency valuation is performed to determine the funded status of a plan if it were to terminate on a certain date. It is a common practice for private sector plans to be funded on a solvency basis where there is a much greater risk that a plan might wind up as a result of bankruptcy or business closure.

A going-concern valuation, by comparison, is calculated based on whether or not there is enough money now in the plan, when combined with expected new contributions, to cover the benefits of current and future retirees.

The standing committee was persuaded by NEBS' position that it is more appropriate that this pension be funded on a going-concern basis, as it is a type of pension plan that is likely to operate indefinitely and one which is not facing an immediate threat to its existence.

2. Limiting the Scope of Intergovernmental Agreements

In order to deal with the practicalities of operating the NEBS plan in a multi-jurisdictional

environment, Bill 12 allows for the Minister responsible to enter into intergovernmental agreements respecting matters related to the NEBS plan. In some defined circumstances, the terms of an intergovernmental agreement will prevail, if there is a conflict, over some sections of the act.

The standing committee acknowledged the rationale for intergovernmental agreements, given the multi-jurisdictional nature of the NEBS plan, but was concerned about ensuring in the legislation that the power afforded to governments, in entering into intergovernmental agreements, not be used in such a way as to circumvent requirements of the act. Motion 3 addresses this concern.

3. Addressing the “50-50 Rule”

Clause 32 of Bill 12 specifies that, under the NEBS plan, the contribution rate for active members must be equal to the contribution rate for participating employers.

The standing committee considered the possibility that employers may wish to make pension contributions in excess of 50 percent, as an employment incentive to recruit and retain workers. The committee discussed with Minister Miltenberger the option of amending the legislation to provide the flexibility to the Pension Committee to increase the employer contribution rate beyond 50 percent.

In declining to concur with the committee’s proposal, the Minister offered the rationale that the trend for public sector plans across Canada is to require 50-50 cost sharing. The Minister also pointed out the inherent logic in enshrining a 50-50 cost sharing arrangement to complement the proposed amendments to clause 12 creating a 50-50 governance model for the Pension Committee.

The standing committee reviewed pension legislation across Canada, to determine how other jurisdictions addressed the matter of employee-employer contribution rates. Their research revealed that:

- All of the statutes reviewed have clauses intended to prohibit an employee’s contributions to his or her pension from exceeding a certain level or threshold. Under the Pension Benefits Standards Act (Canada) and eight provincial statutes, the employee’s contribution plus interest may not exceed 50 percent.
- The New Brunswick Pension Benefits Act permits the minimum employee contribution to be determined according to the relevant pension plan. However, where the pension plan is silent, then “the plan shall be deemed to have fixed the percentage at 50 percent.”

- Three jurisdictions – Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador – refer to this as the “50-50 Rule.” In others, it is variously referred to as the “minimum commuted value,” “maximum employee cost,” or the “minimum employer contribution.”

The standing committee found that, while the effect of such provisions may be to create an environment where 50-50 cost sharing is likely to occur, the legislation is not worded to require cost-sharing. The committee’s research did not reveal any provisions in any of the statutes it reviewed that prohibit an employer from making a contribution in excess of 50 percent.

Therefore, while the committee was not persuaded by the Minister’s assertion that the trend across Canada is 50-50 cost-sharing, the committee was willing to concede that the amendments to clause 12, allowing for balanced employee-employer membership on the Pension Committee, was reasonable grounds for acceptance of the “50-50 rule.”

What We Did

The standing committee listened intently and gave careful consideration to the opinions that were expressed at the public hearing on Bill 12.

The clause-by-clause review of the bill was held on February 19, 2014. At this meeting, the committee moved 12 separate motions to amend Bill 12. Each of these motions was carried and Minister Miltenberger concurred with each:

Motion 1: To amend clause 2 by adding “defined benefit” after “multijurisdictional.”

This amendment clarifies, in legislation, the commitment to have the NEBS plan operate and be interpreted as a “defined benefit” plan rather than a “target benefit” plan. There is further discussion related to this motion under Motion 6, below.

Motion 2: To amend clause 7(2) to add a provision to provide that an intergovernmental agreement cannot waive any requirement under the act.

This amendment provides that no provision of an intergovernmental agreement may be used to waive statutory requirements of the act.

Motion 3: To amend clause 11(3)(a)(ii) to remove the power of the board to determine the number of pension committee members.

This is a consequential motion necessitated by the amendment to clause 12, Motion 5, which specifies the number of pension committee members. Given that the composition of the pension committee will be set in the legislation, it is no longer appropriate, and legislatively confusing, to have the current sub-clause permitting the board to set the number remain in the bill.

Motion 4: To amend clause 11(3) to remove the power of the NEBS Board to approve or reject contribution rate increases for participating employers.

This motion is related to Motion 6 to amend clause 15(3) and removes the authority of the board to approve or reject Pension Committee recommendations for contribution rate increases for employers.

This motion, in conjunction with Motion 6 to amend clause 15(3), means that the power to recommend and implement increases will lie with the pension committee, not the NEBS Board.

Motion 5: To amend clause 12 to set forth the composition of the Pension Committee.

As originally drafted, Bill 12 proposed that the Pension Committee be composed of two independent members and such other members as the board determines.

The standing committee heard the concerns that the composition of the Pension Committee was seen to be weighted to favour the interests of employer members over beneficiaries, and that employees were left without an effective voice in the governance of the NEBS plan.

The standing committee passed a motion to amend clause 12 to provide for equal employee/employer balance, with one independent member of the Pension Committee. It also provides that the pension committee shall elect its own chair. The standing committee believes that this amendment to the bill will implement a fair and balanced governance model for the NEBS plan.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask to turn the report over to my colleague Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Moses.

Motion 6: To amend clause 15 to deal with the powers of the Pension Committee if there are insufficient assets in the plan.

As originally drafted, clause 15 of Bill 12 authorizes the Pension Committee, at any time, to retroactively reduce accrued ancillary benefits and to reduce core pension benefits on a going-forward basis.

In the event that there are insufficient assets to maintain the solvency of the NEBS plan, Bill 12 also requires that the Pension Committee request the consent of the NEBS Board to increase contributions to the pension fund before taking any actions to change or reduce benefits.

This section of the bill, as originally written, also gives the board the power to veto any proposed increase to the rate of contributions by employer members.

The standing committee listened carefully to the concerns raised by many of the presenters who viewed these authorities as placing an undue

burden on employee beneficiaries to pay for the costs of an underfunded pension. This was seen to be especially problematic given the lack of employee representation on the pension committee.

As a result, the standing committee proposed amendments replacing clause 15 with a new clause that removes the ability of the pension committee to retroactively reduce any earned benefit as a way of dealing with insufficient assets in the plan.

There is one exception to this general prohibition against the retroactive reduction of accrued benefits:

- This exception occurs only in the specific case of the accrual of cost of living indexing benefits accrued after December 31, 2004, where an employer withdraws from the plan or the plan is terminated.
- If there are insufficient assets, and the employer has withdrawn or the plan has been terminated, then indexing benefits earned after December 31, 2004, are not guaranteed but are, instead, discretionary.
- This exception is in keeping with the current plan text, in which plan members only accrue a right to receive indexing benefits if the plan is not wound up or an employer has not withdrawn.

In addition to the prohibition against the retroactive reduction of accrued benefits, the amended provision gives the Pension Committee the authority to increase contribution rates as one of the ways of addressing an insufficiency of assets in the plan.

As well, this motion removes the clause giving the board a veto power over contribution increases. As a result, the authority for managing pension fund solvency will rest with the Pension Committee.

This motion also has the effect of ensuring that the NEBS Pension Plan remains a defined-benefit plan. For greater certainty, this is enshrined through the proposal in Motion 1 to include the term "defined-benefit" in clause 2 of the bill which outlines the purpose of the act.

Motion 7: To amend clause 22(3) to refine Minister's ability to direct class of employer to apply for membership.

The purpose of this motion is to bring the language of this provision in Bill 12 in line with the language used in Nunavut's Bill 1, so that the bills mirror each other as closely as possible.

This has the effect of making the wording of this clause more precise. It removes the ability of the Minister to direct either an Aboriginal government or the legislative or judicial branches of the territorial

government to apply for membership in the NEBS plan.

Motion 8: To amend clause 25 to set forth what an actuarial funding report must contain in the event of a funding deficiency – options.

This is a technical amendment designed to go with the amendment to clause 15, Motion 6. This motion eliminates the option of proposing, in an actuarial report, a retroactive reduction of benefits in the event of a funding shortfall.

Motion 9: To add a subsection to clause 25 to require tabling in the Legislative Assembly of the actuarial valuation reports.

This motion would require the Minister to table in the Legislative Assembly an actuarial valuation report within 120 days of receipt, or, if the Assembly is not sitting, at the first available opportunity when it next sits.

Motion 10: To add a subsection to clause 27 to require tabling of the Pension Committee's financial reports.

This motion requires the Minister to table in the Assembly the Pension Committee's financial report within 120 days of receipt, or, if the Assembly is not sitting, at the first available opportunity when it next sits.

As with Motion 9, the purpose of this motion is simply to ensure, through legislation, that this information is made available to the public. Motions 9 and 10 were favoured by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut's Standing Committee on Legislation and were added to Bill 12, with the concurrence of this standing committee and the GNWT's Minister of Finance to ensure symmetry with Nunavut's Bill 1.

Motion 11: To amend clause 28(4) to provide that amendments to reduce benefits do not come into force until 60 days after notice is given to affected members.

Under the heading "Disclosure to Members," Bill 12 contains a clause requiring that 60 days' advance notice be provided to any pension beneficiary adversely affected by any decision of the Pension Committee to retroactively reduce accrued ancillary benefits.

With the amendment to clause 15, Motion 6, removing the authority to retroactively reduce accrued ancillary pension benefits, such a period of advance notice is no longer necessary.

Nonetheless, the standing committee feels that any reductions to ancillary and/or core benefits planned by the Pension Committee on a going-forward basis warrant 60 days' advance notice to affected plan members. This amendment ensures that such notice is provided.

Motion 12: To amend clause 57(3) to provide that when the Minister cannot give 30 days' advance notice of a decision under 57(2), being a decision to terminate the plan, the Minister must give notice as soon as possible.

As with Motion 7, the intent of this motion is to mirror the equivalent provision of the Nunavut legislation.

This amendment has the effect of ensuring, where the plan is being wound up, that whatever notice is possible is being given.

Mr. Speaker, now I turn the report over to the chair, Mr. Nadli.

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

Conclusion

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations' review of Bill 12 is the result of a highly collaborative process. The standing committee wishes to thank everyone involved in the review of this bill for their assistance and input.

During the clause-by-clause review, the standing committee and Minister agreed to the 12 amendments to Bill 12 outlined in the motions above.

Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 12, Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act, as amended and reprinted, as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the standing committee's review.

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

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 11-17(5) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, CARRIED

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes the presentation of our report. Therefore, I move, seconded by the honorable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 11-17-(5), Report on the Review of Bill 12: Northern Employees Benefits Services Pension Plan Act, be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 11-17-(5) is received by the Assembly and is referred to Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

Mr. Moses.

COMMITTEE REPORT 12-17(5):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 36:
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
PROFESSIONS ACT

MR. MOSES: Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Social Programs is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of Bill 36: Health and Social Services Professions Act, and commends it to the House.

Introduction

Bill 36, the Health and Social Services Professions Act, will enable the government to regulate numerous professions under a single law. As such, it mirrors umbrella legislation in six other Canadian jurisdictions. The act will ensure that only qualified professionals are licenced to practice. It will also empower the Minister to establish a mechanism for hearing complaints and reviewing professional conduct.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs commends the Minister for developing the bill. It is the result of five years of work by the Department of Health and Social Services, professional stakeholders and the public. The committee believes that the act will enhance public safety, improve the level of care and professionalism in the Northwest Territories and bring our jurisdiction into step with other parts of Canada.

Bill 36 was referred to the committee on November 4, 2014. The public hearing was held on January 19, 2015, and the clause-by-clause review was held on February 24, 2015. During the review the committee passed two minor amendments to address drafting concerns identified by the department and made at the request of the Minister.

Comments were received from more than a dozen stakeholders, including: the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner; the Association of Psychologists of the Northwest Territories; the Northwest Territories Association of Naturopathic Doctors; the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists; the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science; the Northwest Territories Massage Therapists Association; the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; the Alliance of Medical Radiation Technologist Regulators of Canada; the Northern Nutrition Association; and a community advocate. All stakeholder comments were shared with the Minister.

Overall, stakeholders indicated strong support for the bill. Many are eager to become regulated under

the act. Stakeholders also raised some concerns about how the legislation will be implemented. The remainder of this report addresses these concerns and recommends several courses of action.

Privacy Concerns

The Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner identified four concerns related to the protection of privacy.

1. Authorities granted to an investigator under the act may violate the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP) or the Health Information Act.

The bill authorizes an investigator to make inquiries of "any person" when investigating a complaint. This leaves a person with no option but to produce records or other materials. The committee considered this matter carefully and concluded that authorities granted to an investigator are consistent with ATIPP and the Health Information Act. Under ATIPP, information may be disclosed if another statute authorizes the disclosure. Under the Health Information Act, a health-information custodian must disclose information if it is requested during the course of an investigation into a health provider's conduct.

The committee noted that the bill protects third-party information against inclusion in the investigator's written report. The bill requires an investigator to prepare a written report and provide it to the complaints officer. In turn, the bill allows the complaints officer to refer the matter to a board of inquiry. However, the bill stipulates that third-party information must not to be included in the report and may only be used to determine how a complaint will be handled.

2. Appointed officials under the act may not be subject to ATIPP or the Information Act.

The Department of Health and Social Services advised the committee that all health-related registrars and registry offices are housed within the department and fall under the public service. Registrars and their records are therefore subject to ATIPP. In addition, the department noted that other appointed or contracted officials are required to sign standard contracts, which require compliance with ATIPP.

3. The requirement to hold a public hearing may violate ATIPP, the Health Information Act, or the principles of the protection of personal information.

After careful review, the committee concluded that the common-law doctrine of procedural fairness requires hearings to be held in public. Public hearings allow for scrutiny and ensure that proceedings are fair, transparent and unbiased. Public hearings also give the respondent the right to be heard and to respond to evidence. Members

further determined that the bill's provisions respecting public hearings are consistent with other health-related legislation.

The committee noted that the right to a public hearing is not unlimited. A board of inquiry may hold an in-camera hearing where it decides that the public interest is outweighed by other considerations, such as protection of a person's privacy.

4. The power to compel witnesses at a public hearing may violate ATIPP, the Health Information Act, or the principles of the protection of personal information.

The committee considered this matter in detail and concluded that the power to compel a witness is a common-law principle of procedural fairness. It allows the respondent and the complainant to put all relevant information before the decision-maker. The committee also determined that the bill's provisions respecting the power to compel witnesses, and the potential consequences of contempt, are consistent with other health-related legislation.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to pass the report over to my colleague Mr. Dolynny.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Moses.

Implementation

The majority of stakeholders requested that professionals be given opportunities for substantive input into the development of regulations. The committee was pleased to hear the Minister agree to this request.

Several stakeholders recommended that a majority of registration-committee members be licenced practitioners or at least very knowledgeable about the profession. The committee noted that provisions pertaining to registration committees are flexible enough to accommodate this request.

Some stakeholders drew attention to the difficulty of regulating professions, which have a small number of practitioners. For instance, the Northwest Territories is home to just a handful of naturopathic doctors. The association representing them noted potential for conflicts of interest or situations in which "friends are regulating friends."

One community advocate made several recommendations. First, she recommended that the department ensure complainants are interviewed by a complaints officer. Second, she recommended that community members be given a stronger voice in the licensing, registration, and complaints processes. Third, she urged caution around the use of alternative dispute resolution processes, noting

that such processes can result in hasty or inadequate remedies for complainants.

Another stakeholder expressed fear that professional standards will erode if foreign-trained professionals are licenced within the Northwest Territories. However, the Minister and his staff indicated that the department does not have the capacity to assess or certify foreign-trained professionals and will therefore only accept foreign-trained professionals who are certified in other Canadian jurisdictions.

With respect to fees, several stakeholders cautioned against overburdening professionals who are required to pay fees to national associations or in other jurisdictions. They requested that the government keep its fees to a minimum. The Minister assured the committee that annual fees in the Northwest Territories will be kept to \$300 or less.

Recommended Actions

The Standing Committee on Social Programs recommends the following courses of action:

- 1) that the Department of Health and Social Services proceed without delay in regulating the first four professions, including emergency medical service providers, psychologists, licenced practical nurses and naturopathic doctors, and further, that the Department of Health and Social Services respond swiftly to other professions requesting to be regulated;
- 2) that the Department of Health and Social Services provide professionals with opportunities for substantive input on the development of regulations;
- 3) that the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that the legislation is carefully implemented in accordance with ATIPP and the Health Information Act;
- 4) that the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that a majority of registration-committee members be licenced practitioners of the profession;
- 5) that the Department of Health and Social Services seek the involvement of professionals in other jurisdictions where there is a small number of professionals practising in the Northwest Territories;
- 6) that the Department of Health and Social Services provide community members with opportunities for input in the registration and complaint processes;
- 7) that the Department of Health and Social Services direct the complaints officer to interview every complainant to ensure that complaints are accurately understood;

- 8) that the Department of Health and Social Services exercise caution in the use of alternative dispute resolution processes and guard against hasty or inadequate remedies for complainants;
- 9) that the Department of Health and Social Services set reasonable and nominal fees for professional memberships; and
- 10) that the Department of Health and Social Services require professionals to meet national certification standards, engage in professional development, and keep abreast of best practices in their profession.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass this back to our chair, Mr. Moses. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Dolynny.

Conclusion

The committee thanks all stakeholders who commented on the bill or attended the public hearing.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs advises that it supports Bill 36 as amended and reprinted and presents it for consideration to Committee of the Whole.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 12-17(5) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, CARRIED

That concludes the presentation of our report. Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Committee Report 12-17(5), Report of the Review of Bill 36: Health and Social Services Professions Act, be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 12-17(5) is received by the Assembly and referred to Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Welcome everybody here in the public gallery today. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Mr. Menicoche.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 747-17(5): ABORIGINAL WELLNESS CENTRE AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in the day when I did my Member's statement, I was speaking about the Stanton Renewal Project and the need to include an Aboriginal wellness centre. So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services – I know he had discussions with the elders, the Stanton Elders Council on this matter – how supportive is he of such a project? Thank you very much.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department and I recognize the importance of culture in health care, and work to incorporate Aboriginal wellness is being done within Stanton and within the health care system here in the Northwest Territories. We have planned for continued delivery of Aboriginal wellness programs through Stanton, but we do acknowledge that not all of the functions or activities that can be done, or should be done, in the Aboriginal wellness centre could actually be done within the infrastructure of a hospital. There are certain codes that we have to adhere to and some of the activities cannot be done.

The concept of an Aboriginal wellness centre is based on similar approaches that we've seen in Alaska and elsewhere, including some things that are being done in the Yukon. Planning for an Aboriginal centre is being done at Stanton Territorial Hospital, and it's being done at the same time as the Stanton redevelopment. We are working closely with the Elders Advisory Committee and moving forward and planning for an Aboriginal wellness centre on the Stanton grounds. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I guess part of the issue, too, with a stand-alone Aboriginal wellness centre is about funding the business plan case or the business case to provide such a facility, and cost, et cetera, I think even class B engineering estimates. We don't think it has to meet the high technical standards that a hospital would have. I believe it's a stand-alone centre.

How can the department assist with planning and creating business plans for such a wellness centre? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Stanton renewal planning work that has been going on has actually identified a piece of land on the property where an Aboriginal wellness centre can go. The next step in planning is actually to develop a more detailed outline of the program requirements, what the Elders Advisory Council would like to see, as well as other Aboriginal government partners. Starting in April, we are going to be developing and consolidating all of that information into a plan that will help us articulate what exactly an Aboriginal wellness centre will be, what standards, what codes, what facilities, what programs will be delivered in there. Details on timing and budget and other things like that can't really be completed until we've actually done that work and have a better idea of what it is that we want, to work with our Aboriginal partners to create here in the Northwest Territories. Much of the final construction will not be able to proceed until we've identified the resources required, potential partners, and we also have to continue to move forward with the Stanton redevelopment. We need to find out what that project is going to look like and we are still waiting for proposals from the three qualified proponents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: It shows that the department is willing to entertain and move forward with this. I would like to know how well the department continues to endorse and support this very worthwhile initiative. The Stanton Renewal Project is to be completed in five years. We do have an opportunity to include this as part of the completion in five years.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: An Aboriginal wellness centre was not part of the plan of the Stanton renewal, but is something we have articulated to the qualified proponents and we are hoping to see some interest on their part to move forward. We are also pursuing other partners, Aboriginal organizations, Aboriginal governments who might have an interest in being partners on this important facility that we would like to create here in Yellowknife for all the residents of the Northwest Territories.

We acknowledge fully that this is an important building. It needs to be done. We do need to find a way to make it happen, but the first thing we need to do is figure out exactly what services and programs should be delivered there, and we are relying on Aboriginal governments and the Elders Advisory Council to help us with that. They are going to be doing a significant amount of work, starting in April, for the next three or four months to articulate and quantify what that will be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am really pleased to hear the progress that has happened to date. I believe the Legislative Assembly has to have the political will. As I said, it's an idea whose time has come and I believe that we have to throw our full support behind this and our resources. I know they are looking for some resources to do a planning study.

In government we have other departments that certainly support Aboriginal culture, such as ECE and ITI, that have no problem supporting businesses that want to do a business plan. I believe we can take a consolidated approach using all of our resources to benefit this group.

What will be the next steps forward? Would you let this Elders Counsel run on their own, or can there be a more structured approach to get everybody to the table and make this dream come true? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Stanton Elders Advisory Council will be playing a lead role in the work that I have articulated that is going to occur, starting in April, for the next three to four months, the planning, the articulation, programs and services.

We don't have a lot of money in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Our budgets are incredibly limited. So to move on something like this is going to take a significant amount of creativity and ingenuity. We are looking, as I said, to other partners who might be interested in coming in on this particular project, whether it's Aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories and we will also be looking within as much as possible. This is an important initiative. There is a lot of interest in this particular project and we would like to find a way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 748-17(5):
EMERGENCY SERVICES IN
SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today the Minister spoke about safe communities and I spoke about the need to remove the politics from emergency services, especially in our smaller communities. It's clear when one hears about a stop work order for an entire fire department that we should be asking those bigger questions. My questions today are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Back in December 2014 the Fort Resolution fire department was issued a stop work order by Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

Reports did cite deficiencies reaching as far back as July 2013.

Can the Minister indicate what role his department performed specifically during this concern leading up to the stop work order? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe small communities play politics with emergency services because you're playing politics with the safety and well-being of your residents. The issue was brought to MACA's attention in late 2013 when WSCC advised us of a non-compliance issue involving the community. In response to this, we work with the community officials to help them develop policies and procedures, by providing guidance, advice and templates. At this time we didn't assume a hands-on approach in preparing the necessary instrument and tools.

MR. DOLYNNY: Since December 2014, can the Minister indicate what improvements have been undertaken in the department assisting the hamlet of Fort Resolution to meet emergency service standards of operation? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Given the seriousness of the situation and increased fire hazard around Christmas, we worked with the community government to validating a suitable service level by taking a hands-on approach to develop guiding policies, procedures and training plans. I would also like to note and highlight the tremendous effort of the community fire staff and Hay River in their help and training volunteers from Fort Resolution...I almost said Revolution. Their contribution at this time was greatly appreciated and they did a fantastic job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm trying to keep the topic of transparency in mind. Can the Minister confirm whether his department compiles community information indicating compliance to the codes and standards of emergency services? If not, why? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The office of the fire marshal works extensively with community governments to complete fire department assessments and development plans. Information contained in these assessments provided MACA with a good idea of broad gaps and deficiencies that exist within NWT's community fire protection system. This helped our key stakeholders, including the NWT Fire Chief's Association, to develop the Community Fire Protection Plan that contains a number of priority initiatives aimed at improving the system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister shared, earlier today, progress towards the continued implementation of the NWT Community Fire Protection Plan, yet there appears to still be an overall lack of a proper fire safety culture in our communities.

Can the Minister share what he intends to do to fix this monumental problem? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: It is a problem that we are taking steps to deal with. Every year I have the privilege of attending the NWT Fire Chief's Association's annual general meeting. Each year, obviously, the participants showed great interest in this topic. Make no mistake about it, community fire protection in the Northwest Territories is challenging and we are taking steps to deal with that. The communities are upgrading their training and we are working with them to upgrade their training. They also have in their ability, through their CPI funding and gas tax, to purchase firefighting equipment and get the proper training. It is a concern and one that is being dealt with by the communities in the Northwest Territories. I have great confidence in their abilities to put good plans together, implement the plans and make sure they have all the infrastructure they need in place, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

QUESTIONS 749-17(5): PUBLIC SERVICE ABSENTEEISM AND WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Human Resources. I want follow up on my statement when I talked about absenteeism and mental health in the workplace and making our workplace better.

I mentioned a statistic from the 2013 Public Service Annual Report and I'd like to first off ask the Minister, the statistic I mentioned was 12.3 days absence per employee in the year 2013. So, I'd like to know from the Minister, if he can tell me, what accounts for the very high incidence of days absent from work? Are there any statistics that he can give us, to me, to the House? Any reasons for absence that add up to 12.3 days per employee? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sick leave is monitored and tracked by the Department of Human Resources; however, specifically why the individual employees are on sick leave is not indicated. It's a privacy matter and individuals have a union agreement that they are allowed a certain amount of sick leave. If they're within that amount of sick leave that's allocated within their employment agreement, then we don't

ask why. If they start to exceed that amount, then there's more investigation with the employee and there could be discussions to determine exactly why an individual would be missing more than what is allowed in the agreement. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. It may be that every employee is allowed 12 sick days per year according to their Collective Agreement, but I'd like to know from the Minister, because the Public Service Annual Report presumably looks at all aspects of our public service, and I would hope that they would also be looking at costs of certain actions of our public service, does the Minister have any idea what the cost is for 12.3 days of absence per employee in a calendar year? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The negotiated amount is actually 15 days of sick leave per employee. Once they exceed not the 15 days but a certain amount of days, less than 15, I think it is nine days, the individual can be questioned by their supervisor as to why.

Determining the cost, I guess I don't have that specific number with me; however, it would be very easy to determine the cost. We just have to track the sick leaves, as we have done, to determine how much the individuals are being paid who are taking the sick leave, do the arithmetic and we would come up with the number. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I would think with 4,500 or 5,000 employees, whatever we have, times 12 days times an average salary per day, it's going to be a pretty huge number. I would urge the Minister to look at that number and consider that maybe we ought to be considering the cost of absenteeism and working to bring that down somehow.

There is a report that I have encountered which says that up to 25 percent of mental disability costs directly incurred by an employer are preventable. I talked a lot in my statement about mental health and the need for us to make it easier for people to talk about it, easier for people to bring it into the workplace, not the mental health illness itself but to talk about it.

One of the things that I think is increasing more and more is stress leave. So, I'd like to know from the Minister, in terms of mental illness in the workplace, in terms of stress leave, which I think is a mental illness in itself, what are we doing with our workplaces, in our workplaces to try and reduce stress and to try and reduce the amount of absenteeism related to mental illness and stress? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: All of the departments do have occupational health and safety committees. They have regular meetings and they talk to the departments within the department heads and so on. If there is an issue where they think that

individuals could be missing a lot of work, then they can't really come out and ask individuals why they are missing work, so there is an offer that we have within the government that is an Employee and Family Assistance Program. Many people take advantage of that.

Last year, out of the public service, we had just slightly over 800 individuals access that program, so it could be part of their family as well. This year we're anticipating that it will be closer to 900 individuals accessing the EFAP. This is available to people and we do have a campaign where we try to have the departments aware of the invisible disabilities, which mental health and illness could fall under. We do try to communicate to the employees on mental health in the workplace.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I appreciate that we have health and safety committees, and I'm very glad to hear that employees are taking advantage of the services that are available for them. But I'm talking a bit more about something that is broader. I'm talking about a culture in the workplace. We have tried to promote a culture of safety. I think we also need to promote a culture within the workplace where it's okay to talk about mental illness and mental health problems. The Minister mentioned a campaign.

I guess I would like to know from the Minister: What are we doing to try and promote a culture of awareness of health, acceptance of disabilities and differences, for lack of any better way of putting it?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The campaign has posters. We promote an inclusive workplace and we provide information to our employees. We have a GNWT Advisory Committee on Employability and the Employee and Family Assistance Program. We look at these. We try to promote as much as possible. We do encourage our managers to have discussions with individuals where we suspect that they are missing work due to mental illness and try to direct them in the right place so that they can receive some help. But there are a lot of privacy issues here as well. We have to be cognizant of privacy issues, so we work within that, recognizing that there are privacy issues. But this is what we do to try to assist employees.

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

QUESTION 750-17(5):
REPLACING MOOSE KERR SCHOOL
IN AKLAVIK

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Built in 1969, Moose Kerr School was named after Arnold J. Kerr, a long-standing principal who strove to

incorporate the local culture into the daily learning environment.

The school underwent renovations in 1997 with the expansion of the senior high wing and the addition of a beautiful library that is reflective of the cultures. The library was later recognized as a public school library to service both students and community.

Moose Kerr School is the oldest school in the Northwest Territories as of today. Even though one is older, but it did go through major renovations in 2005-2006, so technically Moose Kerr School is the oldest. I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works, what are the plans for Moose Kerr School in 2019?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's plan for any infrastructure is to replace infrastructure after 40 years, or 20 years after a major renovation, so the plan would be to replace the Moose Kerr School in 2019.

MR. BLAKE: That's just what I wanted to hear. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 751-17(5):
REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION
PROGRAMS FOR INMATES

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Often our people, for some reason, go astray and it takes great effort to bring people back on the trail. My question is for the Premier.

The Auditor General has indicated that correctional facilities don't seem to have enough program dollars specifically allocated for rehabilitation of inmates. That sounds like a failure on the government's part to live up to its statutory obligations.

Will this government be providing additional funding to ensure that inmates receive programming aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration?

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To enhance accountability, the development of a performance assurance and accountability framework commenced last year. This framework outlines consistent and effective management as well as proper monitoring of procedures and protocols and improved rehabilitative and reintegration programs. The framework will be fully implemented by 2016.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Premier for indicating just the progress in terms of the department that's mandated to oversee the correctional facilities. Often, too, because of our

government and our zest to try and help each other, we sometimes take an institutional approach as contrasted with going out on the land as a healing element.

I would like to ask about on-the-land programs. The 2013 Minister's Forum on Addictions called for more on-the-land treatment options. What it heard is that on-the-land programs are very effective as long as the approach isn't overly bureaucratic.

Why isn't this type of programming being used in all of our correctional facilities?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Earlier on, the government made a statement about on-the-land programs with the Department of Justice. We did have a number of programs and they fell by the wayside because of a number of operational issues. The Department of Justice is going out for expressions of interest to have these programs come into effect. I did discuss it with the office of the Auditor General as part of the rehabilitation. As you know, having inmates go out on the land has to be a voluntary situation. We can't force them to go on on-the-land programs. That is part of the issue as well.

MR. NADLI: I have heard the Department of Justice on the south side of the lake has had good results out of Hay River, South Slave and the Deh Cho regions by using a team-based approach to community reintegration.

Will the government be expanding this type of program across the territory so that all offenders have an appropriate degree of support when they return to their communities?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: All inmates sentenced, remands and intermittents, should receive case management assessments. We agree and we will be working to ensure case plans to guide inmate rehabilitations are developed for all inmates including release dates. Plans will need to be documented, monitored and adjusted as necessary. This is what the Auditor General has recommended and we have agreed and we accept all of his recommendations.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier commit to this House that as the Department of Justice works towards 2016, in terms of unveiling the framework to at least address the concerns that were raised by the Auditor General's report, that he will keep this side of the House informed and updated as to the progress?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: On behalf of the government, we will commit to ensuring we do that as we do all of this important work to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 752-17(5):
WEAVING OUR WISDOM –
TERRITORIAL WELLNESS GATHERING

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to follow up with some questions on my Member's statement earlier today about the Weaving Our Wisdom Gathering that's actually going to be finishing up a little later on today. I registered online to get the live feed and it was great. It was really simple. The feed came up and I was able to just look at it for a bit.

I would like to ask the Minister if he has the number of individuals from across the Northwest Territories of how many people have logged on to that site, just to get an idea of how many people we're actually reaching on this gathering. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have issued 287 name tags at the gathering itself over the three days, and we have had the video link available to residents, and I'm glad the Member did have a chance to go online. I just want to take a second to applaud our staff who have thought really outside of the box on this one and have come up with an opportunity to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to hear these discussions and hear these presentations from these incredible speakers.

Unfortunately, at this time I don't have those numbers because, frankly, we're still in the middle of the conference, or the gathering, and we will be collecting that data as best we can. I think this is a huge opportunity for us to look at how we can do conferences of this nature in the future, and we will absolutely be sharing that information with the Member and the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: Another thing that I did was I signed up for the archives. In a few days all these presentations will be put into an archive and be on the website, and that was a very simple task as well. So in a few days I'm going to get an e-mail saying that all the presentations, obviously because we're sitting in meetings I was unable to attend, so I'll be getting notified in a few days that presentations are up and running so I'll be able to take a look into it.

Has the Minister done this type of video archiving with any other projects of this nature in terms of this videoconferencing?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: This is the first time the Department of Health and Social Services has done this particular thing with respect to videoconferencing as well as the archiving. Once

again, I have got to take this opportunity to applaud the staff for thinking outside the box and finding ways to make sure that all the information is available to all the residents of the Northwest Territories, and it is certainly something that we will explore and consider doing again. It's something that, once we've had an opportunity to analyze this, other departments may also consider using this opportunity, this tool, in the future as well. Anything to get the information out there is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: I know the Minister also travels and looks at best practices around the country. Would this be something that the Minister might be able to incorporate into looking at when he goes travelling to other countries, or even within Canada, and listens to presentations, that this is something that might be utilized based on the fact that they get buy-in from the organization to film a presentation and put it on our website? Is this something that he might look to explore to allow all Members who can't go to those meetings to see what's being talked about and addressed?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's certainly an interesting idea. I hadn't thought of it previously, but it's something worth consideration. I don't personally travel to a lot of conferences. Most of my travels are here in the Northwest Territories, into communities. But I do have a number of staff who attend conferences around the country and sometimes internationally, and getting their presentations, and presentations they see could be quite valuable, assuming, as the Member said, we could get the legal rights to do so. But I'll have the department look at that as well.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister alluded to 287 name tags earlier, and if you put a travel tag, accommodations, per diems to 287 people, that's a lot of money. I'm really curious about the amount of money that comes in, not the amount of money but the numbers we're going to get for people who have logged on to this live webcast.

I'd like to ask the Minister, if there's going to be a report, if he's going to share with committee and look at how we can utilize these kind of presentations even more, through a live webcast, because you're actually able to use real time and ask questions on the website. It's going to prove to save a lot of money for this government. It's really amazing.

Can I ask the Minister, when can Members look forward to seeing a report on this? I know the conference is still going on, but can I ask the Minister when we might see that?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I would like to use this opportunity to applaud and thank the Government of Canada, Health Canada, who actually has participated and been a partner in the delivery of this and has provided most of the funds to run this conference. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the NWTAC who helped us to coordinate this gathering, to make sure that representatives from all communities in the Northwest Territories were there. We've had a great team on this project that have come above and beyond to put it together, and of course, a final report will be prepared and produced once the conclusion of the gathering. I would imagine it would take a couple of months for us to pull together all the information and put it in a format that's readable and useable. But absolutely, that document will be tabled in this House. It will be shared with Members and it will be online for everybody to see. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 753-17(5):
SUPPORTS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister for Health and Social Services, in recognition of the Social Workers Month here. I would like to ask, recognizing the importance of the work that these workers do, what supports are in place? Frequently our workers, I know, deal with sad and sometimes traumatic situations, and that can take quite a toll on people and families, and people might even take it home and the consequences can disperse out. So, what supports do we have in place for this particular group of workers who have their own unique issues and require our support to sustain their work? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree, the social workers do incredible work and often they're dealing with very difficult, traumatic situations. In the Department of Health and Social Services as well as in the eight health and social services authorities that we currently have in place, what happens often, and what is organized, is debriefing after very traumatic situations with other professionals. We also make counsellors, other social workers available should an individual be having some difficulty with a situation that they're in. The Department of Human Resources also provides the Employee and Family Assistance Program which is another avenue for individuals. So, we debrief regularly, we have counselling available and we have EFAP available, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for that response. What is the need? Are there a lot of requests from these

workers for time off and that sort of thing? What is the sense that the department is meeting the needs of social workers? Is there any feedback or evaluation going on with respect to this? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Social workers are a protected title here in the Northwest Territories, a specific profession, and they have an association and we meet with them. The department meets with them as they meet with RNANTNU from time to time, as necessary. But I haven't got those numbers the Member's curious about. I will certainly ask the department to pull that information together to give us a bit of a sense.

I have talked to a number of social workers throughout the territory myself during my travels, and many of them have articulated some of these challenges that the Member is bringing up and have articulated that, you know, they're thankful for things like EFAP debriefing and counselling being made available.

As far as the numbers, I'm just not aware of those at this time and I will commit to getting the number to the Member.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister there. Is there an attempt to move social workers around or to place them in cultural situations where they're comfortable, that sort of thing? Do they receive the training for cross-cultural situations? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. The Department of Human Resources actually has cultural competency training that they provide and make available to all residents, or all employees of the GNWT. So in addition to that, the Department of Health and Social Services is currently working on cultural competencies that we can use within the health care system, recognizing that there are a lot of challenges in that area and that's not just going to be available to social workers. That's going to be available to doctors, nurses, all allied health professionals as well as social providers.

As far as moving individuals around, it's a little bit more complicated in a multi-authority system. It will be something that we'll be able to do with a little bit greater flexibility as we move forward with health transition into a single, combined, unified system focused on meeting the needs of all residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering if there are recognition programs that the government supports. Most communities know who their really successful social workers are, and a mechanism to support social workers would be great through some recognition or awards like that. Do we have that sort of support in place? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In the GNWT we have long service awards and those types of things, but as far as a recognition that the Member is talking about, and I may have missed the point, but it sounds something like the teachers Hall of Fame or something along those lines to recognize our nurses who have made a real contribution, or to recognize social workers who have made a significant contribution over time. We don't have those. Nobody has brought it up to me until just now. I think it's a brilliant idea and I think it's worth the exploration. It may take a little time to get there, but it's certainly something that I think is worth some exploration because our nurses, our doctors and our social workers are doing amazing things here in this territory and it's important to continually recognize our great staff. So, thanks to the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 754-17(5):
SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue my questions with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Last week we celebrated and gave attention to anti-bullying here and I want to continue my questions around the fact that the Minister, almost two years ago, said legislation alone was not enough to deal with bullying. He did indicate back then that the territorial Safe Schools Action Plan to address bullying and regulation policies and procedures were to be created by his department. So, I'd like to continue that line of questioning.

With schools facing budget and human resource challenges and trying to implement safe school guidelines, WSCC standards of safety and overarching government occupational health and safety expectations, can the Minister indicate how the department is helping school boards, DEAs and DEC's meet all those demands? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the safety of our school children, that is a priority of this department, working with the DEAs and DEC's. The Safe and Caring Schools Initiative, obviously supporting schools and teachers in developing tools needed to create such an environment and we do also have a working group. It deals with all the partners, the parents, the educators, administrators in our school system. Even at the DEAs and DEC's and they also work very closely with all the education authorities to make sure that they're complying with all the safety rules and regulations.

So it is a factor that's in place and we're fully supportive of that. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Parents play a key role in accountability when it comes to bullying. Can the Minister indicate how does his department ensure the accountability of parents preventing bullying in our schools? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. As I stated, the parents are also engaged when it comes to bullying because they need to be involved, they need to be engaged and there is a standard process that's in play with the DEC's and DEAs. Whenever there is a bullying incident that happens, we involve the parents, we involve the educators, the community members, even the community leaders to that matter.

So those are just some of the processes that we are currently following, and we provide resources to the school boards as well. Some of the resources, obviously, are Creating a Safe School Environment, some of the pamphlets...(inaudible)...for online training. So, those are just some of the key aspects of how we want to deal with the bullying in our school system. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Bullying takes on many different forms. Can the Minister elaborate what his department has done to deal with bullying involving students with special needs and gender specific situations? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We've worked with various experts throughout Canada, even internationally, working with a national expert such as Ray Hughes, very known as an expert in this field. Part of the programming that is taught in our schools is to help young people to learn and also work with others within the school system to deal with the bullying and to address issues that are also related to part of the gender issues. So, we work very closely with those experts in their fields. Mahsi.

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

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the last recommendations of standing committee on bullying, back in 2013, was to have the department to immediately, and I stress the word "immediately" work on a broader anti-bullying legislation that addresses bullying in general society and cyberspace. Basically beyond the classroom.

Can the Minister give us a progress update to this committee recommendation? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. The new legislation has amended sections 34 and 45 of the Education Act to require educators and school administrators to strengthen policies and procedures, a law that involves bullying and safety. That's the very reason why we've developed a Safe and Caring Schools Initiative and having the DEAs

and DEC's having their own protocols, having their own policies and regulations to deal with their discipline as well.

When it comes to bullying, it is a priority of this government and we continue to push that forward with all the education bodies across the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 755-17(5):
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I was having a chat with my 25-year-old daughter the other day and not that she was a top student, but she was bemoaning the fact to me that she's 25 years old, she's a young adult, she's living here in the North and she doesn't know much about savings, budgeting, credit, banking and that she feels that she should have maybe learned something about that in school. Now, I know there's a role for parents to play, too, in teaching these things, but I'd like seriously to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, is there anything in the curriculum of our high schools where students learn about financial management? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This has been brought to our attention from some of the parents who want their child to be fully aware of financial awareness. Based on that, we've been dealing with our DEAs and DEC's. If they haven't provided an actual curriculum relating to the fiscal outlook, the financial management, time management, those are areas that we talk about, CALM class. We have some of the communities that do the program delivery of CALM class, a career and life choice management course that's also taught in our high schools. So that is an area that students can take on courses to learn life management. So, we know that we need to do more and I'm open to some ideas on how to deal with those issues. Mahsi.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. I just think that we have a really golden opportunity with our young people in the school system to learn something about this, because it is a life skill that is extremely important and will stand them in good stead as they go out into the work world.

Has the Department of Education ever considered inviting banking institutions into the school where they could also provide some information and perhaps help students with something like setting up bank accounts? I know there aren't banks in

every community; but there is online banking and most kids these days have access to the Internet.

So I'd like to ask the Minister, have they ever thought about involving any of the major banks in coming and doing some awareness and some teaching and perhaps even helping young people set up accounts? Thank you..

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Obviously this is an excellent idea. Even when I was in high school, we had different professionals coming to the community, for example, bankers, talking about accounting. This is an area I need to share with the DEAs and DEC's. It's their school, as well, and I need to work with them. I'm sure they will be more than receptive because they are always looking for ideas on how we can have educational awareness around accounting, around banking. I'm glad the Member has given us some ideas that we can generate within DEC's and DEAs. I will be bringing that to their attention. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 756-17(5):
REGULATING THE
MOREL MUSHROOM HARVEST

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are following up on my Member's statement for Minister Miltenberger, Environment and Natural Resources. It is anticipated by mushroom experts that this summer's harvest of morels will be the largest ever, this spring's harvest. The industry that last year brought in a few million dollars is set to bring in exponentially more and perhaps for years to come.

Can the Minister indicate what plans are underway to capitalize on this renewable resource harvesting opportunity? Mahsi.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are going to build off of the work that was done last summer as we started to mobilize to be more efficient, organized and coordinated with morel mushrooms. Just today we have a legislative proposal to make a modest amendment to the Forestry Act that would give authority to do the work and address some of the issues that the Member raised. That will be making its way to committee. If there is willingness, we can get that operational by May. The Member raises good points about timeliness. We are also at work in terms of policies and regulations, one way or the other that will go into place, but it's getting them out in time. So that work between ENR and ITI and with MACA is underway. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. It sounds like he heard my Member's statement. I appreciate that. We have a challenge here and I'm just wondering what the Minister's early thinking is on handling it, given that these things need to be in place in the communities, available in the communities and so on. Thank goodness it's an electronic age, I guess. By May 1st, that's about seven weeks from now. Is this doable, and if it isn't, how will the Minister handle that situation? Will there be a phase-in period or something? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, we believe it's doable. Whether it will be fully operational with everything that needs to be done is an issue of some debate, but we do commit to getting the work done. We will be better than last year. If we get that legislative change through, it will allow us to really structure ourselves over the next few years as we rewrite the Forestry Act in its entirety. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I know the Minister is aware that we are in a vulnerable situation. We don't want to undermine the industry from the very start, so I'm sure there will be sensitivity to that. While most of our mushrooms are world-class, clean and safe to eat, some areas that have been tested showed high concentrations of contaminants. Areas near Tibbitt Lake and west of Yellowknife, for example, may not be safe. World markets will test morels from the NWT as they have done in the past. Findings of contaminated morels would make it hard for the mushroom industry to rebound from the negative publicity. This has happened in areas of the world too.

Does the Minister have any plans in place to test mushrooms and soil and to restrict harvesting in areas that could present a health hazard? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: My understanding is that, in fact, not a lot of jurisdictions set themselves up to regulate the mushroom market after fires. So we are looking at some places like, I believe, Alaska, but there aren't a lot of best practices out there.

The issue of contaminated soils, I have to commit to the Member that I will follow up with the department to see what the intention is in the areas around Yellowknife that the Members have highlighted so that we, in fact, avoid issues if we're going to get into this in a big way of having one batch of contaminated mushrooms possibly ruin the market for the whole Northwest Territories.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that commitment. In fact, it's because jurisdictions are not doing the testing that the

industry now does it because they're liable, of course.

Let me see if I can get this right. There is a portable, high quality X-ray fluorescence, XRF, high count rate DELTA Premium heavy metal analyzer available that can answer the Minister's needs. It provides a response on what the contaminant load is within a few minutes at 95 percent accuracy. It's available from Vancouver for \$40,000 U.S., and it takes four to six weeks to be on site. Now, we would need this in the order of seven to nine weeks from today.

I'm wondering if the Minister would also commit to looking into that modest investment for this potentially very large industry and resolving things just like that.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: If the Member can rattle off that name without looking at his paper again, I will commit to looking at that. All joking aside, I will add that to the list that I have to follow up on with the department. Though, I would be interested to see if the Member could actually rattle that name off without looking at that paper.

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

QUESTION 757-17(5):
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW
MENTAL HEALTH ACT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I wanted to ask some questions about the Mental Health Act. We have on our Order Paper the first reading of a bill that's coming up. We've also been hearing from the Minister for quite some time that the Mental Health Act is under revision. It seems to be an extremely long time coming. Certainly, the standing committee has been looking at it for over a year. I'd like to ask the Minister, first of all, to give us an update on where the development of a new Mental Health Act is at this point.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current Mental Health Act is quite old, quite outdated. It's truly not meeting the needs of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Moving forward with the Mental Health Act, the department released a discussion paper in November 2013 for review by residents of the Northwest Territories. From May to June 2014, the department consulted with key stakeholders on the proposed Mental Health Act as well as the discussion papers. In November we received the LP back from committee which gave us the ability to move forward and develop drafting instructions with the input of committee, because they had an opportunity to

review the discussion papers and hear much of the input. Once we got the input from the Members through the LP, we prepared the drafting instructions. Those drafting instructions have gone to the Department of Justice and the legislation is currently being drafted.

This is a massive piece of legislation. It's not an amendment; it's a brand new piece of legislation. As we are moving forward we had said and indicated that this will take 10 to 12 months, once we get the LP back, to actually go through the drafting process. This is a priority of mine; this is a priority of government; and I know it's a priority of Members. We're committed to trying and working really hard to have that legislation ready for the May/June sitting.

Right now, I have regular conversations with the Department of Health, and I've got commitment from the Minister of Justice to commit resources to this project to get it done by May/June. But we're working on a tight deadline and we're trying to get 10 to 12 months' worth of work done in six months. I'm optimistic that we can do it and we're hopeful to have the legislation in front of this House in May/June. There is a chance it may not happen, and if it doesn't happen, I've committed to tabling the document in the life of this Assembly so that other people can start looking at it and reviewing it in anticipation of passing it in the 18th Assembly. But my preference, the preference of Cabinet is to get that piece of legislation done for the May/June sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that long answer, good answer. The Minister mentioned that drafting instructions were given to the legislative drafters. One of the major concerns that I think all of us have with regards to certain patients is that they go off their meds and they create dangerous situations for themselves and for other people, family, public and so on.

I'd like to know from the Minister what was in the drafting instructions that he gave to the legislative drafters that will look at that problem in terms of clients and patients who create dangers for themselves and the public. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, in looking at what other jurisdictions are doing to address this exact problem, there are actually models out there where we can do this exact thing. Individuals who have come in for psychiatric assessment or a diagnosis who are on medications, who are in our system, we can work with them to sign that release document that will allow them to leave our facilities, on the understanding that they will take the medications on a regular basis. If they don't, then we can look at working with them to bring them back in the facility.

It's a complicated piece of legislation. It's going to take a lot of work, and it's going to take a complete

rewrite to get us to the position where we'll be able to do that. There is no simple fix for this. This takes a massive undertaking to make this happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Thanks again to the Minister. Another concern that arises when you talk about someone who is going to be a danger and they are then admitted, whether they want to be or not, into a psychiatric facility, there's a certain human rights issue there, people being held potentially against their will.

How will the new act address that? How will it look at having people admitted who don't necessarily want to be but need to be? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There's always going to be a high standard required, both medically and legally, to involuntarily commit an individual. Our current act is really vague in this particular area, and the drafting instructions are to look at the other jurisdictions and find ways to enhance that, recognizing that we do have to be incredibly careful so that we don't infringe on individuals' human rights.

But there is precedent out there. There is legislation out there. We're looking at making a complete change to our Mental Health Act.

As I said, barring any unforeseen complications, we're hoping and anticipating we'll get that in May/June. If we can't, we'll certainly be tabling it in the fall sitting, as I've indicated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a question as to process. If the bill is not ready for tabling in May/June, it then will not be able to go through our process before the Assembly is dissolved and an election takes place. So when the Minister says he's tabling, maybe he could explain what that means.

What is he tabling and what does that mean in terms of a bill coming forward and actually processing through and getting passed at some point? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we've always been fairly clear that the legislation is going to take about 10 to 12 months to conclude, once we have received the LP back. The LP came back in November, which leaves us about just over six months to May/June. Recognizing the importance of this legislation, the Minister of Justice has committed staff and I've committed staff to make this happen for May/June. So that's six months' work in 10 months.

We're working like crazy to make this happen, and it's our hope that it will happen. We're intending to actually introduce the bill for first reading and

second reading, not table it in May/June, but first reading and second reading in May/June.

If, unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances like we have to rewrite a whole lot of regulations or one of our staff members happens to get ill and isn't able to continue with the file, we may not finish in May/June. If that happens, our intention is to table the document in the August or fall sitting, which will make this a public document so all residents in the Northwest Territories will be able to review, read and discuss this legislation. Discussion can begin at that point. At which point, early in the 18th Assembly, whoever the Minister of Health and Social Services happens to be, he can bring that forward at the first sitting for first reading and second reading and then begin the normal 120-day process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Time for oral questions has expired. Colleagues, before I go on, I would like to welcome my daughter Kristin Jacobson to the Assembly today.

Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 213-17(5):
NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION TRUST FUND
ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

TABLED DOCUMENT 214-17(5):
WASTE REDUCTION AND
RECOVERY PROGRAM
2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I wish to table the following two documents, entitled "Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund Annual Report 2013-2014" and "Waste Reduction and Recovery Program 2013-2014 Annual Report." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 15, notices of motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 38-17(5):
ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON TRANSITION MATTERS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, March 9, 2015, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that, pursuant to Rule 88(1), the

Legislative Assembly hereby establish a Special Committee on Transition Matters;

And further, that the following Members be named to the special committee:

- the Member for Sahtu, Mr. Norman Yakeleya, chair;
- the Member for Hay River North, Mr. Robert Bouchard;
- the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Alfred Moses;
- the Member for Kam Lake, Mr. David Ramsay;
- the Member for Range Lake, Mr. Daryl Dolynny; and
- the Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Tom Beaulieu;

And furthermore, that the Special Committee on Transition Matters be established by the terms of reference, identified as Tabled Document 211-17(5). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 12, Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act; Bill 36, Health and Social Services Professions Act; Committee Report 10-17(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2013-2014 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories; Tabled Document 188-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2015-2016; Tabled Document 205-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2014-2015; Tabled Document 206-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015; and Tabled Document 207-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2015-2016, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Good afternoon, Members. I'd 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 wish to continue with Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016, continuing with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and, time permitting, Public Works and Services. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, committee. I will call Committee of the Whole back to order. I will go to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty. Do you have witnesses to bring into the House?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Mr. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses to the House for the record?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. To my left I have the deputy minister of ECE, Gabriela Eggenhofer; to my immediate right is Olin Lovely, assistant deputy minister of corporate services within ECE; and Dana Heide, associate deputy minister with ECE.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Committee, we are on page 65, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$244.200 million. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to the department again. I have two areas of questioning regarding this activity summary. First is the culture and heritage main estimates of the \$7.1 million. I noticed we did approve, a few pages back, the care and storage of Government of Nunavut museum and archive collection for a little over \$1 million. Can I get an idea of what the cost is for the Prince of Wales Museum? Is it the \$7.1 million and are we minus the revenues we are getting from Nunavut? So, is it costing us \$6 million or is there another type of math that I should be looking at? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Museum had an agreement with Nunavut to store their archives. There has been a decrease in funding. I will get my deputy to elaborate more in detail. There are some agreements in place as well. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Deputy Minister Eggenhofer.

MS. EGGENHOFER: The department is still storing the Nunavut artifacts for this year. The MOU expires next year and we are in negotiations with Nunavut. We have advised them that this is not a long-term solution and they need to make their own

provisions for storing their own artifacts. A working group has now been established between Nunavut and GNWT to look at transferring the Nunavut treasures back to Nunavut. Our Minister has written to the Nunavut Minister advising them, as well, that this can no longer continue, but I can advise that the \$1 million that we do receive from Nunavut covers the cost of storing their works in our museum and in our warehouse, actually. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. I do appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that this is not a long-term solution and I am pleased knowing that. I'm also pleased knowing that the Regular Members did play a key role years ago and making aware that there are archives being stored and there was no return. So we were appreciative of the fact that the government negotiates its restitution or at least some compensation for doing those activities.

That being said, the question of the math, what is the cost of operations of the NWT archives operation at the Prince of Wales? Again, we are seeing \$7.1 million and we have revenue from the Nunavut government of over \$1 million. Is this offsetting each other or is it costing us \$7 million at the end of the day to operate that museum? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Mr. Lovely.

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The cost of running the museum, including the storage of the Nunavut artifacts, is the \$7 million that you are seeing right here. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess in essence, \$7.1 million is what it's costing us and we have an offset of a little over \$1 million. So it's costing the taxpayer about \$6 million. If and when the Nunavut archives are removed from this facility, do we have enough artifacts that are also in storage to meet the needs or at least to put into exhibit or at least curator exhibits? Maybe just a brief description of how many of our archives, NWT archives, are also put to the side as a result, or is this just involving storage behind the scenes and not really being showcased as exhibits?

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the museum presently there is a storage facility that is being used by both NWT artifacts and archives as well as Nunavut ones. When the Nunavut artifacts leave the facility, there will be more breathing room for NWT artifacts and they are

being circulated through exhibits at all times, so we will have easier access to our own artifacts.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it's safe to say that at a point in time in the future that the museum itself will have a lot more space to deal with more of its own artifacts. Would there be the probability that we could also, with the new space, if and when that indeed comes to fruition, this new space can be used for artwork, local artists showcasing some of our unique culture that may not have had the opportunity to have that type of exposure? Is there a possibility of the department opening up the doors to more local artists to have an opportunity to show their wares?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Absolutely. We are currently doing that already with some of the local artists from across the Northwest Territories. We want to showcase each of the regions as much as we possibly can in the hallway of the museum, and even go further. If we have more additional spaces then we'll take advantage of that as well.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: That's good to hear. I think we have a lot of talent here in the Northwest Territories and the space is going to be always at a premium within our four walls, and I'm very appreciative of the fact we're going to open some doors to some of our incredibly talented artists.

I'd like to continue on with my questions on this activity but changing gears ever so slightly. This category contains compliance with the NWT Child Daycare Act as well as the child daycare standards or regulations. As the department will remember, this committee felt very passionately about wanting to put more money into daycare facilities last year. So much so that we wanted to put an extra \$500,000 to augment existing daycare facilities. This committee felt that there was a need in the Northwest Territories. Of course, at that point in time it didn't come to fruition through the process. That being said, I still want to highlight the fact that there is still a dire need in our communities to have those types of daycare supports. Many of us have talked to many of the key stakeholders in the communities around their family resource centres. These would be perfect vehicles. We already have a lot of infrastructure in place that is not being used 100 percent.

To the question of augmenting daycare facilities, what are the plans for this department to enhance that service and, if so, can it share some of those highlights for this upcoming budget year?

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are two actions in the Early Childhood Action Plan, action 14 and 15, which I believe speak to your issues. Action 14 looks at developing a policy around public sector dollars and private sector infrastructure such as daycares. I believe that the departments of Executive and Finance have developed a draft of that policy and I believe committee is reviewing that policy. That will, hopefully, once approved, give us some guidance as to when the government would be prepared and what conditions to make public sector investments in such things as daycare facilities.

Action number 15 includes a review of all the subsidies and assistance that we currently provide to licenced daycares and day homes, and that review is wrapping up at the end of this month, March 2015. We will look to what kind of improvements we will have to make in order to provide a better governance regime in terms of how we provide funding, the amount of funding we provide, trying to cut red tape and so forth. I look forward to getting that review completed in three weeks.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the deputy minister's reply on that. To the subject of daycares, daycare operators in general and the communication and interaction with the department. There have been, I guess, some barriers to that in the past, as a Member trying to facilitate a better collaboration with our daycare providers. What is the department prepared to do in this upcoming year to reach out to daycare providers in the Northwest Territories to engage them in a fulsome discussion, talk about their issues, engage with them in terms of what's best for them and best practices? Is there a plan of action that we can share with those of us who have daycare providers in our riding that our department is going to be there for them this year?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, most certainly. The daycare operators have been actively involved, giving us feedback and advice on these recommendations that were brought to our attention, and we want them to be involved along the way, as well, as part of our working partners. There is a communication plan, obviously, being drafted, as well, how can we best approach those stakeholders. We will share what we have on file, what we've developed with the standing committee so they can share with the operators, because we want them on board as well. If we are making changes and additions to what's been highlighted

here as part of recommendations, we need to hear their perspective as well.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to continue on with some questions about daycare from where Mr. Dolynny left off. With regard to the review, it's going to be completed fairly soon, I gather. The end of the month, I think I heard the DM say. I asked some questions of the Minister, I can't remember, within the last couple of weeks, in the House about consultation and what consultation was undertaken for this review. I asked the Minister if operators had been consulted, and I think he advised yes. Then I asked who those operators were. Can I get, from the Minister or the department, an indication of the names of some of the operators that were consulted, because from what I hear, they weren't.

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, everybody was consulted in the review of the early childhood programs. There was a symposium that kicked off the review and invitations were extended to each and every licenced daycare operator and licenced day home as well as Aboriginal Head Start, and we actually had a very good turnout. There were quite a few people from Yellowknife who attended, and I believe a response is written to the Member's earlier request giving you the names of everyone who attended. We did a survey, an online survey. Because of the survey being anonymous, we don't know how many Yellowknife daycare operators answered the survey, but we had a very good turnout. We had over 75, I think, responses to our survey, and we have continuous conversations with them through the reviews, because, of course, we have the early childhood program review going on but also the junior kindergarten review, and they have been contacted directly by those consultants who are undertaking the review.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the deputy minister. I haven't seen the response. If it's been written, it hasn't gotten to my desk yet, so I'll look forward to that.

I wanted to ask a question, as well, with regard to the training that Aurora College does for early childhood educators. I've not managed to figure out exactly the length of the program and I guess the viability of people who are educated under that program if they transfer to another jurisdiction.

My first question would be: What is the length of the Early Childhood Educator Program that we deliver through Aurora College? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. We're just looking for detailed information on the actual delivery through Aurora College. There have been some programs in addition to what we've had before, where we had certification in early childhood programming. Through our southern institution partners, we've also been involved and engaged with developing diploma programming. That's still in the early stages. Those are just some of the discussions that we're currently having. We're just trying to get the most detailed information from the college, what they currently deliver, and we can provide that information to the Members.

MS. BISARO: In the absence of that information, I'm not sure if this question will also be able to be answered. It's my understanding that the program delivered by Aurora College doesn't meet national standards for sure. I don't know if it meets the standards in any other Canadian jurisdiction besides the NWT. If somebody is educated and receives an early childhood diploma or certificate, whatever it is that we produce through Aurora College, how portable is that certificate or that diploma when they go to another jurisdiction, Alberta or Ontario or Quebec for instance? How does our program stack up against other programs across the country, provincially but also nationally? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, obviously we want our Aurora College programming to be adaptable and comparable to southern institutions. That's why it's key to have key partners involved with delivering these core early childhood programs, even through our venues of Aurora College campuses and throughout the Northwest Territories. We've had this discussion. It was brought up in this House, certification diploma programming. That's when we came out with the different initiatives on staff grant money and the scholarships. Based on scholarships, obviously we want to attract those individuals to come back to the North who are taking either diploma or degree programming in early childhood in southern institutions, for them to come back. We're working very closely with the college to identify those key programs, whether they be certification or diploma. We want it to be recognized inter-provincially across Canada, even through my other portfolio as labour market. Even provincial jurisdictions are recognizing those other college programs as well.

We want to deliver a program that's recognizable by other provincial jurisdictions. That's our overall target. I will get my deputy to elaborate a bit more on the dual credit for early childhood studies. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Deputy Minister Eggenhofer.

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Action 13 of the Early Childhood Action Plan also has the creation of a dual credit course for the early childhood certificate. Since February of this year, we actually are running a pilot between the college and the high schools in Yellowknife, whereby high school students interested in early childhood education can take courses both at the high school and at the college. The courses, if they are successfully completed, will be already accredited towards an early childhood certificate degree at the college. We have had very good take-up. I think there are over 20 students who have expressed an interest in Yellowknife to enroll in that course. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to hear that there's an uptake on that dual track or whatever course that you talked about. The Minister, in his response, totally used future tense. We want to be portable. We want to be equal. I'd like to know where we stand right now, whether our early childhood education certificate – I think it's a certificate – whether it equates to any other certificate or diploma or degree elsewhere in the country. If it does not, when are we going to get to the status that the Minister referred to in the future? Thank you.

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The certificate course that the college would be offering would be transferable because they get accredited through southern universities just like the Teacher Education Program.

In respect to the question of when would it be feasible to have our own early childhood diploma courses offered or post-secondary degrees, I think a couple years ago we did the cost-benefit analysis of what it will cost for the college to offer this training program. I believe it came in somewhere around \$750,000 to \$1 million to offer the course. The issue was also to do with not enough people having expressed an interest in taking the course because the wages for early childhood educators are typically quite below what you would make in other professions. Therefore, some of the actions in the Early Childhood Action Plan drive to incent people to get in the profession, and one way of starting that was through the wage subsidy that has been successfully implemented now through the Early Childhood Action Plan as well as starting with the dual credit course to create some interest amongst Northerners to get into early childhood education. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, deputy minister. Next I have Mr. Bromley on the list.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just follow up on a couple of things. On the last series of questions, I think the relevance is we are putting in place early childhood development programs knowing that we don't have a lot of expertise here. The last time I looked, our graduates from ECE programs at Aurora College did not meet federal standards. It sounds like some work was done and we decided we can't afford that. That's unfortunate, but I do appreciate the effort to support, through scholarships, early childhood students who choose to pursue those qualifications through other routes. It would be nice to try and build that here when we can.

Also, on the ALBE programs, I want to reiterate the concerns that Ms. Bisaro had put forward last time we chatted on this page. I think had this been an Auditor General report, then last year they would have been all over this with a second report saying, "What the heck is going on here?" There's been no response. In this case, it was our own Program Review Office that did the analysis in a sort of parallel mode to the Auditor General, and they said we have serious issues here. We don't have a clue what's going on, and four years later we don't see things happening. It's very, very disappointing.

Moving on to the culture and heritage division, I see that they oversee the Aboriginal Languages Secretariat. Is that a new role? How does that work? Typically this has been run by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, our cultural programs, but is this new? How is this working? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is new from what we've heard. When we had the Aboriginal Languages Symposium we heard from various stakeholders and the general public that we need to do something about our language preservation and revitalization. They wanted us to have a system in place similar to the Languages Bureau that we had back in the 1990s. This is a similar set-up where we have an associate director in that position in the past, a director of official languages, and having a couple key staff within the museum to work very closely with the language groups. We also provide funding directly to the language groups to have a coordinator approach. This is a fairly new initiative that we've established. We're at the preliminary stages but we want to make some changes that will benefit the communities. If I missed out on key points, maybe my deputy can elaborate more in detail.

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the Member is right. It is new. What we're trying out is to see if housing the Aboriginal Languages Secretariat together with the people in the museum who work so much around cultural preservation and cultural activity, whether there is going to be some synergies having Aboriginal language together with culture. It was generally quite well received. We're monitoring closely to see if there's a good fit. It could be equally as good a fit to have the secretariat as part of our curriculum development folks because we're also providing language and culture through our schools. There's no real science to it but we thought for the time being let's see if it works.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that response. It's good to learn a little bit about that. I guess I would just ask, are they physically in the museum and is that taking up space and is there a budget allocation to the museum to help support that, or is it more a virtual administration by the museum staff?

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Originally the plan was to have the associate director sit in the museum, but I think there was some feedback we received around the office space encroaching on the space in the museum that was used by the public in order to see maps and stuff. There was a bit of space in the Lahm Ridge Tower, so we moved the secretariat back into the Lahm Ridge Tower and now there is full access of the public to the space in the museum.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the deputy minister for that response. My next question is in the area of early childhood development and learning. I mentioned I was very pleased to see the \$1.24 million investment into this program. I wonder if I could get some specifics on what the intention is with these dollars and confirmation that these are new dollars. So, are these new dollars and where they're going, and maybe I'll just throw out another part to the question on the financial side. I don't see this reflected in the budget. The budget, in fact, has gone down from the revised estimates for the current fiscal year, so I'm just wondering how this fits with that situation. Three parts to that question.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Early Childhood Development Action Plan has \$1.24 million allocated towards that. That was money that

was internally reallocated from other areas within the department. In terms of what we are planning to do this fiscal year, there is some money set aside for EDI data collection and GIS mapping, public campaigns, iPads, senior secondary child development course, the early childhood program review, the early learning framework and integrated play-based curriculum, ECD symposium for daycares, competency-based assessment of early childhood development workers, and development of monitoring, evaluation and accountability plan.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for those details. Of course, I'm horrified to see more iPads out there. I know that's going to hurt us more than it helps us. I still haven't had an explanation. Was this reallocated from inside the early development and learning program? Have they taken the early development and learning program dollars and reallocated them to early development and learning programs?

MR. LOVELY: The \$1.24 million was reallocated from inclusive schooling a number of years ago, and this is, I believe, the third year of the ECD Action Plan.

MR. BROMLEY: When the Minister highlighted this in his opening remarks, this budget proposes an investment of \$1.24 million. These dollars, in fact, were proposed and implemented several years ago. Is that correct?

MR. LOVELY: That is correct. However, it's the continued implementation of the Early Childhood Development Action Plan. As we stated earlier, that's year three of this action plan.

MR. BROMLEY: Just moving on to education operations and development, let's see if I can get through this smoke and mirrors here too. Just on student achievement, obviously, the slight rise. I think the deputy minister had it right. One data point does not make a trend. What other monitoring do we do on student achievement and do we have other sources of information other than the EDI?

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The primary measures are the graduation rates. They are the AAT results, and we are monitoring those closely. What we will have soon, I hope, as part of the ERI Action Plan and the 18 actions that are in this plan, all of which are geared to improve student achievements, that plan will be supported by an overall monitoring and evaluation plan that we are currently working on with the education authorities, because we want to be sure we are identifying the right kind of indicators and the right kind of performance measures, and we can't do that in isolation. We want to do it together with our superintendents to make sure we all are in agreement that we're measuring the right kinds of

things in order to know whether the implementation of the actions under the ERI Action Plan accomplish what they have set out to accomplish.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to follow through on the early childhood but I'll leave that, I think. No, I have to ask the question again. The certificate that we are currently issuing through Aurora College for early childhood educators, how portable is that to other jurisdictions within Canada?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I believe my deputy answered that, where through our partner from the southern institution it is an accredited program that's transferrable to other jurisdictions across Canada. Dealing with universities from southern institutions, they are recognized from other provincial jurisdictions as well. Once we deliver that program here in the Northwest Territories, through our affiliated university partners, they are recognized in other places as well. Mahsi.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really confused. This is a one-year course, I think, or less. I'm not sure. It may be recognized as being part of a course in the South, but can I get a certificate here in the NWT, go to a daycare or an early childhood facility in Alberta, for instance, in Edmonton, and be accepted as a fully trained early childhood educator and meet the requirements of an Alberta certification to be an early childhood educator? Thank you.

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

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the exception of one program that's the forest management program, all the courses that the college offers in the NWT are accredited through southern institutions. I believe that it is the University of Saskatchewan that is accrediting the early childhood certificates and diplomas and any other courses the college may offer from time to time. The question then really is, is the University of Saskatchewan certificate recognized across the country. I would assume it is but I don't want to say with certainty that U of A or Saskatchewan courses accredited through their universities would be recognized across the country. There are always issues with one university not necessarily recognizing the diplomas of other post-secondary institutions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the deputy minister. I appreciate that things are not always equal

between one jurisdiction and the other, but I guess I would have thought that if we are putting on a course, we are certifying people and we are certifying them against the Saskatchewan standard, we would know how that measures up in other places. I would think that would be something that we should know as a department.

I want to change course here and ask a question about junior kindergarten funding. I have struggled to get... I don't know if I'm asking the question incorrectly or whatever, but I'm trying to find out in terms of junior kindergarten funding, whether or not the plan that was outlined by the Premier last fall is still going to go ahead. That was a three-year plan for funding junior kindergarten. Year one was certain funds deleted from education authorities' budgets. Year two, some more funds from certain education authorities' budgets. Some got it back if they had JK. Then, year three, the same thing all over again.

In year one education authorities had some funds removed. JK was put in place in 22 or 23 communities. We have now put a stop to that. In school year '15-16, I am presuming that we will have, from what the Minister told us a few days ago, 18 or 19 schools providing junior kindergarten. My question is whether or not there is any reduction to education authority budgets to fund junior kindergarten for the '15-16 school year. Thank you.

MS. EGGENHOFER: Yes, there will be for the remaining this year and next year. We are using the same funding approach that was initially conceived to roll out junior kindergarten. The cost of junior kindergarten will go down. However, because we're going from 23 communities to 19, eventually 18 communities, the cost we're estimating is going to be reduced from about \$1.8 million to \$1.3 million. That \$1.3 million will be divided amongst the education authorities in the same way as was initially conceived.

We were able to recoup some funding, \$73,400, from going from 23 communities to 19 communities. That funding was given back to the education authorities that did contribute to the cost of junior kindergarten. Also, part of that agreement from October of last year was that the funding approach adhered to the guarantee of the 16 to one PTR. Yellowknife District No. 1 just recently benefitted from that funding approach and was provided with \$225,000 extra because they slightly exceeded their 16 to one PTR. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: I'm really struggling with this. If we take Yellowknife Education District No. 1, for instance, I believe it was \$450,000 that they had their budget reduced by last year, and you're now telling me that they're going to again get a reduction in the '15-16 school year. We're not increasing the JK Program. The money that was collected from the reductions in the education authorities for the

first year of implementation of junior kindergarten, the '14-15 school year, that money you already have. It's in your base now because you're not giving it out to the education authorities. So why is it that the education authorities have to be reduced again? There's no additional cost to JK in the '15-16 year. Why are we charging the education authority, so to speak, more money when there's presumably no bigger cost? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Again, when the decision was made October 30, 2014, it was decided that we would continue with rolling out of junior kindergarten in 19 communities, based on the feedback that we received, and 18 the following year, not to proceed with the second and third phases and to continue with re-profiled funds from education councils. That was the decision that we went with.

Last year, 2014-15, it cost us approximately \$1.8 million. In 2015-16 it will be approximately \$1.3 million. That was the decision that was made by our government to move forward. That is what we're doing, unless my ADM has a bit of detailed information. By all means, Mr. Lovely can answer that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Lovely.

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Each year the education authorities' budgets are determined by the number of students that they have in their classrooms, so each budget is not guaranteed for the next year. When we implement year two of junior kindergarten, we're going to have to reallocate from those authorities the \$1.3 million. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Maybe I need it to be written down. I don't understand. I don't know how to try again.

I understand that education authorities are funded by pupils. In the 2014-15 year they were funded by pupils and then they were reduced \$400,000. Are you telling me that they're going to be funded to the max by pupils in '15-16 and again be reduced by \$400,000? Except for enrollment, is it going to be an equal amount of funding in '14-15 for the education authorities as it will be in '15-16? Thank you.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The enrolment figures are the basis for calculating the budgets. Year one of junior kindergarten, we had to provide \$1.8 million from all the authorities to provide JK in those communities that were offering

the program. That \$1.8 million goes towards funding the costs in year one only. The cost in year two are going down because there are fewer communities offering the program, and those costs have to come from the other authorities as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Lovely. Next I have on my list is Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to take a break from junior kindergarten. I'll let the department take a rest.

Mr. Chair, I know the Minister is deeply passionate about Aboriginal language, especially getting Aboriginal language programming in the communities. He spoke very passionately last week, actually this week on CKLB. I myself have been equally passionate about trying to aid an organization that has been saddled with a number of old debts and has been dealing with aging infrastructure, aging transmitters and, quite frankly, very stagnant in Heritage Canada funding and also funding from the GNWT, but to a lesser degree, through our community broadcasting grants.

The Minister indicated that there has been some recent activity in the last week or so with respect to the Native Communications Society and its executive director. I'm asking, at this time, if the Minister can provide some clarity as to where this radio station stands, and will we expect to potentially hear this radio come back on the air in some form or fashion in the very near future. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. When I spoke about it last week, I did indicate that I had met with the chair of the NCS that looks after CKLB. It was made clear that obviously both he and I want CKLB back online because it is the voice of the North.

My department has been contributing, for a number of years now, our portion of \$202,000. We'll continue to do that. That's our commitment. Obviously, through the federal government there is approximately \$464,000 that goes to the CKLB. There have been some challenges, obviously, on the reporting mechanism.

I did meet with Shelly Glover, as I indicated last week. This is very important that we need to resolve this issue, once and for all, how to best deal with the next step. The next step, I'm hoping that the federal Minister will be receptive to us taking the funding over from the federal government so we can work directly with NCS and CKLB. That's where it's at right now.

As the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, we will continue to deliver our

contribution. I believe the chair has stated that they're in the process of discussing amongst the board to see if we could offer some sort of CKLB broadcasting to some degree. Probably not full-fledged at this point, but those are discussions that they are currently having.

We've been in constant contact with them and we will continue to do so. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing from the Minister. I strongly know he is committed and passionate about wanting to get this back on the air, and I'm pleased to hear that the funding model might come under the one-roof model which would be administered through the GNWT.

But there are still some key areas of operational challenges that CKLB is still facing. The first one is the ongoing debt that this organization has been saddled with for so long. This debt is an albatross around its neck which prevents it from getting to the next level as a business entity.

What opportunities are there for this organization to deal with that debt moving forward?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: When I met with CKLB and the NCS chair, I offered, from my department, a financial accountant to deal with their bookkeeping challenges, their debt load that we're aware of. So, the offer is on the table with the board chair and also to deal with the board members. It is at their discretion if they want to take advantage of that, but we offered that. We are offering as much support as we possibly can, as a department, to the organization because we want them to be back up and running. That's what we're offering at this point. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm encouraged to hear that we're providing that financial management support, and hopefully CKLB can see that as reaching out by this government and I strongly encourage it to take advantage of it.

That being said, the so-called 600-some thousand dollars of programming dollars isn't enough to keep the doors open per se. I mean, that's just a smidgen of the amount that's required to pay wages, operational costs and everything. One of huge undertakings that CKLB is facing today, and has faced for probably over 10 or 15 years, is its community transmitters are in dire need of replacement. As I referenced once, not that long ago, I refer to them as a Timex watch in a digital age, and I meant that. Because we have to not only look at providing some funding, we have to look at how we can help with upgrades or at least open doors to investment dollars or investors who come forward to help bring those much needed dollars to make those upgrades to electronics and equipment. So, to the question, knowing full well that this is another hurdle in the success of this radio station,

what is the government prepared to do, or doing, to look at this dated equipment? Even if you throw money at this, this is a freight train. If you don't deal with this equipment in due course, this organization is going to be facing the same problem.

So, to the question of aged equipment, what is this government prepared to do or are doing currently? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Madam Chair, since we've been in discussion with CKLB, capital infrastructure has been brought to our attention on numerous occasions. Obviously the federal government plays a key part in this.

My department, obviously, provided support. So the organization can submit a contribution proposal to CanNor. We're providing support at that level, even as far as developing a business case proposal to be submitted to CanNor. That's what my department is offering, as much support to deal with those matters at the federal level. We're behind CKLB when we're speaking to the federal government. When I met with Shelly Glover, Minister responsible for Canadian Heritage, in January, that was the same message I reiterated, that the capital is a challenge to CKLB, so she is fully aware of it. The CanNor is her counterpart, Leona Aglukkaq. We've been dealing with those Ministers as well. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

MR. DOLYNNY: All I know is that as of July 31, 2014, programming ceased. There are just a minimal amount of updates to the website and some sponsorship messaging that continues to go on this radio station.

When will the department, in conjunction... It sounds like we're involved with the federal department, as well, as well as NCS itself. At what point in time will we be able to see something publicly come forward with a plan with a timeline and with an investing model so that the public can be reassured, and our Aboriginal stakeholders and our communities will be reassured that we're going to see this radio station back on the air in its rightful place? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Those are questions that I had with the board chair. What kind of resources do they need to be back up and running? Obviously, he needs to sit down with his board and highlight those key areas of what it would require to establish CKLB online again. At the end of the day, it's the federal government that's the process we have to work with, but we're doing what we can as a department while we're waiting for the federal government to push that forward.

So, I met with the board chair and also with the board to decide on the next steps. Again, financial accountant, we offered that, we offered proposal writing as well. So we're doing the best we can to

support NCS and CKLB and I told the board chair that I'd like to meet with him again as a follow-up. So there's that constant contact that we've established. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Page 65, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$244.200 million. Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to my colleague for that reprieve. I'd like to get back into it just for one moment to see if I can penetrate the finances, which I'm sure are my shortcomings, not the Ministers.

Just to follow up on the last response with regard to the board funding, I understand that the reduction would be less this coming year than in the current one. Does the thing return to zero every year, sort of zero-based funding? In other words, it's not cumulative and the funding reduction will actually be less this year or this coming year than last from the original amount at the beginning of this fiscal year. Am I understanding that correctly, if I said it at all clearly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lovely.

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is somewhat correct. Each year we have to identify how many students are going to be enrolled throughout the entire school system. Each school is then provided an allocation based on the FTEs. So let's say Sir John is provided \$3 million based on having 250 students and that is based on a PTR ratio, I can't recall the number right now. We will then take the number of students that are in junior kindergarten and determine the costs associated with that and allocate it out to each of the schools or authorities and then that funding that is originally calculated based on a PTR is then reduced by the amount of the cost of the junior kindergarten. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Lovely. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess the significant thing to me is that the starting place, the amount per student doesn't change each year. So they start over again with a clean slate. So I appreciate that explanation. I think I'm getting there. I'm starting to get there, I think, according to the Minister's staff.

I just had a question on the education renewal. I heard in a response yesterday that the education renewal includes a number of initiatives, which are one or two-year pilots, and I heard that many education renewal initiatives are one or two-year pilots. Can I get an idea of what those pilots are? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lafferty

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Part of the pilots that I referred to before, there are a couple of initiatives that we're undertaking. Elders in school and also resiliency programming. We wanted to test pilot that into some of the small, isolated communities. One of them, obviously, is Ndilo, and supporting self-regulation programming through specialized equipment.

So those are just a couple of initiatives that are on the go. I'm sure there will be others as well. As we've done in the past with the family resource initiative that we've undertaken and building on that, working on health and social services, those are just of some of the areas that we've initiated with our department. There's also e-learning through the Beaufort-Delta. We've expanded that into other communities, as well, based on the success of the Beaufort-Delta. Now we're expanding to other isolated communities as well. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for those examples. I assume we would be seeing an evaluation of those. Unlike the junior kindergarten pilots, we would actually see an evaluation of those before deciding to make them operational. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. Most definitely. There will be evaluations. We're currently in the process of developing MEA accountability on monitoring, evaluating and accountability on all initiatives that are before us because we want to monitor them and we want to evaluate them because we're accountable to deliver that. So of those initiatives, there will be evaluation processes as well. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you to the Minister for that. I'll look forward to those. I'd like to just move to Aurora College now. That's a big figure there, adult and post-secondary education, \$37 million. I know \$33 million or \$34 million is for Aurora College.

I'm trying to understand how it is that Aurora College has now developed an ongoing and running surplus of \$9 million. I'm trying to read the annual reports. It looks like they've overspent in a number of years. As an arm's length they get granted more money and then go and spend all of that and it builds up as surplus and now it's running at about \$9 million. Am I understanding correctly how that process occurs at in fact Aurora College? Because their annual report says it's running about a \$9 million surplus. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lovely.

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. What the Member is referring to is the \$9 million accumulated surplus presented in the financial statements.

However, that also includes the investments they've made into their capital assets. So the actual surplus that they have available in terms of cash available for reinvestment is approximately \$1 million. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: That's good. Thank you. Just how they got there, was I right in that interpretation? They've been overspending and then being granted extra to cover that. I'd appreciate any understanding on how they get there, and for that matter, where is the final accounting for the capital so that I can understand exactly what's going on here? Thank you.

MR. LOVELY: Each year the Aurora College is provided a contribution from the department for the operation of their programs and services. They also are able to generate third-party revenues from accommodations and tuition fees and books and such. In terms of whether or not they overspend, they haven't been overspending over the last number of years. In terms of the investments in the capital assets, I'd have to get back to you with that information. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I'll look forward to that information and I understand now that the actual surplus is about \$1 million right now. So I'd appreciate that information.

Just related to Aurora College programs and some of the issues that had come up before, the housing for people who live in Yellowknife, students that choose to go to Aurora College is not supported at all, unlike people who live outside of Yellowknife, and yet they are still giving up their life as income earners to attend college. I know the Minister is aware of this issue. Is there any contemplation on a policy to address this deep concern to students who happen to reside in Yellowknife? They may not even be from Yellowknife originally but when they decide to go to school they are, and yet they are treated as if their housing is taken care of even if they're in an apartment or whatever that requires rent, and they have to give up employment to attend the school, college.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Madam Chair, this obviously has been brought up in this House as well. I did raise that issue with the Board of Governors. It is their policy that they have in place. They are developing their strategic plan as we speak, this 2015. I did reiterate that this is of key importance that we need to deal with and it has been brought to their attention again. It is before the Board of Governors to decide if they are going to make some changes to their existing policy to deal with student housing.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate the Minister's response and I appreciate him bringing this up with the board of Aurora College.

Just my last point on this page, how is child support made available for students at the college, be they from elsewhere or from Yellowknife? I often hear that that is an issue and I'm wondering what supports there are for students with children that are going to Aurora College at the Yellowknife campus, and I assume it would be the same policy elsewhere.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Heide.

MR. HEIDE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Daycare supports and daycare subsidies are available through the regular daycare programming, so if a student is on a limited income such as student financial assistance and they have expenses such as rent and other food costs, et cetera, they'd be eligible for daycare assistance through the regular daycare programming.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Heide. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the Minister's understanding in terms of this being an issue for students? Are they having problems accessing that support or are things, according to the department's experience, sailing along smoothly with that aspect?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Again, it has been brought up, because I've visited the campuses as well when I met with the president and the board chair. Some of the students raised that issue. It is an ongoing challenge for some students, so we're doing what we can to subsidize them through my department, continue to subsidize them. But we're fully aware of it, and any of those challenges that come to our attention we expedite the process, having our staff meet with the college president to identify it is an issue that we need to deal with. I wouldn't say it's smooth sailing at this point. There are always challenges coming up within my department, but we're working with the college on these matters on a continuous basis.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$244.200 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Education and culture, grants, contributions and transfers, total grants and contributions, \$209.153 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Madam Chair. A couple of questions on this page. We're on page 66, right?

Thanks. The first one has to do with the Early Child Worker Grant Program, and from 2014-15 to 2015-2016 it's almost doubled, and I'm wondering what the extra funding is being used for.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. The Early Child Worker Grant Program, the budget increase obviously represents additional funding for early childhood learning and the child care worker. This is just an area that has been initiated already and part of the initiation that we need to develop to identify those individuals that are working in early childhood who are one of the lowest paid in the Northwest Territories, and we want to increase their incentive. That's where it's at, the \$391,000 that we're looking at right now.

MS. BISARO: I heard the Minister say that it's grants for early childhood learning and child care workers. I see that written in text on the bottom of the page. Who is getting these grants? Are they going to daycare operators? Is this the money that is going to early childhood educators as a top-up in their wages? Is this the scholarship grants? I would like to know what the extra \$400,000 is being used for.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The funding that we've identified for these early childhood workers, the funding goes directly to the staff, so there is no implication on their employers. Yes, it is going directly to the staff.

MS. BISARO: So \$400,000 is earmarked in this next budget year for wage top-ups? Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Lovely.

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is \$900,000 that is allocated towards the wage top-up. In 2015-16 eligible employees who have no post-secondary early childhood development training will receive a \$1 increase over the amount that they receive currently. For those that have an ECD certificate, they'll receive \$2 an hour extra. For those who have an ECD diploma, they'll receive \$3 an hour, and for those with an early childhood development degree, they'll receive \$4 an hour over and above what they're currently receiving.

MS. BISARO: That then makes me ask what the \$500,000 in this budget year, in the '14-15 budget year is being used for. Is that also for wage top-up? Did that program start in this year or is that for something different?

MR. LOVELY: That is for the wage top-up. It is similar, but next year the dollar amounts will increase.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to Mr. Lovely. My other question here has to do with the early childhood program, and it's gone down about \$700,000.

Could I get an explanation as to why that's reduced so much and is that \$700,000 added in someplace else?

MR. LOVELY: Last year when we originally loaded the budget we weren't fully fleshed out in terms of what we were going to do, so we had allocated \$700,000, inappropriately or in error, to grants and contributions. This year we have corrected that and those dollars are still within Early Childhood Development Framework and will be spent on the initiatives contained therein.

MS. BISARO: These contributions are for early learning and child care programs, family day homes and family literacy programs. So are these the operations grants that daycare and day home operators get? I'll start with that. Thanks.

MR. LOVELY: The \$902,000 is for the Early Childhood Worker Grant Program. We have another \$3.181 million and that's allocated to a variety of different contribution programs including Early Childhood Small Community Program, the Early Learning Child Care Trust Fund, the early childhood contributions, early childhood training contributions and Early Childhood Initiative scholarships. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. BISARO: It boggles my mind. I don't think I've heard of any of these except maybe the scholarship program. It makes me wonder why we have a trust fund. But I'll accept that explanation as it is.

I have a question with regards to the Healthy Food for Children and Youth. I'm glad to see this is in here. I think it's a program that started in this budget year and is carrying on next year. It states that its contributions to the schools for the purchase of healthy and nutritious food. One of the things that I hear quite regularly is that it's all well and good to provide funding for food to schools, but it requires somebody to basically order the food, get the food, look after the food, cut up the food, provide the food to the kids, clean up afterwards, et cetera. That job usually falls on teachers. It's just one more thing that gets added on to the job that they have to do during the day.

My question to this particular funding is whether or not any of this funding to schools for this program is eligible for them to hire somebody from the community to be a coordinator or to run the program for them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Ms. Eggenhofer.

MS. EGGENHOFER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$650,000 was distributed according to number of students and cost of food and so forth. That funding is then provided to the schools. If the school felt that it needed to hire a part-time coordinator to assist with the distribution of the food, I believe that the schools are allowed to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Eggenhofer. Education and culture, grants, contributions and transfers, total grants and contributions, \$209.153 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to ask the Minister, first of all, I know he's been a great supporter of the Dechinta teaching and learning institution. Does that show up on this page under grants and contributions? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. That's correct. It is part of the grants and contributions. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: I know the Minister is aware of their work to seek to expand their programs based on the tremendous success they've enjoyed. I know the Minister's heard those statements and questions in the House and so on. Is there a plan to increase the funding for Dechinta in this budget?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Madam Chair, as I stated in the House, we are working with the Dechinta stakeholders. Obviously, we need a proposal from Dechinta to move forward on as part of their business case scenario. We haven't received that at this point yet. Again, I have to work with the college across the Northwest Territories as well. It is a process that we have to follow. We've been in touch with Dechinta and vice versa. We're working with them. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: I can confirm that I've heard the same thing from Dechinta. They really appreciate the Minister's support. I think it's been critical for their work to date. They're very anxious to move onwards and work with the Minister for that extra support.

In fact, I'd say Dechinta has proven itself to be cost effective. The students love it and First Nations support it. It can support local economies, and of course, Dechinta supports the communities it works out of. Everyone associated with the Dechinta model wins.

But GNWT recognition of them as an accredited educational institution and financial support is now critical to building on the demonstrated success that they have achieved and to provide for the expansions to the regions that we've just spoken of. There's a high regional demand, I think, as the Minister knows. Students are from all over, but they're demanding their own programs in their own region. There's a desire by Dechinta to meet those interests.

With support, every regional program will provide six full-time and 32 part-time positions in each region for elders and local residents and provide strong support, as mentioned, for community economies. The interesting thing about the

Dechinta model is that there's no need for costly infrastructure. Dechinta, in fact, is a model that supports existing private infrastructure such as lodges and camps that we know from time to time go through financial bottlenecks, so it's a beautiful merging of interests in a way that serves our communities.

The Dechinta, I know the Minister is aware, is five years old now. Their five-year pilot is coming to an end. It's now time, of course, to move to an operational basis. During that time they've enjoyed the success of 250-plus course graduates, all of which have become either employed or gone on to additional post-secondary education. The students universally praise the program. There's a strong record of progressively engaging students on northern issues, keeping the northern graduates in the North because of that engagement and, in fact, repatriating students that have left the North and moved south. I have a constituent who has just returned and wrote me a letter saying that the Dechinta programs were so instrumental in her doing that.

In my region where they exist right now, there's strong support by First Nation governments like the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. They, of course, have partnered very progressively right from day one with the University of Alberta and McGill University for university-accredited courses and they are now, this year, working on a master's level course.

I know that the Minister is also aware, from statements in the House and so on from my colleagues, that applications have soared beyond the 30 spaces that are available now and I believe there were 97 applications as of some weeks ago to date so far this year.

Again, I know the department has been supportive and is appreciated by Dechinta. They say they have a very good working relationship with the Minister's staff. They also have other major funders in McConnell Foundation, Counselling Foundation of Canada and Tides Foundation. However, there are limits to what they can without being incorporated in the GNWT fold of accredited educational institutions.

Since 2008 Dechinta has brought millions of dollars in education and research funding into the NWT, but they have a dilemma. They cannot grant degrees without legislated recognition by ECE. As a consequence, they cannot hold grants that they successfully have competed for and therefore the grants must be held by southern degree-granting institutions. Being recognized, of course, would also attract considerably more foundation money that they're able to achieve right now under these limitations, enable them to carry their own grants instead of having to funnel them through another southern institution and pay admin fees down there,

employ people down there and so on and enable them, of course, to grant Dechinta/U of A or McGill degrees in concert as Yukon College does with the University of Alberta.

All of this is a long way of saying they are now at a critical juncture, the end of a very impressive five-year pilot study, pilot project where they have tested things. They have developed a very unique model and they are set to go and have a very keen bunch of students in regions who are interested in those programs that also bring a lot of employment along with the program. I know the Minister is aware that they work hard to make sure it's a land-based program that draws on the elders' knowledge and gives them professor status, rightfully so, in the delivery of their programs as well as the academic side.

I appreciate that the Minister is waiting for a proposal from Dechinta and that he has appreciated their work and is standing ready to consider that proposal seriously. At this point in time, I would like to propose a motion to support the Minister in another aspect of this, and that is the aspect of getting them recognized. Madam Chair, may I go ahead with the motion?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Yes, we may have a timing issue here as we are obligated to recognize the clock in about three minutes. I don't know how many Members want to speak to this. I don't know how far beyond the six o'clock it would go if we introduce the motion now. Do the motion now? Is that the wish of the committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Please proceed with your motion, Mr. Bromley.

COMMITTEE MOTION 101-17(5):
ACCREDITATION FOR DECHINTA CENTRE
FOR RESEARCH AND LEARNING,
CARRIED

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a short motion. I move that this committee strongly recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment work with representatives of the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning on the legislative steps necessary for Dechinta to become an accredited post-secondary education provider with the potential to become a degree-granting institution. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Question is being called.

---Carried

Committee, at this time I am going to recognize the clock and rise and report progress. When we resume tomorrow, we will be back on this page with Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses from the table and thank Minister Lafferty for his appearance here today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 188-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2015-2016, with one motion being adopted, and would like to report progress. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Do I have a seconder? Mr. Menicoche.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, March 6, 2015, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Mental Health Act
19. Second Reading of Bills

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 12, Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act
- Bill 36, Health and Social Services Professions Act
- Committee Report 10-17(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2013-2014 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories
- Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016
- Tabled Document 205-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2014-2015
- Tabled Document 206-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015
- Tabled Document 207-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2015-2016

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, March 6th, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

