



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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## **HANSARD**

**Thursday, February 9, 2017**

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**The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Hon. Jackson Lafferty**

(Monfwi)

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*Minister Responsible for the Workers'*

*Safety and Compensation  
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*Minister Responsible for Seniors*

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(Hay River North)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PRAYER</b> .....	<b>1585</b>
<b>MINISTERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>1585</b>
126-18(2) – Commercial Fishery Revitalization Strategy (Schumann) .....	1585
127-18(2) – Cost of Living: ECE Progress Statement (Moses).....	1586
128-18(2) – Hay River Harbour Restoration (Schumann) .....	1587
<b>MEMBERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>1587</b>
Replacement of the Louis Cardinal Ferry (Blake) .....	1587
Support for Creative Arts Industry (Vanthuyne) .....	1588
2017-2018 Budget Process (Testart).....	1589
Records of Non-conviction (Green) .....	1589
Impacts of Drug and Alcohol Abuse on Youth (Beaulieu) .....	1590
Thomas Simpson Secondary School Students' Concerns (Thompson) .....	1590
Climate Change and Renewable Energy Alternatives for Sahtu Communities (McNeely).....	1591
Impacts of Junior Kindergarten Implementation on Aboriginal Head Start Program (Nadli).....	1591
Legislation to Enable Cremation in the Northwest Territories (O'Reilly) .....	1592
Government Transparency and Accountability (Simpson) .....	1592
<b>REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS</b> .....	<b>1593</b>
<b>RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY</b> .....	<b>1595</b>
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>1596</b>
<b>WRITTEN QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>1606</b>
<b>TABLING OF DOCUMENTS</b> .....	<b>1607</b>
<b>MOTIONS</b> .....	<b>1607</b>
29-18(2) – Appointment of Two Members to the Human Rights Adjudication Panel (Vanthuyne).....	1607
30-18(2) – Extended Adjournment of the House to February 14, 2017 (Green) .....	1607
<b>SECOND READING OF BILLS</b> .....	<b>1608</b>
Bill 15 – An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act .....	1608
Bill 16 – An Act to Amend the Education Act .....	1608
<b>CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS</b> .....	<b>1609</b>
<b>REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE</b> .....	<b>1628</b>
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b> .....	<b>1628</b>



## YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, February 9, 2017

### Members Present

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### Prayer

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty):** Good afternoon, Members. Good afternoon, everyone. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 126-18(2): COMMERCIAL FISHERY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, the last decade has seen our Great Slave Lake fishery hit hard by circumstances well beyond its influence and control. Commercial fishing in our territory has, as a result, declined significantly.

What has not declined is the number of fish in the lake, the quality of this food source, or the proven markets we can use to rebuild our fishery. They offer the opportunity to restore an industry that remains important and vital to our economy and to our territory.

Thanks to changes in our fishery support program, we have seen recent increases to our catch volumes, but there is no silver bullet that can fully save or revitalize our industry. It will require a concerted, coordinated effort by our government, the Government of Canada, and the men and women who make up our fishery. Mr. Speaker, despite obstacles and challenges, we believe in a viable and prosperous future for the Great Slave Lake fishery and we are making every effort to make it happen.

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has led the development of a revitalization strategy that considers all aspects of our Great Slave Lake industry. It is the blueprint we will use to rebuild our fishing sector and to restore its contributions to our economy, and to the Town of Hay River in particular. I am pleased to advise my colleagues that I will be tabling this plan before the end of this session. Our strategy was guided by the

needs of our commercial fishers. Its completion reflects a collaborative effort across governments, including within this Legislative Assembly, and in partnership with the NWT Fishermen's Federation and their Tli Cho Cooperative.

The government has identified strategic challenges and risk factors in the context of seven focus areas and has recommended 25 actions to advance four overarching strategic goals: increasing lake production; increasing processing in the NWT; growing the NWT market; and accessing export markets.

This strategy will move forward in support of a business plan developed by the Fishermen's Federation and Tli Cho Cooperative. We have committed \$1.4 million in funds to leverage investment in strategic areas such as the establishment of a new or refurbished processing plant in Hay River, training and new entrants programs, increased collection points around the lake, and restarting the winter fishery.

Our strategy will also see the current business model on the lake change dramatically. It will mean greater responsibilities for individual fishers, and it will include a new marketing relationship with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation; but much like the model that we recognize in devolution, producers will ultimately see the benefits of having a direct say, and even ownership in their industry.

It will mean a thriving fishery and a renewed livelihood for fishers all around the lake. This will strengthen and diversify our economy, and over time, we will be able to replace imported fish products with a locally produced, healthier, and more affordable alternatives that will contribute to greater community wellness and a reduced cost of living for residents across the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the completion of this strategy fulfils the first part of a commitment we have made to finalize and implement a Commercial Fisheries Revitalization Strategy.

The business case for this work was first identified in the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy. It remains central to our government's efforts to diversify the NWT economy, create local jobs, and contribute to the availability of healthier and more-affordable food choices for residents across the

NWT. Revitalizing an industry doesn't happen overnight, but this is a big step and it lays out a path for the rest of the journey. I look forward to working with my colleagues across all levels of government to build a thriving commercial fishery on Great Slave Lake for the benefit of our entire territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 127-18(2):  
COST OF LIVING – ECE PROGRESS  
STATEMENT

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has implemented new initiatives and improved existing programs and services to help meet our mandate commitments to address the cost of living for NWT residents.

We all understand the importance of reducing poverty and providing our residents with the tools necessary to achieve their goals and live healthy, productive lives. The work under way at the department supports those goals.

Actions in early childhood development, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, have been focused on developing and implementing meaningful programs and services for families with young children. We recently renewed our Right from the Start Action Plan, which will continue to guide the work we do and help inform areas that we need to continue strengthening.

Fulfilling the commitments in the action plan, ECE reviewed the Early Childhood Program, which included engagements with various groups in the early childhood sector. As Members are aware, this is the program that provides funding and support to licensed Early Childhood Program providers.

The results of the review led to the changes we implemented in October 2016 to streamline processes and provide more strategic support to these small business operators.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased the operating subsidy model for licensed childcare operators to reflect increases in the cost of living, and substantially increased the rate provided for the care of infants and children with identified special needs. Operators in government-owned buildings now receive 75 per cent of the daily rate, a significant increase from the previous 50 per cent.

These changes are in addition to the ongoing staff grants we provide for upgrading early childhood development skills and the scholarships for

students registered in early childhood education programs. All of these improvements are intended to increase and improve supports for childcare operators.

Mr. Speaker, the junior kindergarten program is planned to be incorporated into schools across the territory in the 2017-2018 school year. If parents choose to enroll their children, they will save up to \$12,000 per year in child care costs. This is a free, optional program in a safe school environment. Not only is it a good choice for healthy child development, it puts money directly back into the pockets of Northern families.

Another significant change we have made to ensure families have as much in their pockets as possible is the new approach to funding families with children through the Income Assistance Program.

Following the federal government's introduction of the new Canada Child Benefit in July 2016, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment made changes to the way income assistance payments were calculated. This change resulted in more clients being eligible to receive income assistance and an increase in monthly household income. This is an investment in families.

Taking into consideration the new federal benefit and the rising cost of living in the NWT, we restructured the Income Assistance Program to ensure that income intended for children was no longer included in the calculation of income assistance payments.

As a part of the focus of raising NWT children out of poverty and providing more assistance to NWT families, ECE, in partnership with the Department of Finance, are proposing to increase benefits under the NWT Child Benefit to better support more low- and modest-income families with children.

We see this approach as helping families provide a better quality of life for their children, support their well-being, and give children opportunities to reach their potential.

We continue to work with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, to transfer income assistance clients from market rent accommodations into public housing. Efforts were focused on placing clients with high rental costs into public housing to more effectively transition these individuals into the labour force.

The department has also initiated a program that provides intensive labour market supports to income assistance clients that helps them with employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is a great place to live and raise our families. We will continue to work with all levels of government to improve our residents' quality of life through partnerships, policy changes, improvements to existing programs, and new initiatives. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will continue improving programs and services to ensure Northern residents have resources and opportunities to allow them to lead healthy, fulfilled lives and contribute to the growth of our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister of Transportation.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 128-18(2):  
HAY RIVER HARBOUR RESTORATION

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation has made a commitment in its mandate to restore safe operating conditions in the Port of Hay River by strengthening connections with public and private sectors partners.

The Hay River Harbour remains an essential piece of infrastructure for the NWT marine transportation system. The harbour supports critical services such as those provided by the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of Defence. As well, industry and communities up and down the river depend on the steady and reliable resupply of essential goods and materials shipped out of Hay River.

Low water caused by the buildup of sediment has long challenged navigability in the Hay River Harbour. This has had a serious impact on the safety and effectiveness of the essential marine services on which Northerners rely. Commercial fishing boats often touch bottom when entering the harbour, and Coast Guard vessels have trouble accessing their base.

That is why last year the Government of the Northwest Territories supported the establishment of the Hay River Harbour Restoration Group, led by the Hay River Harbour Authority with representatives from all impacted stakeholders. The restoration group provides a forum to discuss challenges and various technical matters regarding future restoration efforts. The group most recently met in Hay River in December and decided that DOT will work with the NWT Fishermen's Federation to develop an informal request for a quote for dredging services from local contractors.

Over the past year, DOT has worked with public and private stakeholders to advocate for project funding and to acquire the necessary information to have this important harbour dredged.

In 2016, a military surveillance aircraft recorded imagery over the harbour and East Channel entrance. The Canadian Coast Guard also conducted sounding operations in the Hay River Harbour. The information collected during their activities is vital to determining the approximate volume of material that needs to be dredged.

Identifying funding sources for the dredging plan remains an important component of this project. We will continue to explore all possible funding options, including through the Oceans Protection Plan announced last year, and other federal programs.

Critical marine resupply operations for many communities start from the Hay River Harbour. The facility is also important to the commercial fishing industry on Great Slave Lake, which has the potential to help diversify the NWT economy. By restoring the Hay River Harbour to its maximum potential, we will continue to reduce the cost of living and provide jobs for Northerners in line with our Legislative Assembly commitments.

The Department of Transportation remains committed to working with all stakeholders to develop a reliable, long-term solution to restore the harbour's full and unimpeded operational capacity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

### Member's Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
REPLACEMENT OF THE LOUIS CARDINAL  
FERRY

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Louis Cardinal ferry needs to be a higher priority. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway will be finished later this year, opening the region to industry and bringing more traffic to the ferry crossing.

Mr. Speaker, the Louis Cardinal is an old vessel. It's been sailing for close to 45 years. There has been talk of replacing it with the Merv Hardie ferry, Mr. Speaker, but the Merv Hardie is even older. Things have changed a lot in Mackenzie Delta in the last 45 years. Transportation technology is improving. Instead of retrofitting an old ferry, we could look at a new one, and we should, with increased capacity for passenger vehicles and B-trains hauling fuel and freight.

Mr. Speaker, we already see long lineups at the Mackenzie River crossing, especially when there are special events in the communities, like the Midway Lake Music Festival, for example. Vehicles

could move across more efficiently on a larger ferry. We could also look at a vessel with efficient engines and other capabilities suited to harsh winter conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' new air tanker fleet is a good example of how the government invested in new technology that will have measurable improvements and serve the Northwest Territories for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, constituents in Tsiigehtchic raised the need for a new ferry at a recent constituency meeting. They want a vessel that could welcome tourists, have more fuel-efficient engines as we look forward to being connected to the Arctic coast. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, barely two years ago the government released its long-term Transportation Strategy. Improving our ferry system is consistent with the strategy's priorities and actions.

Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Delta relies on the Louis Cardinal ferry. Before making reductions to this critical piece of infrastructure, let's consider where we want our transportation system to go.

Getting new capital projects is a slow process, Mr. Speaker. We have to take steps toward approving a replacement for the Louis Cardinal ferry now -- and if not a new ferry, Mr. Speaker, then I will be asking for another Mackenzie River bridge! Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE ARTS INDUSTRY

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak about the creative arts industry. I'm referring in part to our painters and storytellers, musicians and film makers, carvers and authors. They are the people in our communities who tell our stories. Through their art, in whatever form that takes, our creative artists give form and shape to our identity as individuals, as communities, and to this great territory.

It is also important to recognize that the North's creative industries go well beyond the performing and visual arts. The creative industry is very diverse -- advertising, architecture, crafts, design, fashion,

television and film, information technology, and even museums, galleries, and libraries show that we are surrounded with an abundance of creative artists in a multitude of mediums. These mediums impact our everyday lives on many levels.

Mr. Speaker, creative arts contribute in very significant ways to our economy. This is an important element of our goal of a diversified economy, and that's also why I support investment by this government in the creative arts community.

Of course, artists and those employed in the creative industries make money, sell their wares, pay their rent and mortgages, and pay their taxes like everyone else. That's a significant factor in any local economy.

Beyond that, the performing and visual arts help to draw and retain people to our communities. An artistic community is a more welcoming, inclusive, exciting place to live and visit. Investment in the arts community can provide multiple economic spinoffs, including increased cultural tourism, more support for emerging artists, and increased investment from other levels of government and the private sector.

A vibrant creative community challenges creativity in all of us in all kinds of endeavours. New ideas encourage more new ideas. New creative experiences promote innovation in all fields. Canada is a leader in many creative fields like graphic design and architecture. In the North, we can build on that creativity in the areas that are significant for our own economic growth. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. We can encourage Northerners to be innovative thinkers -- in business, on environmentally responsible resource development, on alternative energy, on transportation and construction. A thriving, creative community needs our support and investment.

In return, a thriving creative community pays dividends to our society in education, health and healing, stronger connections amongst our communities. Creative thinking fosters innovation. Innovation contributes to diversification and enhanced economic growth. We have identified these factors as mandate goals of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly. We must include the creative industry in that support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
2017-2018 BUDGET PROCESS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health replied to the Budget Address and spoke to some of the comments that my honourable friends have made over the past week and a half. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that this is not the ideal budget for anyone on either side of the House, and we have not achieved consensus on this budgeting process.

What is equally clear is that there is some confusion over what both sides want to achieve with this. The goal is simple: the best possible budget that invests in Northerners and ensures that their future is a sound future and that they can have confidence that the same opportunities that they enjoy today will be able to be enjoyed the next five, 10, or 15 years, along with enhancement to those opportunities, as well.

Today also we are joined by students from Aurora College, students from high schools who were looking forward to attending Aurora College and participating in some crucial degrees and diploma programs that are now at risk of not being delivered on. These are why Regular Members have stood up and taken the definitive action to say: we need to do a better job.

One thing I want to make perfectly clear is we have not taken any hard lines, Mr. Speaker. We have always been open to negotiation. Today I want to reiterate that we are open to discussing with our Cabinet colleagues the subject of the 2017 budget and make sure we can resolve this impasse.

The only clear intention that my honourable friends have taken is that we need assurances that this government is listening to our constituents and to the people of these Northwest Territories. We are not shutting down discussion, and we are certainly open for debate.

I welcome the comments we heard yesterday. I hope we have more fulsome debate in this House, so we can get a very clear picture of what both sides are trying to achieve and what the priorities of this House really are. Mr. Speaker, mine will always be serving my constituents and ensuring we have the best possible future for everyone in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
RECORDS OF NON-CONVICTION

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to return to a topic I raised during the last

sitting, as I have had another constituent bring another case of injustice to my attention.

The issue is records of non-conviction, the reports that are produced by the police when a criminal records check is requested. These reports may contain records of a person having been questioned by the police and not charged, or charged and the charges were later dropped, or charged and the person was later acquitted. In the latest case of my constituent, the person was charged with assault in 1990 and received a conditional discharge, which does not result in a criminal record. My constituent has kept the peace these past 26 years, and after graduating from Aurora College as a personal support worker, she has repeatedly confronted obstacles to employment.

She is not alone. National research by the Toronto Star shows that more than 400,000 Canadians never convicted of any offence have records in police databases. Some are recorded under the notations, "attempted suicide" or "mental instability," which show up under the generic indictment "adverse information on file." As I have said before, I will say again, this is outrageous.

In opposing the use of records of non-conviction, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association points out there is no evidence that broad use of these checks materially reduces the risk of crime or violent offences in the workplace. The CCLA points out that systemic barriers to employment undermine the significant efforts and resources put into reintegration and ultimately prejudices community safety.

Mr. Speaker, in our jurisdiction, with its higher rates of mental illness, policing much closer to the population, and the higher concentration of jobs in a few major employers, the injustice of these records can be even more exaggerated.

Again, I come back to the fundamental test of our justice system: you are innocent until proven guilty. If you are not proven guilty, you should not be made to suffer as a result of legally unfounded accusations, mere contact with the police or, in the worst cases, having suffered from mental illness. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, these records of non-conviction are used nationally. There is a growing backlash against this injustice. Last sitting, the Minister of Justice said he would not seek a change in this practice. I don't think that is good enough, and I will have questions. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
IMPACTS OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE ON  
YOUTH

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about difficult times families are facing when it comes to impacts of drug and alcohol on youth.

[Translation] The way the kids are drinking and using drugs, that is what I would like to talk about. The way our relatives are having problems and still drinking today. There are kids -- it gets very expensive and all the money is spent on -- [translation ends] struggle with alcohol and drugs, the added burden on mothers, fathers, and grandparents and siblings is huge. It is a wide ranging issue, from not sleeping properly to constant worry and financial pressures.

The financial burden on just one youth-in-crisis is tremendous. We know all about addictions, what addiction does to a person. When it comes to vulnerable youth, it can consume a youth's life. A youth with addictions has no regard for the family's financial issues or health. A youth in the throes of drug and alcohol only cares about the next fix or drink.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch on some of the issues related to youth aside from their own families, because addiction impacts the whole community.

In the NWT, the most common property offence is mischief, typically linked to abuse of alcohol and drugs. Our high crime rate is driven by abuse of alcohol and drugs, which in itself is often linked to the traumatic impacts of residential school.

When it comes to the law, a youth is somebody under the age of 18. I don't dispute that law, but when it comes to programming outside the justice system, like treatment, prevention, and employment support, the range expands. The United Nations considers anyone ages 15 to 24 as a youth. When it comes to Service Canada, the youth internship program welcomes a range of 15- to 30-year-olds.

You see, even crime stats don't show the whole picture.

In 2012, a report from Health and Social Services told us that 53 per cent of people between the age of 15 and 24 are likely to have five or more drinks on one occasion, 26 per cent are described as heavy drinkers. Residents in small communities are twice as likely as Yellowknife residents to have tried cocaine.

Many of our youth are living with addictions and are also harming themselves. Some die while they are doing drugs or consuming alcohol. They are at risk of freezing to death, dying in vehicle accidents, or committing suicide. Mr. Speaker, I wish to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Thirty per cent of NWT youth reported that they had been harmed in some way by their own drinking in the past year; 56 per cent reported that they had been harmed by somebody else's drinking.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is hope. I compliment the Department of Health and Social Services for the work they are doing in this area. When a person looks for help, the help is available. The problem is it is not available to all and it is not available everywhere.

As we go through the budget, I will be asking the Ministers to spread the magic of HSS through the NWT to all youth in crisis.

Our youth are desperate, Mr. Speaker. As they reach out for help, we should be in a position to provide it. Marci cho, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
THOMAS SIMPSON SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS' CONCERNS

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member from Kam Lake said in his Member's statement, I would like to thank the social workers and the education students and the union workers for coming and presenting their concerns to us, as a government, about the budget.

Mr. Speaker, during my time leading up to our session here I had the opportunity to not only visit the communities but go into the schools and meet the students in each of the schools. They addressed a number of concerns to me, and I would like to address some of the stuff that students at Thomas Simpson Secondary School said to me. It was really interesting.

Their first thing was: what about us? We are the future. Why aren't you guys listening to us? So it was very troubling to hear that the first question they asked was: where are the support and recreation positions in the government? What are they doing? There are people in the system, but there are positions that are not filled. They asked about this, and I have asked the Minister in the House about that.

Mr. Speaker, then they went on to inclusive schooling, junior kindergarten, mental health workers and counsellor positions in school, and summer school opportunities. The students are asking for help. They are wishing that this government listens, and I am talking about us collectively, the 19 Members. They talked about inclusive schooling and the importance of having mental health workers, which is our social worker program that is going to help us. It is not helping right now, and it is disappointing.

They go on to talk about the turn-offs. Yes, it is not important as it seems sometimes, but these turn-offs are vital to our region. They give them the opportunity to stop and rest, relax, maybe even go to the washroom, but they are not maintained properly. If we want to promote tourism, these should be looked at and fixed.

Mr. Speaker, then they talk about jobs, the importance for them to come back to something, whether it is summer students or internships. The government is working on that, but it is not enough. They want the government to work for them. Mr. Speaker, can I seek unanimous consent to finish my Member's statement? Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. I could probably go on for about 20 minutes, so I will try to summarize it as quickly as possible.

They talked about jobs, that it is important, about working, whether it is them or their families, to not only get off social income but work.

Mr. Speaker, they went on to talk about housing and how some friends and family members live in houses that are not suitable, and some of the challenges that they face. They are asking about that. They talked about homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I had individual students come talk to me afterwards, and they wanted to talk about activities for after school and what is the government doing for small communities. We have to understand, small communities have a voice and they should be treated equally. That is what they are asking for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY  
ALTERNATIVES FOR SAHTU COMMUNITIES

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk about the current energy strategy and

climate change strategy coming on-stream for a 10-year plan here in 2017 developments.

Now that the gas is turned off in Norman Wells, we must seek alternative energy options for supply to the residents, commercial customers, and the community. Both Tulita and Norman Wells have potential for alternative energy sources.

Colville Lake has taken the lead with their solar panel project, which is proving to be quite a vital operation and is a prime example that there are alternatives and initiatives out there, funded jointly between the federal and territorial government.

Mr. Speaker, we must also look at some of the previous studies to collectively substantiate and justify best value for dollar. Back in April of 2010, there was a study done by ENR saying that there is potential down the Mackenzie Valley corridor, in the areas of Deline, Tulita, Norman Wells, and Fort Good Hope, that could supply geothermal heat for the buildings above. Later I will have the appropriate questions for the appropriate Minister. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
IMPACTS OF JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN  
IMPLEMENTATION ON ABORIGINAL HEAD  
START PROGRAM

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I am continuing with my Member's statement from yesterday. I want to talk to you about the Aboriginal Head Start program.

There has been a lot of information flying around the House, so let me give you a quick refresher. Aboriginal Head Start, or AHS, is a federally funded program with the mandate to serve preschool-age Aboriginal children. It was founded in the belief that children are a gift from the creator, who have the right to live proudly as Aboriginal people in the land of their ancestors. In 1995... [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, how does this relate to junior kindergarten, a GNWT-run program?

As it stands now, ECE's proposed rules would see schools get the option of either half-day or full-day junior kindergarten, with the other half-day meant to leave room for AHS. ECE has also suggested that AHS redesign their programming for children aged three years or younger.

For some communities, this partnership works well, with strong results.

For others, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't.

When we passed a motion on junior kindergarten back in October, we affirmed that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work and that ECE should accommodate existing programs. In Yellowknife and the other regional centres, that means working with the existing daycares and preschools. In our small communities, that means working with AHS.

Unfortunately, talks between ECE and AHS are moving into a non-productive "us versus them" stage.

I am not here to lay blame, Mr. Speaker, but instead to highlight the questions and concerns of my constituents. This must not be lost.

Supporters of AHS, including parents and educators, are worried. They are worried about changes to existing programs, they are worried about quality programs for Aboriginal children, and they are worried about AHS' survival when its federal funding ends in 2020, especially if four-year-olds are enrolled in junior kindergarten instead. Program changes to support younger children would not be easy or cheap, or even desirable. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi, colleagues. Like I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the confusion we have seen in the House doesn't address these worries.

Regular Members are still waiting on the government's response to Motion 26-18(2), including a fully costed implementation plan. Meanwhile, parents are trying to plan for their children's education this fall, while schools are rapidly approaching their budget deadlines.

We can chart a course through this confusion, but we must all be up-front, and we must be all on the same page. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LEGISLATION TO ENABLE CREMATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. People in the Northwest Territories who want to choose cremation of human remains -- that is currently about 30 per cent of all deaths -- cannot access this service from a Northwest Territories supplier. A local funeral home would like to expand to provide this service, and it's just down the road from me, Mr. Speaker; but in seeking a way to support the expansion of our economy and of

services for our residents, road blocks have been encountered.

All Canadian jurisdictions except the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have legislative regimes for cremation. In the Northwest Territories there are a variety of laws touching upon the legalities of cremation, but no single law overseeing or enabling cremation.

A review of crematoria legislation in other jurisdictions found that a comprehensive framework for cremation services is the preferred approach. Typically, health departments regulate such matters as sanitation standards and air quality. The Public Health Act would likely govern these matters. The Vital Statistics Act outlines the requirements for issuing a permit allowing disposal of human remains by any means. More work needs to be done to ensure that there is no legal prohibition under the current legislative framework to prevent cremation services here in the NWT. That includes determining what other public health concerns may exist.

An important outcome of this internal review was the observation that the commercial operations of crematoria are typically regulated by community affairs departments.

I approached Municipal and Community Affairs -- and that's where progress seems to have come to a halt. I was told by the Minister that development of this legislation is not on the priority list for the department, primarily due to other pressing needs. It's not clear what these other pressing legislative changes are and how regulation of cremation will fit in or not.

We're almost into the bottom half of this Assembly's term. Again, I have to question this government's ability to move legislation forward. After all, we are supposed to be a Legislative Assembly. Here's an opportunity for local economic expansion, an improvement of services and reduction of costs for our residents, an increase of the tax base. It's all wins, Mr. Speaker, and there is proven law across the country to start from and shape to meet our needs. I'll have questions for the Minister on how to move forward on the issue of regulation of cremation. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Members of this Legislative Assembly have committed to improving government

transparency and accountability as one of our top priorities. This commitment came about in part because of an historic election in which 11 first-time Members were elected. Residents of the NWT were clear that they wanted a change in the way business was done.

In response, Premier McLeod created a Minister responsible for Public Engagement and Transparency and bestowed that title upon the honourable Member from Thebacha. The Minister is developing an open government policy and strategy to set consistent direction that will apply to all government departments.

To help develop the policy, he is holding public meetings around the territory. This Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, the Minister will be in Hay River to hold a public meeting to gather input on what this strategy should look like. This gives residents a chance to have a hand in changing the way the government does business without having to wait until the next election to do it.

Some people may be asking: what is an open government policy, and why should I care? To me, open government is a way to allow citizens to hold government accountable by making government data and information accessible and easy to understand.

As an MLA, I can attest to the importance of access to data and the need for this policy. I have to make decisions based on the best information I have, and it's a constant struggle and time consuming for me to find that information.

Just imagine if you wanted to know how much infrastructure money flows to Inuvik or to Fort Smith. An effective open government policy would allow you to go onto a website and pull up that information. Then, you could send that information to your MLA to hold up on the floor of the House and question the Ministers about why there seems to be such a disparity between funding to regional centres. That's just one example, and there are many more.

I encourage all residents of Hay River who want to change how the GNWT does business to attend the public meeting this Monday at 7:00 p.m. at the Ptarmigan Inn. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move item 11 on the orders paper, replies to budget address. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 11, replies to budget address. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

### Replies to Budget Address

#### MR. BLAKE'S REPLY

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to start, I'd like to take you on a virtual tour of life in the Mackenzie Delta.

Say you were from Aklavik, Fort McPherson, or Tsiigehtchic. You'd likely be Aboriginal, often Gwich'in or Inuvialuit, and chances are you were actually born in Inuvik, where the closest hospital is.

Life wouldn't be cheap, Mr. Speaker. Maybe you'd be one of our residents making less than \$15,000 a year. That's 41.9 per cent of people in Aklavik, 33.3 per cent of people in Fort McPherson, and 36.4 per cent in Tsiigehtchic.

If your family income hovers around the local average of \$70,957 a year, that's still little more than half the territorial average. Your parents might get worried, thinking about expenses. For food bills alone, for every \$100 they might have spent in Yellowknife, they'd spend \$158 to \$170.

As you grew up, Mr. Speaker, you'd start to learn the language and traditions of your people.

When the time came to enter daycare, your parents might have options, like the Aklavik Childhood Development Centre, or they might not. If you were in Fort McPherson, you might join Aboriginal Head Start. Come this fall, you might enroll in junior kindergarten. One thing's for sure: like all NWT children, you have the right to quality education and a safe place to learn and grow.

Next, you'd make your way through the education system. Thanks to government investment in the Beaufort Delta e-Learning Program, students can access a wider range of course options, though you'll still have to be a strongly motivated self-starter. Last year, the Beaufort Delta Education Council reported that high school attendance had reached a "critical" low.

On the subject of education: have you ever heard of the organization Cuso International, Mr. Speaker? This non-profit sends volunteers all over the world to improve the lives of people living with poverty and inequality. I mention them because Cuso International is looking for volunteers to serve in schools in the Beaufort Delta and the South Slave.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take a long, hard look at our priorities if we want to make reductions to a K-to-12 system that's drawing the attention of international aid workers.

Back to our virtual tour. Remember, right now, you're a student in the Delta.

In the evenings and on weekends, you might be out on the land, learning from your elders, or you might be back at school. Because like I said yesterday, our schools aren't just schools -- they're also important shared spaces where people of all ages gather for public meetings, talks, feasts and dances, games and movies, and sports competitions.

Without a high school diploma, though, your chances of finding a job later drop. Adults have a hard enough time right now. Tsiigehtchic has our highest employment rate at just 49.7 per cent, compared to an NWT rate of 65.6 per cent.

Time flies, Mr. Speaker. Now you're an adult, working and raising a family of your own. Long waiting lists keep you out of public housing, while condemned units block new construction. You're also trying to take care of your elderly parents. Fortunately, new investments from the Housing Corporation mean they'll have grants to renovate their homes for safety, and dedicated seniors' units, too.

Because you're a Mackenzie Delta resident in this little exercise, Mr. Speaker, that means I'm your representative.

To prepare for today, I considered the concerns and priorities of my constituents. I listened closely to the replies of my colleagues. I thought back to the work we've done in committee and to pass budgets.

First, I'm going to draw out a few highlights. Then I'd like to go over a few places where there is still work to be done.

When it comes to our economy, we are dependent on the federal government. That is a simple fact. Outside that, our major employers right now are government and the diamond mines. When we face these facts, we can start to make real progress.

Because we have made progress with this budget, thanks to the hard work of Regular Members challenging some proposed reductions, and the hard work of Cabinet incorporating some of these changes into the main estimates.

I am pleased to see continued investment in the Community Access Program. Projects under this program create valuable jobs and real benefits for communities.

I'm also pleased to see new investment in the Small Community Employment Support Program. Regular Members were champions of this program in the

last Assembly, and it shows sound judgment to build on that legacy. Jobs mean food on the tables, fuel in tanks, and clothes on backs. It's as simple as that.

The progress we have made together on junior kindergarten is a good start. There are still some wrinkles to iron out, but we're on our way.

When it comes to working together across the floor, I'm glad the Premier has suggested the joint committee on rural and remote communities.

Infrastructure projects are also key. I'm looking forward to the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link, and I'm hoping that increased traffic through Inuvik, thanks to the expanded satellite stations, will spread benefits to nearby communities. People in my riding don't want to wait any longer for real opportunities for the Gwich'in contractors.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Member for Great Slave said that while the budget was not "the best," it was "good."

Well, it's my view that good is the enemy of great. All Members have been working for months. Wouldn't it be a shame to call it a day, after all this work, simply because we'd reached "good enough"?

---Applause

There are a lot of positive things in this budget. I've highlighted just a handful, but there are also several issues that we still need to address.

When it comes to transportation, we want to be more connected, not more isolated, dependent on outside workers and supply lines.

It troubles me greatly that this budget proposes to eliminate two well-used ferry services at two points in the Mackenzie Delta during winter months.

Cuts aren't as easy as just lining up the numbers, trying to make up \$150 million or even \$100 million. They have serious ripple effects. Residents of the small communities rely on access to Inuvik for food, fuel, and other supplies, as well as medical appointments and skilled labour. Frankly, a lack of access would put communities, including Inuvik, at risk.

To me, it is an opportunity of growth not for cutbacks. When the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway is completed, our fellow Canadians -- not to mention international visitors -- will come. Cutting

off easy access to the Mackenzie Delta hardly seems the way to encourage connections or investment.

In fact, this ties in with the Mackenzie Valley Highway project. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, we talked about that road extending all the way to Inuvik. For now, that dream is waiting.

Now, a few words about position reductions in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, nobody wants to see positions cut. I believe the government has tried to protect current employees from its reductions, transferring them where possible.

That's important, and it is appreciated, but preserving an individual's employment status is not the same as protecting a position, and the government's actions have led to uncertainty. Members of the public service don't know if their jobs will survive. Parents are uncertain of junior kindergarten and when it will start and how it will impact existing programs, and how we will pay for transportation, after-school care, and inclusive schooling needs.

The Aurora College -- I know we have students in the gallery today -- students aren't sure if they'll be able to pursue the teaching and social work careers they've dreamed of. Three young Gwich'in ladies in my riding worked hard to earn their certificates in early childhood education. They wanted to give back to their community by working for Aboriginal Head Start. Now they're not sure what's going to happen with Aboriginal Head Start.

We can't blame Northerners for wondering just what is going on.

While the government's \$150 million reduction target has gone down to \$100 million, it was already the basis of past reductions, including some spread over multiple years. Its impacts still linger.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, MLAs are sent here by our people to represent those people and to serve their best interests. We have heard concerns about hard lines drawn between Members. We have seen news articles about conflict and head-butting, but the reality is that we agree on 98 per cent of this budget.

That's right. The programs and services Regular Members are pressing for -- like truly fully funding for junior kindergarten, essential ferry services, youth suicide prevention, homecare services, and minimal position cuts -- represent 2 per cent of the overall budget. We're a small territory with a small population: small investments can make a big difference.

Today is the last day for replies to the budget address, but we're heading into the first day of budget review -- the days that will determine the fate of that 2 per cent.

My colleague described the budget preparation as a marathon. Well, Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues for their endurance and their dedication. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Replies to budget address. There appear to be no further replies to budget address today, so we will return to item number 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nahendeh.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I get to recognize a few people here today. Kristen Tanche, who is a student in the social work program here in Yellowknife. I actually had the opportunity to almost marry her and her husband, but they got smart and got an official somebody else to do that. So I'd like to recognize Kristin.

Then I have to recognize my two daughters: Jacqueline Thompson, who is a teacher, and my daughter Jenny, who is part of the social work program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize all the students who have come out to join us today and watch our proceedings. They were out earlier raising their voices, which is an important part of democratic participation, and I commend them for that. I encourage them to never stop, and one day perhaps seek an office in this House. We always need more representation from our Northern population.

Also, I'd like to recognize my good friend Fran Page who is visiting the Northwest Territories from Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to recognize all the students who have come and taken part today and welcome them to the House. I also want to take this opportunity to welcome Yellowknife North's Amanda Mallon, who is also here representing the NWTTA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize a few visitors in the gallery. One of them is Trisha Landry, my constituency assistant and also chaperone extraordinaire, who is here to accompany two students who are pages from Detah, and also the students from the Northern People for Northern Education program who are here in terms of their protests against the cuts to their program. Also -- I saw her earlier; I don't know if she is still in the House -- Laura Boileau from the New Day program. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. I, too, would like to thank all the students for coming out and watching the proceedings in the House today. I also have two pages who are serving us in the House today. Ethan Horn and Mia MacInnis are from the Frame Lake riding. Welcome to the House, and thank you for your service. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize Bella Jean Stewart, one of my constituents from Aklavik; also Lauren Ross, the daughter of Richard and Sally Ross from Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife South.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to recognize a constituent from Yellowknife South, Fraser Oliver. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by recognizing Dawn McInnis, a long-time Northerner; a good friend of mine, Amanda Mallon, I consider a very valuable asset to the Northwest Territories, and I am proud to say is one of my friends.

I really want to reach out and say it is great to see all of the young students who are here in the Chamber today. I want to recognize also that these youths are mostly female. In fact, I see all females, and, if I am wrong, may the lone male stand up. As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I really want to say it is really important to see them all here. I appreciate you being here. As Members have said, you are going to be the future leaders of the Northwest Territories. When you're ready, I will

gladly step aside and let you take my seat. Thank you, and welcome to the Chamber.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Fraser Oliver, president of the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association; Adrien Amirault, executive director for the NWT Teachers' Association; and Amanda Mallon, professional development coordinator. I want to let them know that we are very appreciative of the work that you do on behalf of our teachers across the Northwest Territories.

I also want to recognize all the students who are here today. We are listening to you and really appreciate that you have made the time and effort to come and join us.

As well, we have some pages from my riding in Inuvik Boot Lake, Miss Cassidy Lennie-Ipana and Lauren Ross. We just appreciate the work that they have been doing here, in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would just like to welcome all the students, as well, to our proceedings here. It is always great to have an audience. In the future, I hope we have more audience in our proceedings. It is always great to have public in the gallery. Masi. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 548-18(2): PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF AURORA COLLEGE PROGRAMS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that this has been a topic of hot debate and an almost consistent feature of question period, but I do want to ask the Minister of Education, just firmly on the record, if he can answer: why has Aurora College decided to discontinue the Social Work Diploma and the Teacher Education Program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have mentioned in this House before, the executive council for Aurora College did consult and meet with our department. We looked at where we can look at reductions and look at our programs, and it is always being reviewed, and looking at how many graduates do we get out of the programs for

the big investment that we put in. These two programs were recognized. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Would the Minister agree with me that, in light of the lack of a new strategic plan for Aurora College, where many of the long-term goals of the college are still undecided, it is unadvisable to cut crucial programs like social work and education at this time?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We are still waiting on that strategic plan. At this time, we are looking at these programs to see where we are getting the best investments and the end product. I encourage all the students here, as we continue to support the students going through the program before they finish, that they work hard, study, and make sure to graduate because that was one of the factors we weren't getting graduates coming out of the program for the big investment that we put in.

**MR. TESTART:** Earlier, in recognition of visitors in the gallery, the Minister made the comment that, "We are listening to you. We are listening to the students." The students today, I heard them loud and clear outside the building, "We don't want any more cuts to education. We want northern education."

What is the Minister doing to ensure that we have quality access to made-in-the-north education programs? If this program isn't working, Mr. Speaker, why are we cutting it instead of redesigning it so it can be successful?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** This program, both the programs, have been around for a long time. When I did say we are listening, we are hearing, we are continuing to support all the students who are here today through Student Financial Assistance programming, as I mentioned before, best in the country. We are going to give them all the support they need to graduate from the program in the time that is allocated.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apart from encouraging students to work harder so they can graduate in greater numbers than before and reminding them that they can access Student Financial Assistance to go to programs down south, what is the Minister doing to help these students today who are not yet in the program but were looking forward to taking it? The high school students, the community access students, who wanted to pursue this in the future now may not have that opportunity. How are we helping them get education here in the Northwest

Territories, in the programs that they have chosen for themselves? Thank you.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we do have that Skills 4 Success document that we are reaching out to organizations as well as in the high school to look at all jobs, all programs, across the Northwest Territories. We still continue to support our students throughout the NWT with our Student Financial Assistance programs at whatever institutions that they want to go to. We have career development officers, employment transition officers. We have guidance counsellors in the schools who work with students to develop and go along the career path that they choose. We continue to support them.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 549-18(2):  
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS  
PROGRAMMING

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [translation] Minister of Health and Social Services, the kids that are addicted to drugs and alcohol, that is what I want to ask [translation ends].

The Department of Health and Social Services tabled a strategic framework on mental health and addictions recovery. Now, it is working on three action plans, with children and youth coming first. Can the Minister provide an update on the work towards its Children and Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Member for raising this question. The framework is out. We have shared it with committee. It has been tabled. That strategic framework set out some guiding principles that were utilized in the development of the different action plans. Those items are a focus on prevention and early intervention, recovery orientation systems, personal experience and outcomes, and a whole-of-government approach. As we move forward with the different action plans, those are some of the guiding principles that we are using.

With respect to the child and youth mental wellness action plan, work has already been started. We have gone out and started doing different research on best practices in other jurisdictions, literature reviews, talking to people across the Northwest Territories. We have created an interdepartmental working group as part of the whole-of-government process that is helping us with the development.

We are hoping that this action plan will be done summer 2017 in time for business planning so that we can work together with Members on both sides to move forward with the actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** How will the actions described in this plan work with the department's future development of an addictions recovery action plan?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I am assuming the Member is referring to the child and youth mental wellness action plan. At this point, there are no actions identified. We are still in the development phase. As I indicated, all these action plans are working on some guiding principles that inter-tie with each other. Once again, it focuses on prevention, recovery-oriented systems, personal experiences, and outcomes, as well as a whole-of-government approach. To date, the department has completed a significant amount of research and literature reviews into best practices for addressing child and youth mental health challenges or mental health wellness. This information has formed the basis of the working group's work as they move forward with the development of the action plan.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** I would like to ask the Minister if the youth themselves would be directly and meaningfully engaged in the development of these plans.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Yes. In fact they, already have. In the development of the framework in the summer of 2016, we held a number of different focus groups throughout communities and with youth from across the Northwest Territories. We engaged with FOXY and SMASH as well as MACA youth ambassadors. We have had youth involved.

Moving forward in the development of the action plan itself, we are intending to conduct different validation exercises with youth again to make sure that their voice is heard, that their input is included in the youth mental health action plan.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently, at this time, how are existing addictions programming targeted to serve the youth? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to addressing mental health and addictions issues across the Northwest Territories, the department is taking a holistic approach, and this includes a holistic approach to youth services, including services around addictions. We have community counselling positions throughout the Northwest Territories that can provide counselling

to individuals who are struggling, both adults and youth. We have some specialized treatment options available for youth who are struggling from mental health and addictions. Many of those are in the south. We also have Trailcross in Fort Smith. Those programs are designed specifically for youth.

As we move forward with the action plan, Mr. Speaker, ways in which we can better target youth is part of the goal of this particular action plan. We do an awful lot, Mr. Speaker, but I think the Member can agree that we need to do more.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 550-18(2):  
INVESTMENTS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other day in my Member's statement I talked about tourism and how tourism supports our goal of building a diversified economy. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I would like to ask the Minister if the Minister can explain how and how much is ITI investing in tourism promotion in 2017-18. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think someone asked me this question yesterday, possibly. We invest roughly \$5.5 million through grants and contributions and transfers to many tourism initiatives, including NWT tourism, Convention Bureau, Northern Frontier Visitors Centre, and Tourism Product Diversification Program and Tourism 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you to the Minister for his reply two days in a row. Much appreciated. As it relates to diversifying the economy, Mr. Speaker, my next question is to the Minister: what is the department doing to make it easier for potential owner/operators, or anyone for that matter, to enter into the tourism sector?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** ITI has, right off the bat, the tourism diversification marketing program. This is available to provide funding to the operators to do research, identify market needs, and develop products, as well as promote new markets in the tourism industry. We also have upped our staff resources in the North Slave region to address the licensing issues and increasing park maintenance because of more pressure of using these facilities. We also have staffing under way for a new tourist development officer starting in 2017-18.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you to the Minister for his reply. My next question has a little bit of an Education Department component to it, but it more lies within the importance of the industry of tourism. I would like to know if the Minister could maybe explain to us what the department is doing, maybe in conjunction with other departments, as it relates to developing curriculum that we can infiltrate into our education system so those who have an interest in wanting to get into the tourism industry, whether it is food and beverage or fisheries or what have you, have an opportunity to learn about this industry in advance. Can the Minister please provide us with what the department is doing for education opportunities with regard to tourism?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** When it comes to education and tourism, one of the things that comes to mind, right off the bat, is we have the business youth mentorship program that we have introduced. That is a line item that I believe we have roughly \$170,000 in the budget for. We are also focusing on risk management and safety training for our outfitters and potential new outfitters to help them reduce their risk around insurance and operations of their operation. Through ITI we also fund BDIC. BDIC has the entrepreneurship program, which they have had a couple of sessions here in Yellowknife where young entrepreneurs can go and take a course and see what it takes to get into business. That would apply even to the tourism industry. That was a very good course and it was well-attended.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for his reply. Mr. Speaker, finally, can the Minister tell us, Tourism 2020 recommends developing a large number of programs and resources like a welcoming program, an elders-in-residence program, and tourism guide books, to name a few. What progress are we making on these initiatives? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe, on Tourism 2020, we are making quite a bit of progress on a lot of different initiatives. We have just announced the new community tourism coordinator program to advance regional product development and packaging. We are focusing on risk management training, like I just mentioned, in the NWT for tourism operators. We continue to deliver community tours and infrastructure contributions to encourage development of community tourism infrastructure across the Northwest Territories. There are many initiatives under the Tourism 2020 plan, which was there to replace the previous two five-year plans. These things are moving ahead. As everyone

knows in this House, tourism is the highlight of our economy moving forward. There is great expansive growth there. We will continue to support it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 551-18(2):  
IMPACTS OF JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN  
IMPLEMENTATION ON  
ABORIGINAL HEAD START PROGRAMS

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Earlier I spoke about the Aboriginal Head Start program and its establishment in the Northwest Territories since 1995. So my question is to the Minister. Can the Minister indicate when Regular Members can expect the government's response to Motion 26-18(2)? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the Member's statement earlier, we did contact the department and ask them to give us an update. I don't have a firm date right now, but as soon as soon as we get it we will share it with the Members. Thank you.

**MR. NADLI:** I'd like to thank the Minister for his reply. How is the department working to address the questions and concerns of parents and educators who do not wish to change from the Aboriginal Head Start program to junior kindergarten?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I said in the House yesterday, we're sending out packages to all the parents across the Northwest Territories. With the Aboriginal Head Start staff, our department has already been engaging with the staff. We made trips to Fort McPherson, Fort Providence, K'atlodeeche First Nations, and had those initial discussions and talks about implementing junior kindergarten for the 2017-18 school year.

**MR. NADLI:** My question relates to, of course, the optional head start program. So how will the introduction of junior kindergarten impact the funding granted to Aboriginal Head Start program's sites for the GNWT?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** There will be no impact on the funds. We will still continue to fund the eight Aboriginal Head Start programs. In 2015-16 we funded them to the tune of \$260,000. We're expecting, at the end of this year, the funds that we've given to all eight organizations would be in the area of around \$285,000.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question is, there continue to be some anxiety concerning the fate of the Aboriginal Head Start program in light of the roll into the junior kindergarten. Has the Minister engaged his federal colleague who is mandated to oversee the Aboriginal Head Start programs here in the NWT and also the funding in terms of committing the dollars to these eight sites in the NWT? Has the Minister engaged his federal colleague to see if, you know, the two programs could exist in parallel to each other? Mahsi.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I personally have not engaged in that meeting. We did have staff meet with the Canadian Public Health Association of Canada. We invited Aboriginal Head Start staff in on that meeting to talk about the federal funding, and that wouldn't be affected. Currently, we do a joint junior kindergarten/Aboriginal Head Start program co-existing in some of our communities where they're both providing half-day services so families have that opportunity to have full daycare, quality early childhood programming for their kids.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 552-18(2):  
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

**MR. THOMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister for Transportation spoke about the Mackenzie Valley Highway from Wrigley to Norman Wells, and he provided, you know, the importance of this road being granted resources and traditional lands that gives opportunity for recreation and tourism. It will create jobs, general training opportunities, and heavy equipment opportunities for training. So can the Minister please -- or yourself, Mr. Speaker -- when can we expect to see funding for other access roads projects, or is it focused entirely on the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the \$700 million? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Transportation.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, as I said in my Member's statement yesterday, has been suspended by the federal government while they consider new infrastructure programs. So we're waiting to hear on the details on the infrastructure programs, hopefully when the federal budget comes out here in the next month or so, but there's a significant amount of work that is still going on with the highway. Our environmental assessment has started for the Wrigley to Norman Wells' section. Community consultations have been

undertaken by the Review Board and the terms of reference for a developer's assessment report.

So additional work is currently on hold due to funds, and we're also working with ENR on this right now to prepare plans on how to manage caribou and how can that occur together when we build a highway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. I guess the big challenge is that this whole project from the Deh Cho from Wrigley up for 100 kilometres would have a huge impact not just on my riding but in the Member from the other side's riding and the Member from Hay River North's riding, as well. My colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and my Member from Deh Cho at least have the potential for these great things. So I understand that the Canyon Creek access road is the first step for the Sahtu segment, and it's important to get the gravel there. Is the department doing any work of similar access roads in the Deh Cho from Wrigley moving north?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** First of all, the Canyon Creek access road that we just announced was initiated by the Sahtu region. This was brought forward a long time ago by the people of Sahtu and the Aboriginal governments. They spend a significant amount of time and energy on this project to advance it. It speaks to the benefits like the Member just stated of jobs and employment opportunities and training. Federal opportunities came along at the right time for this project and allowed this project to move forward, and it has.

If the Member's community of Wrigley and the Deh Cho wanted to have an interest in promoting a project similar to this in their region, they would have to identify something similar to their project and they would have to contribute to the long-term objective of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, meaning we would like it to probably line up significantly with the project so it wouldn't take away from the project. If they were to do something like that we would certainly sit down with them to look at opportunities and how we would support it and seek opportunities for federal funding for such a project.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. That kind of led into my other question I was going to ask anyway, but I'll, you know, modify it a little bit here. So when can I expect the Minister to come work with us and maybe bring the Minister of Lands to come along and meet with these communities and do a community regional tour? So when can we look at this? Is it going to be sooner or later?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Like I said, first of all, it would have to be something driven by the community and the region. They would have to all

work together to say this is a project that they would all be supportive of and want to bring forward to the Government of the Northwest Territories. That would be the first step. So as long as we have consensus on stuff, we could sit down and look at the proposal. As far as doing a tour of the region, I think we've been asked twice already and due to timing I couldn't make it to the region, but at some point we're going to have to get out there and just talk to the region, especially the Deh Cho and all the communities that the Member has.

Like I said, any new project like this would still require a new source of funding, and that would be something we would have to move onto, but the first step is to get regional support from the community and the region to bring this forward. The community of Wrigley was involved in the application of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, so they have a lot of knowledge and probably some paperwork on how that project was advanced, and that would be probably some supportive documents they would need to do, some type of project similar to Canyon Creek.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answer. Don't get me wrong. I think it's very important, the work that this government has been able to for the Sahtu in that one section of the road. The completion of Mackenzie Valley Highway is important for the residents of Nahendeh and Sahtu, but the whole NWT. The environment or the economic opportunities it will bring by lowering the cost of living and bringing the needed opportunities for future development is there.

I'm pleased to see that the Canyon Creek access project, as I said again, it's happened. What else is being done by this government to ensure this advancement of the Mackenzie Valley Highway? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I've said, we've already submitted the proposal to the federal government. It is on hold right now based on what they're going to do with their infrastructure needs. Hopefully the federal government addresses this project and many other projects that we've submitted under infrastructure for this territorial government in the federal budget coming out in the next couple of weeks. We have done pretty much everything we can do to advance this project until we hear back from them.

Like I said, we're working with ENR on preparing plans for management of caribou, we have the environmental assessment to complete, but all that stuff is tied to funding and we are going to be

dependent on the federal government to how we advance the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a project and as a complete package moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 553-18(2):  
RECORDS OF NON-CONVICTION

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. In response to my questions on the topic of records of non-conviction in November, the Minister said that criminal records checks are intended to protect vulnerable groups and "essential in certain circumstances dealing with vulnerable populations or children." To be clear, does the Minister really believe that the police should be making any records public which do not deal with a conviction for a criminal offence but disclose only that a person has been in contact with the police or justice system? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Justice.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to remember that there are two types of criminal record checks. There's the standard criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check. A criminal record check verifies whether an individual has a criminal record. That's the standard record we often see in court with convictions. A vulnerable sector check verifies whether someone has a criminal record as well as any record suspensions, which means pardons, for sexual offences and includes local police records for information relevant to the situation.

Now if a vulnerable sector check is requested, there's a procedure. They simply cannot be asked for arbitrarily. The initial decision to request is made by the hiring organization. If they determine the position is one of trust or authority over children or vulnerable persons, they can request that an applicant for the position obtain a vulnerable sector check. The applicant then applies to the local police service where they live. The applicant will have to provide certain information, including the description of the position, the name of the organization, and details regarding children or vulnerable persons. The police then will use this information to determine if the position meets the legal requirement to conduct a vulnerable sector check.

So only in those circumstances will a vulnerable sector check be provided to the applicant, who will then have the option of providing that to the potential employer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Thanks to the Minister for that answer. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association research says that there's no evidence that these checks reduce the risk of crime or violent offences. So 17 years on, perhaps it's time to test the assumptions behind them. Will the Minister agree that an evaluation of the effectiveness of these checks should now take place?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, I understand that the Ontario Civil Liberties Association has produced a paper and I have had the opportunity of reading that paper. It may be time to look at these vulnerable record checks; however, I still think they have considerable value.

**MS. GREEN:** Thanks to the Minister for that response. I'm going to ask a follow-up question. In what circumstances are they valuable if they are revealing information that is not a conviction but only that a person has had some kind of contact with the justice system or the police?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** When the relevant legislation came into effect in the year 2000 it was thought some additional protection was needed for vulnerable groups and children, and that was the reason that vulnerable record checks are permitted. As I say, it must be established that the position is one of trust over children or a vulnerable group; therefore, I suggest that the number of vulnerable record checks should be very limited and limited only to those occasions where required.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister whether he would consult with his federal and provincial counterparts and he said, and I quote, "I'm always willing to consult." So can the Minister state his commitment to suggest that an evaluation of the application of the Criminal Records Act be placed on the agenda of the next FPT Justice Ministers' meeting? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to make that kind of commitment. I do realize this is a live issue. As I say, I did take the time of reading the excellent paper provided or prepared by the Ontario Civil Liberties Association and I understand that discussions regarding this matter are taking place in the Justice Departments of Ontario and federally. I will not put it on the next FTP. I don't know if I would have the power to do so unilaterally in any case; however, I will discuss this matter with my federal and provincial counterparts.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

QUESTION 554-18(2):  
OPEN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about open government and the public consultation meeting that the Minister of Public Engagement and Transparency will be holding in Hay River this Monday at 7:00 p.m. at the Ptarmigan Inn. I've been advertising this on Facebook, on my website, and my CA has printed posters, put them up around town. I'm working hard to get the word out so we can get some people there because I think this is an important issue. Now I'll give the Minister a chance to put in some work and sell this to the residents of Hay River.

So my first question is: why should anyone care about open government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister responsible for Public Engagement and Transparency.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Well, I think that anyone and everyone should be concerned about open government. When we discussed the mandate early on in the -- about a year and a half ago now almost, it was one of the essential items that we did discuss. In my mandate letter it was made clear that this is an important project for this government and for all of the Members of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SIMPSON:** I was hoping for a bit more razzle-dazzle to really sell this.

---Laughter

Maybe if the Minister could be a little bit more descriptive. What can the public expect to discuss at this meeting?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** This will be the second public meeting we've had. We had a meeting in December in Fort Smith and people raised a wide variety of matters, including engagement with the government, access to data, so I expect that those types of issues will be brought up in Hay River. I can advise that we will be visiting many of the other communities in the next month or two, so I expect a wide variety of matters to be discussed, open government, engagement, access to information being only three.

**MR. SIMPSON:** I know that the policy is still in development, hence the public engagement, but how does the Minister envision this policy rolling out? How will it look when it's on the ground and it is being used by the departments?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** I am sure it will look great. I don't think we went into this with any preconceptions as to what the ultimate policy would

look like. We looked at policies from other jurisdictions, but we really are engaging with the public, seeking their input, which will make the policy as good as possible.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has sold me. I will be there at the meeting on Monday night. My question is: when can we expect the policy to be completed, but, more importantly, when can we expect this to be implemented? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** It is in due course. Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the Member opposite will be there on Monday. This may not be an item that engages the general public, so I am looking forward to informed information both from the Member opposite and for the people of Hay River. We have heard from some. We are expecting perhaps a dozen at least. As I said, we are going on quite a road show for this project. We are visiting a large number of communities. I would hope that we would have the policy completed by mid-year and shortly after were it implemented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 555-18(2):  
RENEWABLE ENERGY ALTERNATIVES IN THE  
SAHTU REGION

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I mentioned alternative energy options as we are proceeding forward with the ten-year strategic plan here. My question is to the Minister of ITI. I would say let's dust off the old studies that were done by EBA here in 2010 and realize the Sahtu potential as identified in the study. Will the Minister of ITI look at alternative energy sources in the Sahtu? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer is yes. With our energy strategy that we are going around the Northwest Territories, we are willing to look at all input so we can make an informed decision on how we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MCNEELY:** My next question is leading up to, with the same department, the same Minister of DPW, in preparation for the upcoming buildings that are going to be looked at hopefully within the next five years for the health centre in Tulita, will the Minister support a pilot project here on the R and D

phase of the community of Tulita in conjunction with the plans for the Tulita health centre?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I would have to get more details from the Member on what he is asking.

**MR. MCNEELY:** I am specifically looking at the heat source beneath the community of Tulita. The viability of geothermal heat was identified in the study of 2010. That might be an alternative source to eliminate consumption of fuel for the Tulita health centre. My question is added on to the previous one.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** We would have to look at the economies of scales and do a business plan compared to other sources of heat for the facility, be it biomass or diesel fuel or solar, plus all the regular stuff that we are looking at in our energy strategy. That is something we can have a look at, but it would be based on cost of supplying energy and what makes good sense and business case.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the comments made leading up to a date of collaboration. I look forward to some suggestions coming back from the Minister on dates available for this R and D session. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I hear that as a general comment. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 556-18(2):  
REPLACEMENT OF THE LOUIS CARDINAL  
FERRY

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my Member's statement I have a few questions for the Minister of Transportation. I would like to ask the Minister: what is the life span of the Louis Cardinal ferry and what is the plan for its ends of life? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Transportation.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The particular ferry, the Louis Cardinal ferry, is a short-trip, fresh water vessel. They tend to operate for many years. Right across the country, anything that is operating in fresh water tends to get 60-plus years of operation out of it. The other side of that vessel, though, is the mechanical side of it and the hull maintenance. Those things have a much shorter maintenance life, but we have a scheduled maintenance plan, when to undertake those required rehabilitations, and we continue to do so.

He asked another question. There were actually two questions in there. The Louis Cardinal is expected to operate, we suspect, for at least another 15 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BLAKE:** How much would it cost to retrofit the Merv Hardie compared to acquiring a new vessel?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** The Merv Hardie ferry is a little different beast than the Louis Cardinal. It has a different size and shape to it, and the hull is not actually suitable to replace the Louis Cardinal ferry. The Louis Cardinal is actually a shallow-draft vessel that is a little different in river conditions than it was here on the Fort Providence section. No amount of money would ever fix that thing to make it viable to use it for the Louis Cardinal.

With that being said, to replace the Louis Cardinal ferry in today's dollars, if we were to do it right today, it would cost this government roughly between \$10 and \$15 million to replace that ferry.

**MR. BLAKE:** The future prosperity of the Northwest Territories depends on a strong transportation system. How does the Northwest Territories transportation strategy consider their placement of ferries?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As I previously said, the department has programs in place to do maintenance and replacement of the ferries. We want to make sure that everything is safe and efficient and operating going forward, of course. In the long term, all ferries could be replaced by permanent bridges, which the Member also alluded to in his statement today. This would require significant investment from this government to do that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister just led me on to my next question here. How much do ferry operations cost compared to a bridge? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Operating ferries and ice bridges in the Member's area, with a little bit of lower volume of traffic compared to the Providence crossing, which has a high significant volume of traffic, the department has not developed a cost estimate to construct a bridge at the Tsiigehtchic crossing or the Peel. Those would be significant investments. The Deh Cho Bridge cost \$200 million. From my recollection, to operate the Louis Cardinal ferry costs over a million dollars a year. You do the math. It is not viable to put a bridge in there at this point.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 557-18(2):  
LEGISLATION TO ENABLE CREMATION IN THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. The department has said that it has a heavy legislative workload. Can the Minister explain what legislation her department expects to bring forward during the life of this Assembly? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs actually has quite a bit of legislation that we are working on. Some of it is from our mandate. Some of the them are from the Auditor General's Report, et cetera, so the things that we are working on currently are the Civil Emergency Measures Act that needs to be amended. We are working on the 911 legislation and regulations. We are working on the Fire Prevention Act. We are working on the Western Canada Lottery Act and regulations. At a request by the City of Yellowknife, we are also doing some research on the Cities, Towns and Villages Act in regards to the hotel levy and the emergency retrofits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you to the Minister for that list of legislation. We've got the list now. How does the regulation of cremation fit into the legislative agenda for the department? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The topic of cremation actually was not in our mandate. However, it has been brought forward to us as a department. We are actually engaging with stakeholders in the spring, coming up here. We have added, actually, the cremation issue to our list of topics that we'll be working with stakeholders to define what the priorities should be and what order of legislation we should be working on so that we are not only meeting the needs of the Government of the Northwest Territories, we are actually meeting the needs of the consumers, the stakeholders, that will be impacted by these decisions.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the answer from the Minister. It is good to know that there are going to be some consultations around this issue, but I have raised the issue of capacity of Cabinet and their departments to bring forward legislation before. What would it take to move forward with legislation to regulate cremation and to allow a local business to grow and provide our residents with better services at lower costs?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would really like to say that putting forward the issue, the legislation, around cremation, would be easy. However, in all honesty, I don't see it as easy. When I give more thought to it, there are a number of steps. Again, we would be looking at prioritizing what we need to do to make sure that we take care of the public safety of community members -- that would be my priority number one -- making sure that the stakeholders that are impacted by all the legislation have a say in what they say are their priorities.

Cremation, at first, I thought would be an easy amendment or it would have to be an act that we would have to do in MACA; it would take some regulation changes from Health and Social Services and their Public Health Act. The bigger thing that I worry about is stakeholder engagement. The cremation might impact some of these businesses. It may impact some of the residents. It may impact seniors. We would have to consult with them. In all honesty, I do fear a little bit of what is called NIMBY, which is "not in my back yard." Knowing the position, we would have to consult with residents to make sure that they would be accepting of the act.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Minister. It sounds like she has started to do some homework around this. That is a good thing, but there is model legislation out there already. I am happy to share it with the Minister to try to move this along. I know that the operator who has brought this to my attention is looking at a chemical process, so emissions are really kept to a minimum.

I guess what I am looking for now from the Minister, though, is: can she commit to taking the lead on this issue with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure that there is a timely resolution, within our term, to allow this local business to grow and provide our residents with better services at a lower cost? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I put my hand up and said that I wanted to be a Minister, the biggest thing I talked about was being accountable, being transparent, and talking to people, asking stakeholders what was important before I made major decisions. I have followed that promise within my housing portfolio. I am following it within MACA. In order to keep my promise, I would have to bring that issue to the stakeholders and have them define what the priorities should be for us to move forward in this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 558-18(2):  
INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS IN SCHOOLS

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we heard in the news a lot about this issue about the strengthening teachers instructional practice pilot. We have heard it in the editorial again. It is talking about the negative impact on it. We have heard from the teachers' union of the positive of that. I am trying to get this cleared up. Can the Minister inform this House: is this part of the Education Renewal Framework? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Education Renewal Framework, we have a lot of interesting pilots, a lot of great things that are happening that are going to help improve student outcomes, but on the other side we want to make sure that we are taking care of our teachers. As is heard in the news, they are averaging about 52 hours of work a week. They are hardworking. They are dedicated, committed, go above and beyond to make sure that our students get the best opportunities for success in the future.

The instructional hours, I know it has been debated in the public. Those are just opinions, and I want to make sure that everyone knows that, yes, reducing instructional hours is part of the education renewal. It speaks to improving teacher practice, enhancing teacher wellness, and to the overarching need for change to improve student engagement, learning, as well as outcomes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. In looking at this issue here, some of the things we are talking about are senior high and how we line it up with Alberta. Can the Minister inform this House: are we able to keep the 125 hours of instructional time it requires for our students to get their five-credit courses?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Actually, Alberta is moving away from the standard 125-hours-per-five-credit high school courses through their own high school redesign project. As Members know, we did have a meeting with Minister Eggen from Alberta to discuss those changes to the curriculum. Alberta is a shift away from the standard of 125 hours of instruction for five-credit courses, where students who are involved in the project can now complete courses in less than 125 hours and/or take more time if it is needed. It is based on what the students need. The NWT has always been flexible in this area, part of the education renewal, and we are continuing to follow that direction and continue to look at what Alberta is doing, moving forward.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, some of the things and some of the challenges we are hearing about this change is the diploma. Will this have an impact over the NWT diploma once it is done? Since we are going to be implementing it, will it have an impact on our students and our youth?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I believe this is going to have a very positive impact on our teachers and our youth and people who work in the education system. There will be no changes to the diploma which NWT students currently receive.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I probably have a few more questions, but I will end with this one here today: will the Minister be able to tell us, with this pilot project, will the schools be able to be compliant with the Education Act with respect to instructional hours? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we mentioned, it will be up to 100 hours. It will be flexible, and it is up to the schools to decide, and the principals and the teachers working on the direction that they take.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Written Questions

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 17-18(2): IMPACT OF PROPOSED AURORA COLLEGE PROGRAM CHANGES

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these are written questions addressed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment:

1. With the elimination of the Teacher Education Program, how does the government intend to meet our obligations to Section 62 of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which states, "Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms"?
2. In the absence of a program to train teachers, how will the government maintain the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call in Section 63 of "an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including 'developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum and teaching resources

on Aboriginal Canadians in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools"?

3. Upon elimination of the Social Worker Training Program, and given the dire social deficit in the territory and the immediate hiring of social work program graduates, what is the government's plan going forward to provide competent, homegrown social support services and personnel in Northwest Territories communities?
4. Our own mandate of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly commits us to "foster lifelong learning, skills development, training, and employability" through "increasing K-12 support systems", "expanding opportunities for post-secondary education", and "increasing cultural programming in education," among other goals. If the government has decided it is unnecessary to train our own Northern teachers, what is the plan for achieving these elements of our mandate?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Written questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 18-18(2): INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL HOURS

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on the subject of reducing the total number of instructional hours for students in the NWT schools. At the high school level, Alberta requires 1,000 instructional hours per year while the NWT in the future will require 945 hours. What discussions has the Minister and/or his staff had with Alberta Education about delivering the Alberta high school curriculum in fewer hours than prescribed in that jurisdiction, including details of where and when these discussions took place, who attended and a description of outcomes, and:

1. Has Alberta Education confirmed that even with the reduced hours, NWT students will receive a diploma that is accepted on par with Alberta's for university admission, and if this confirmation has not yet been received, when will it be received;
2. Has there been confirmation that the GNWT will maintain the standard of 125 hours of instructional time for a five credit course as required by the Alberta curriculum, and if not, what will be the consequences of reducing hours on the earning of credits;

3. Who makes the decision about what to remove from the curriculum to meet the reduced instructional hours and on what basis is that decision made; and
4. Will a single standard will be applied across the Northwest Territories for reducing course content in high school to meet reduced instruction hours?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 273-18(2):  
NWT SPECIES 2016-2020: GENERAL STATUS  
RANKS OF ALL WILD SPECIES IN THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "NWT Species 2016-2020: General Status Ranks of all Wild Species in the Northwest Territories." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 274-18(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
497-18(2): EXPANDED ROLE FOR GNWT COURT  
SHERIFFS

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 497-18(2), Expanded Role for GNWT Court Sheriffs." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Motions

MOTION 29-18(2):  
APPOINTMENT OF TWO MEMBERS TO THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL,  
CARRIED

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS Section 48(1) of the Human Rights Act provides for the establishment of an adjudication

panel composed of at least three persons appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS Section 48(4) of the Human Rights Act provides that the members of the panel hold office during good behaviour for a term of four years with the exception of the first members appointed;

AND WHEREAS there are currently two vacancies on the adjudication panel;

AND WHEREAS the Board of Management is tasked with recommending individuals to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make a recommendation to the Commissioner;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Mr. Sheldon Toner of Yellowknife be recommended to the Commission of the Northwest Territories for reappointment as a member of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel effective immediately for a term of four years;

AND FURTHER, that Ms. Emerald Murphy of Yellowknife be recommended to the Commission of the Northwest Territories for appointment as a member of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel effective immediately for a term of four years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. There is a motion on the floor. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Motions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MOTION 30-18(2):  
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO  
FEBRUARY 14, 2017,  
CARRIED

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 9, 2017, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, February 14, 2017;

AND FURTHER, that at any time prior to February 14, 2017, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet

at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. There is a motion is on the floor. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

### Second Reading of Bills

#### BILL 15: ACT TO AMEND THE TOBACCO TAX ACT

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 15, An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act, be read for the second time. This bill amends the Tobacco Tax Act to permit the introduction of a territorial stamp that will facilitate the verification that a tax has been paid on tobacco sold in the Northwest Territories. The act is further amended to require collection of the tax at the time tobacco is acquired by wholesale dealers for the purposes of resale. As a result of this change, retail dealers will no longer be required to be deputy collectors and collectors will no longer be paid commissions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Motion is on the floor. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 15 has had its second reading. It is now referred to standing committee. Masi. Second reading of bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

#### BILL 16: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EDUCATION ACT

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act, be read for the second time. This bill

amends the Education Act to change the age of access to kindergarten programs from five years of age to four years of age. The act is also amended to reduce the minimum hours of instruction required for grades 1 through 12. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Motion is on the floor. To the principle of the bill. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill 16, including its provision to reduce instructional hours in the classroom. I know this has become a bit of a lightning rod in local media recently. However, I believe there are logical reasons that this is a good step forward for our education system. The change in hours will bring NWT schools more in line with the Canadian average. That will make the teaching job more sustainable for teachers who love teaching in the North. It will also make the job more attractive to new teachers considering moving here. We know how important it is to attract and retain the best teachers in order to improve our students' success.

We should also recognize that, despite recent comments, fewer class hours does not mean a smaller workload. Class time with students is important, but preparation is the key to maximizing those classroom hours. Many aspects of teaching happen outside classroom time: planning lessons; assessing student work; extra time with students who need help; communicating with parents; collaboration with other teachers; creating student support plans; report cards; et cetera. The list goes on. All of these extras cannot take place during class time, and they are a crucial part of doing a good job as a teacher.

Successful student achievement is complex and involves many factors, both in and out of schools. To suggest that more class time equals better student success is just not true. Similarly, reducing class hours will not necessarily result in poorer student achievement. For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I speak in favour of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 16 has had its second reading. It is now referred to the standing committee. Masi. Second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 7, Bill 13, Committee Report 6-18(2), Tabled Document 261-18(2), with the Member for Hay

River North in the chair. Prior to that, by the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 18-18(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider business before the House.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 261-18(2), NWT Main Estimates, 2017-2018. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** We will take a short recess and resume with the consideration of the document. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 261-18(2), Main Estimates, 2017-2018. Does the Minister of the Department of Health and Social Services have any opening comments?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I do, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2017-2018 Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services. The total proposed budget for the department is \$423,457,000. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$9.2 million, which is an increase of 2 per cent over the 2016-2017 Main Estimates.

These estimates continue to support the GNWT's objective of ensuring a strong, sustainable future for the government and its programs by managing expenditures due to limited revenue growth.

Highlights of proposed budget include:

- forced growth of \$16.17 million;
- sunsets and other adjustments of \$10 million;
- funding for initiatives totalling \$2 million; and
- reductions of just under \$1.6 million.

The 2017-2018 Main Estimates include an increase of \$8.6 million from the 2017-2018 business plan reviewed by standing committee in September. This

additional funding includes allocations to staff to operationalize the new Hay River health centre and the Norman Wells health and social services long-term care centre. The new positions for these facilities in the 2017-2018 total 24: one in Hay River, 23 in Norman Wells.

Increased funding has been included to continue to work to move all health and social services authorities to operating on common information platforms supported by the TSC. The budget also includes \$750,000 in new funding to address the needs of the homeless population by expanding hours of the day shelter and establishing a sober incentive program in Yellowknife.

The department's proposed spending for 2017-2018 continues to support the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. To support seniors and elders to remain in their communities, \$877,000 has been allocated for the operation of the new Jimmy Erasmus Seniors Home in Behchoko, which includes funding for four new positions. The budget also includes \$331,000 in new funding for two positions to meet our regulatory obligations as a result of devolution. That concludes my opening remarks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Do you have any witnesses you would like to bring into the House.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my right is Debbie DeLancey, the deputy minister of Health and Social Services. On my left is Jeannie Mathison, who is the director of finance with Health and Social Services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. I would just like to remind everyone to conclude your statements with a "thank you, Mr. Chair," or some phrase like that, just so our tech team knows to switch the microphones.

I will now open the floor to general comments. First of all, welcome to the witnesses. I will now open the floor to general comments. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when we are looking at this budget, I am looking at the stuff we are missing right now and why the rationale. We need this in there. I guess our first initiative we talked about was youth-in-crisis. Unfortunately, we have seen a lot of crisis and a lot of deaths in our ridings lately. I think we need to be spending more time on the prevention, intervention,

that is needed. I am not just talking about youth, but I am talking about the whole generation. People are passing life through crisis and that. I am looking at the department to put in initiatives and put more funding into it.

The second challenge I find is the anti-poverty funding. I have been to two of the last two anti-poverty conferences as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and I have attended previously as part of my job. I understand the department is doing some really good work. Unfortunately, I find the funding is limited. We only get to spend little bits of money across the board. I have heard the department talk about the importance of an avenue for them to leverage other money from other agencies and other organizations out there. However, I think we need to put a little bit more money into it. I honestly do.

I think the work that the department and these NGOs is doing is greatly needed. They are doing a really good job. My struggle, though, is that we are only putting \$500 or half a million dollars into it. There are over a million, a million and a half, requests. That, to me, is a challenge. I honestly believe that more money needs to be put in there because I think that would help the NGOs do their job, but also the department to continue to do their good work. It is kind of a catch-22.

I understand what the government and the department are saying, but I also firmly believe in my heart, if we want to help these people, this is what we need to do. We need to help these organizations to grow and do better work that they are out there doing right now. To me, it's their nickeling-and-diming. That is where they are. They are pinching pennies to get it. It's sad to hear that this is the direction. I am not blaming the department because you put a half a million dollars in there, but I think we need a little bit more.

My other concern I want to talk about is the homecare services, and I understand that the department is working on the ability to put a plan together and they're working on that. I appreciate the government for the work they're doing and they're not trying to rush in, but at the same time we need this money, I think, for our homecare. However, if there's no agreement from the department because they're working on it, then I'm looking at the department to make a commitment that if they're successful in doing the work that they're doing and they're able to get it done before our budget year is done they will be committed to try and get a supplement back into this government, so we're able to implement the great ideas in the work that they're doing for our respected seniors and our elders in the communities, because they are very important to me and everyone here,

including my colleagues from Cabinet, and I understand that, and the department.

If the plan is done, I'm hoping that the Minister can make the commitment to actually implement this. Besides that, I have to congratulate the department on the work they've done. I've been very happy overall. I've been able to, with the opportunity with the Minister, to have some discussions with the deputy minister on some ideas I've had to help benefit the youth and the seniors and people in the territory, and I appreciate that opportunity.

As the Minister says, sometimes we may not agree to agree and we might have difference of opinions, but we're trying to work on the same direction towards that, so I thank the department for that, and I thank the committee and everybody here allowing me to first. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Do I have any further opening comments? Mr. McNeely.

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to going through this department here knowing the fact that one of our buildings is going to be coming on-stream for this fiscal year, the Regional Health Centre in Norman Wells. I look forward to a budget and transitional accounting that's in the book to ensure that there's allowances there for the coverage of unforeseen costs or preparatory costs for when the building opens up and then we kind of know and have a good understanding that there is funding for O and M and unforeseen potential costs prior to the building opening up for services, including the staffing as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. McNeely. I will allow everyone's general comments and then I will allow the Minister to respond. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few comments to the budget. You know, I was hoping to see, once again, staffing for nursing in this budget. I haven't seen that yet, but I know the department is doing a good job in that department. I'll just mention the community at Tsiigehtchic really appreciates when we do have the nurse during freeze-up and break-up. Really, the community comes together and welcomes whoever comes to the community.

One thing: during my last constituency meeting someone brought up a great idea which I will be doing a statement later during session on, but, you know what, they recommended that we have someone in our hospitals similar to a counsellor but more there to help the patients, to help communicate, whether it's the doctors or the nurses. You know, a lot of patients really have a

challenge to communicate, whether they're elders or even middle-aged people in the communities have a hard time to communicate with strangers, and I think that that's something we really seriously need to look at in the future. You know, someone solely dedicated, whether it's in our regional offices or in our community offices.

Even a pilot project was what they were thinking of doing, and I'll have a little more information on that later during session, but I think that's a great idea. Also, more supports. You know, Members brought this up a number of times over the last few months, is many of our smaller communities have been really hit hard by suicides, mostly our young people. We really need more supports in that area. Just recently over the holidays we had one in my riding. You know, it's very difficult for the families. Two years back we had the same thing happen in our family and you know there needs to be -- whether it's a help line, or who knows. A lot more supports in this field. You know, even today it's surprising that we're still having these sort of things happen in our communities, but we do need to make sure we support those in need.

Ambulance services. I know it has been sort of put aside to MACA, but I think it should be a joint working relationship between departments. I know they are working with the community at Tsiigehtchic with a pilot project there, and I look forward to the outcome or the beginning of that. That's about it for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Any further general comments? Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to start off with some good things, and I did mention this in my reply to the budget address, but there are some good things in this budget. There is some extra money in here for extended hours for a homeless shelter here in Yellowknife. There's also some additional money for a sobering centre here in Yellowknife. Those are some of the good things in here.

One of the biggest issues for me with this particular budget is the sustainability of our healthcare system, and this was something that was raised to me during a recent constituency meeting, as well. We want to give some credit to the Minister and his department for leading with the transformation exercise to Territorial Health and Social Services Authority, the Regional Wellness Councils, and I think we've got some extra upfront costs in setting these things up, but there will be some long-term dividends that are paid down the road.

That's the same kind of approach that we as Regular MLAs took in some of the additional spending that we want to see put into the budget.

So that's where we're coming from, but one of the biggest issues, I think, for us in terms of sustainability is the recent deal that was signed with the federal government. In my humble opinion, it was not a good deal. It was less than the original deal that was offered to the provinces and territories. We were only informed about that deal by e-mail just a day or two before it was actually signed. There was no consultation with Regular MLAs. No explanation of why we had to sign off on it at that point or why we couldn't wait for a better deal and why we couldn't continue to work with the larger provinces. There was no news release and no technical briefing that's been offered to us.

According to the Premier, it's going to leave us with a shortfall of at least \$1.35 million a year over the next 10 years. So I think one of the other big issues around sustainability of our healthcare system is our growing seniors' population, and I know that the Minister and the department had put together a report on our long-term care needs. That's a good first step. I know that there's some additional \$500,000 in the budget for the Seniors Housing Repair program. That's helpful to promote aging in place, but Regular MLAs, we ask for \$1.5 million to be added into the budget. So we're weren't quite, I guess, where we would like to be.

I know that the Minister also said that he's developing a continuing care services action plan, and that is a good thing. It is going to bring together a number of these streams. The difficulty is there is no money in the budget this year for that, so the earliest we are going to see any money is 2018-19. That is not to say that the department is not working on those issues now, not spending money on those things. I know we need to do the work, but I had expected to see some money in the budget to help promote that kind of work. I think that is some of the extra money that the Regular MLAs would like to see added into the budget. We want that kind of investment now. That is why we suggested that there be \$1.5 million added into the budget for homecare now. That will bring, again, longer-term cost savings, and we view that as a strategic investment.

Similarly, we want to see an increase in anti-poverty funding of \$500,000. That would essentially be a doubling of the current program. I have been to a couple of these roundtable meetings. I think they are helpful in terms of networking, but we have to move beyond networking. We need to start to work towards strategic investment of the money that is available and looking at how we actually measure progress towards the elimination of poverty in the Northwest Territories.

In any event, Regular MLAs are seeking more money for the anti-poverty fund, and I would be

happy to work with the Minister to try to move towards more strategic investment of that money. We get great value from our NGOs. I know the Minister knows that, but we have also got to think about how to evaluate progress.

Regular MLAs are also seeking an investment of \$500,000 for youth-in-crisis to help us deal with the epidemic of suicides and addictions. We have also suggested a mobile intervention team. That would be helpful. I think there is probably some assistance and support for that available from the federal government.

I think one other idea I want to put on the table in terms of how we can contribute towards the sustainability of our healthcare system is that we need to work with provinces and the territories towards a national pharmacare program. That was in the news here recently, across the country. CBC did some great work in looking at that issue. They have a national pharmacare program in New Zealand, and their drug costs are a fraction of what we have to pay here in Canada. I know we have some arrangements in place, working with the western provinces and territories to get a limited number of drugs at reduced costs, but we need a national program. I will have some questions for the Minister about how we are working together to try to get that national pharmacare program up and going.

I think there are also some issues with regard to drug costs for folks here. Some people are covered under non-insured health benefits. Other people are covered through extended healthcare benefits. Our government employees, we pay into a plan. So some of those costs are covered, but, if you are not covered by any of those programs, you are in real trouble. I see the Minister shaking his head. He knows that. That is why I think we need to work together to get a national pharmacare program in place.

I do have some questions for the Minister around the status of the NIHB negotiations and where we are at in trying to renegotiate that. I also have some questions around the status of the action plan on disabilities. Of course, I will have some questions on one of my favourite topics, midwifery services. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to bring forward those initial comments. It is a good start with the budget, but Regular MLAs want to see some additional investment to pay off long-term dividends. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Next, I have Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank my honourable friend for his comments. I think he has done an excellent job of summarizing

the concerns many of us have with the budget and areas that need improvement. I will just repeat a few of those.

The Regular Members have asked for \$500,000 for youth-in-crisis funding and to support a mobile crisis intervention team to address our atrocious rates of suicide, and especially suicide affecting young people in our communities; another \$500,000 in anti-poverty funding to support our NGOs in delivering what I would say are essential services to our communities in supporting the objectives of reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty in the Northwest Territories; and, of course, perhaps the most important aspect this government needs to focus on, \$1.5 million for homecare funding. This would be a way to roll out more homecare workers into each of our communities and to support transportation services for seniors and elders who have mobility issues and need to access these services. It is no secret that our population is aging and aging at a rapid pace that our healthcare system can't keep up with. We need to invest in sustainable solutions, which start with prevention.

I think there are good things in this budget. The work done to date on homelessness, and especially homelessness affecting Yellowknife, which is where my riding sits, is commendable and is a really good start. The sobering centre is a foundational project that can lead to other initiatives like a managed alcohol program and other services like that that currently have no home. I am looking forward to the success of these projects. With that being said, we still need to do work on those other areas.

Mental health is becoming increasingly important. Having quality and effective mental health supports will allow us to reduce the rates of addiction, the rates of suicide, increase productivity and employability. It all stems from properly supporting mental health, and I think we are still coming to grips with it.

We see a lot of action plans, a lot of strategies, and the department does not appear to be in a position to really move in an impactful way apart from those action plans and strategies. We need to do more, and we certainly are in a position, as we've discussed as a committee, to start funding some of these initiatives now. Hopefully, the department will be in a position to take that funding and do something with it sooner than later. In particular, our young people are in crisis and they need the support that they can't find at home. We need to offer a helping hand and ensure that they have healthy, safe communities. I look forward to further discussion of this budget and the long-term goals of the Department of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Next, Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think there are a lot of good items and a lot of money well-spent or planned to be well-spent in this budget. I just want to touch on, in no particular priority, some of the items that I will be exploring as we go through the budget with Health and Social Services.

Long-term care, I think, is something that the department is heading in the right direction. I am very pleased with the fact that we are able to provide long-term care regionally, the fact that people from Fort Smith can go into long-term care in their own community, Hay River. Hay River encompasses my community of Fort Resolution. Yellowknife long-term care encompasses the other three communities in my riding of Detah, Ndilo, and Lutselk'e.

I was very pleased to see that Behchoko is increased, doubled in size, for long-term care, and then recently the discussion about providing some continued extended care in Stanton Hospital, I thought that was good. I think complementing long-term care is homecare services. I think that we do need long-term care, and, ultimately, the department and the Minister know that we will need increased long-term care. Homecare services, our position as Regular Members is homecare service is going to slow the need for long-term care, so we certainly want to see increased work in the homecare services area.

NIHB is also something that I am interested in hearing about. It is the Treaty Indian people like myself, eligible for NIHB. We have that group of individuals, some Treaty people are covered with Non-Insured Health Benefits; Metis have coverage extended. There are seniors that have coverage. Individuals that are indigent have coverage and then there is that group that have to buy their own private insurance. Maybe looking at that as a possibility for trying to cover everyone in the NWT one way or another is something that we should look to.

I am also interested in hospital stays. There has always been something that I thought we should look at targeting, and that is who is using the hospitals and at what cost and why. Why are they using the hospital? If someone is just old, I understand that, but are there other groups that are using the hospitals more than they should be? Maybe looking at that.

I have always felt that prevention was a really big item for this department. If they are looking and starting to concentrate on which groups are smoking, which groups are drinking more, and

which groups don't have access to healthy foods, and which groups are not exercising, for that matter. I think that type of knowledge by the department, and they probably do have -- of course they have all that information, but to employ it in a big way, I think, is very important. Language services, Aboriginal food at the hospital I think is something that we should continue and maybe increase in some fashion.

Of course, a very exciting part of the department is the health transformation, especially the territorial doctors. If we could get all our doctors living in the NWT, it is good for many things. It is good for the economy. You start to employ all the doctors right in the Northwest Territories, whether they are living in Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, Norman Wells, Fort Simpson, Behchoko, it is still one way or another. If they can't live in Behchoko, then they could live in Yellowknife. It is better than them living in Nova Scotia. I think that is something that the department is making headway into, that area as part of the health transformation. I am pleased with that.

We have to increase the amount of work that we are doing in mental health and addictions. Mental health and addictions is a huge cost driver for this department. I have talked to a lot of the community nurses, and it is the same thing in the small communities. I think it is very similar in the city and similar in the regional centres that mental health and addictions is probably the biggest cost driver that we have in the whole health system in the NWT. I think some of the work that is being done in early childhood development, prenatal, healthy families, healing on the land are all initiatives that this department should be behind 100 per cent. If there is money needed in those areas, those are huge returns on investment, especially early childhood development, prenatal. The returns on those investments are huge.

At the other end of the spectrum, of course, are seniors, supporting the seniors. Seniors who are living healthy are also important. I know this department supports seniors, supports persons with disabilities, and of course I encourage that.

I think we need to look at Child and Family Services and how we manage that whole portfolio. I think that it is important. I know that there has been quite a shift in this department from working with children in care in their own homes. I think that is important. We still have children who are being apprehended. We still have the high need for foster care in the communities and in the regional centres and in Yellowknife. I think that is something that maybe we should really, really look into why. Why do we have that? We hear national numbers saying that Child and Family Services have more children in foster care right now across the country than they have

had at the height of residential schools. More children than in residential schools. That is a huge number.

When we hear lots of stories about kids going into hotels and things like that and the tragedies of some of that down south, we haven't done that here, I don't believe. I think that we have a system here that works well. Of course, my belief is that we have social workers from the NWT. I think that will improve the system.

Medical travel, again, is something that keeps going up all the time. This department has invested into some sort of tele-health. I know I have seen it at the emergency, where it works very well with the system, with nurses in the small communities having a direct dialogue with the doctors at Stanton or the emergency. I know the name of that has changed, and I forget what the name of that is now, but I know it is a very good initiative.

The last thing I want to touch on is chronic diseases. It is something, I think, during the deliberation of this budget for health and social services I will be talking a bit about how we are dealing with chronic diseases as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Do we have any other general comments? Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some thoughts in terms of going into the section of the business plan and programs, maybe highlighting my language at a later point in terms of just some of the key issues affecting my riding. For the most part, the Department of Health and Social Services is the biggest department, at \$415 million.

The big thing that I have been aware of, and monitoring, is just the whole transformation initiative in terms of coming to one single authority. What do we keep? As my colleagues have outlined, there are generally some positive initiatives that are being led by this department. A few of them, maybe, I can mention are on-the-land programs. I know there have been efforts to try to expand upon it, but the concept behind that is to ensure that, not only in the urban setting or the community setting, that you can bring wellness and mental health initiatives for individuals, or for families for that matter, but you can actually bring them out into the environment of nature. That is the strength of First Nations people, being out on the land. To try to at least be out there relative to nature, to try to derive some strength, whether it is spiritual or physical, but at the same time emotional, and also the mental capacity, ensuring that you feel at peace out there and that those things that you can build upon as strength.

For me, that is a positive. I look forward to more advances in that area.

Of course, I can't help but feel concerned in terms of the things that directly affect my constituents that periodically I hear of. The culturally appropriate care in terms of one example is translation, having that available, especially for elders when they go into the health centres. There are issues in terms of medical escorts. There are concerns in terms of Child and Family Services in terms of how the changes that came about from the Auditor General's Report and how it's being tackled in terms of bringing some very substantive changes in terms of some of the systemic problems that we've come across, and I look forward to the ongoing initiatives in terms of trying to complete that whole exercise.

For the most part, in terms of the transformation changes in terms of moving to a single authority, just recently I was in my home community of Fort Providence and I was made aware that the first, more likely inaugural meeting of the Dehcho Regional Wellness Council was being held in Fort Providence. So I had an opportunity to be there and witness the members of the communities have their first meeting and it was interesting. I look forward to their renewed vigour to ensure that communities do have input in the effectiveness of the healthcare system in the NWT and particularly for the Deh Cho riding.

The question that I asked in the House was, how is it that's going to change in terms of, whereas before we had health boards, now we have regional wellness councils. How is that going to play a part in terms of protocols? Do I, as an MLA, work along with the regional councils, or is it another conduit in terms of addressing the community, concerns of constituents? I was trying to figure that out, and it's ongoing.

At the same time, there are some concerns in terms of the involvement of -- you know, we have within my riding, Hay River Health Authority and, of course, the Dehcho Regional Wellness Council, and we have two administrative bodies. It could be good, it could be advantageous, because we have a brand new hospital in Hay River and at the same time another one coming up in Yellowknife, and, of course, access to Fort Simpson. So there's always, in terms how do we fit in as a community, questions like that. Sometimes leaders ponder: how do we fit in in terms of ensuring that our concerns are being addressed? I understand there might be some growing issues in terms of whether it's the Hay River Health Authority that could address matters from the Hay River Reserve or is it maybe through the Dehcho Regional Wellness Council. So questions like that will probably come up once in a while.

The other matter is just in terms of ensuring that when we do have health centres. In Fort Providence we have, of course, with the communities of Kakisa, being on the road system. There's Fort Simpson, too, as well. Kakisa and Enterprise, we don't have any building or structure to house nurses or visiting doctors. So when people need to go see a health practitioner or a doctor they have to travel either to Fort Providence or Hay River. So there's always the desire for those communities to try and get more access to the programs and services of the department, particularly for healthcare, so I just wanted to mention that.

There have been some advances in terms of the Hay River Reserve. Recently it was noted that we did establish the Judith Fabian Wellness Centre there, and just recently there was an effort to try to bring health services to the people on the reserve. So I think that's been a good gesture, a good step forward, and I'd like the department to try to build on that; of having more healthcare services for people on the reserve.

In terms of some of the other matters that I wanted to highlight, too, is there are ongoing matters in terms of the treaty rights and the federal government in terms of how it is that they're involved with the delivery of healthcare in the NWT. More so for the reserves in terms of how it is that there's an obligation that needs to be upheld by the GNWT plus the federal government in terms of their involvement in bringing more programs and services to the reserve. I think that needs to be highlighted. That's a matter that has been brought to my attention by the local leadership of the K'atloodeeche First Nations.

At the same time my belief is that I think more could be done in terms of wellness and healing, especially in the communities, and that perhaps it could be this department that is the lead agency in terms of engaging the federal government in terms of bringing more resources so that there's adequate counselling services for individuals, for families that need help, who want to lead a better life in their communities and a better future for the well-being of, not only our communities but for the whole entire North. My belief is that this department could perhaps maybe be the lead agency in terms of bringing some discussions at that level.

The other matter that I wanted to just maybe raise in terms of reminding this department is that we still have a treatment centre on the Hay River Reserve and the fate of that treatment centre on the reserve hasn't been decided upon. I know there's been some dialogue between the GNWT through this department and the K'atloodeeche First Nation, and I don't know where that's at. There's still an interest to see how it is that facility could be used.

A point was made that most alcohol and drug treatment centres that exist in most provinces are run by First Nations people. The point is that, unfortunately, the statistics is that what plagues our communities is alcohol and drugs, and unfortunately, statistically speaking it is First Nations that have issues and challenges with this. So the point was made, well, perhaps it should be our First Nations people that provide those counselling services because they have an understanding of the culture and the issues and maybe they can provide that expertise of trying to share their experiences in terms of trying to be successful in terms of managing that problem.

I just wanted to highlight maybe just in my language, too, in terms of the need for homecare services. It can be said, you know, as an example in Fort Providence we have an aging senior population. Generally in the NWT that's what we're facing and there's a need for homecare services and we've been trying to build upon that, and I can't emphasize more that we're expecting a burgeoning population 10 years, 15 years down the road. Not only should we look at senior care facilities, but expanding upon the homecare services in terms of bringing services into the communities. Elders who make a conscious choice to stay at home for as long as they can, and sometimes they're not mobile and those services have to be brought to their home. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Do we have any further general comments? Seeing none. I will allow the Minister to respond. Minister, you have 10 minutes to respond, keeping in mind that there will be time as we go through the main estimates to respond to each issue as they're brought up. So, Mr. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Ten minutes?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Only 10 minutes.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Is that a new rule?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Minister, there are 10 minutes. Each Member gets 10 minutes to make a statement, then you have 10 minutes to respond. So please continue. I'll reset the clock for you.

---Laughter

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I'm pretty sure that's a new rule, Mr. Chair, but I'll do my best. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I hear the Members loud and clear, and there are definitely a couple of recurrent themes in there. Earlier this year the Minister of Finance and I had an opportunity to meet with the Member from Kam Lake and the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh

to discuss budgets and try to negotiate our way forward. At that time we clearly articulated that we agree with committee 100 per cent. The areas of homecare, mental health and addictions, and poverty are areas that we want to invest in. We believe that, with this budget that's in front of you today, it positions us very strongly to make those investments starting in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

I hear you clearly indicating that there's a desire to move on some of those things today, and I would love to, as well. The problem is, in some of those areas, we haven't quite finished the work that is necessary to even help us quantify what some of those dollars are, but we are diligently working to find ways to improve homecare services here in the Northwest Territories. We are working diligently to make significant progress in our responses to mental health and addictions.

With respect to homecare, we are currently finalizing the NWT Care Services Action Plan. This is scheduled to be done this spring; by March 31<sup>st</sup>, we're hoping. This will clearly identify priorities for next steps; things we need to do.

There are a couple of things, and we already know this based on the work that we've done, is we really need to understand what services are necessary to residents in the Northwest Territories. There is zero consistency across this territory as a result of having multiple authorities. We are really a fragmented system across the Northwest Territories. So we basically have to define where we need to be. What are the services that are required by communities?

The next thing that we'll need to do is we'll need to assess the gaps, recognizing as I said, every authority had their own take on what level of coverage of services they want to provide. So we need to go out there and really compare to where we need to be. We need to figure out where we are, so we need to assess the gap. At that point, we'll be in a solid position to quantify what resources we need to fill that gap. We're obviously trying to get that work done as quickly as we can, but it is a fairly significant amount of work, and we will be moving forward as soon as we table that action plan or bring that action plan to committee at the end of March.

Beginning in a new fiscal year, we plan to actually start some of that work that I've just talked about, a comprehensive review of what services are out there compared to, you know, what it is that we think we need. There is some federal investment coming; we don't know the full amount. We don't know the parameters under which they want to release it, but you know there's some things we think we can do to actually help us in that planning

process so we can actually have a meaningful discussion in business planning for 2018-2019.

We want to explore how we can better integrate homecare services with our primary care services. There are successful models across the country that we want to examine. This will help us develop the new model for home and community care, but it might involve new scopes of practice, and in some of our side conversations, I've heard some really great ideas. You know, looking at paying family caregivers to support elderly or disabled family members to help live in their homes longer, possibly developing a paid community caregiver position, somebody who could help with some of the activities of daily living, shovelling sidewalks, shovelling driveways, helping with some cooking in the home, helping with some cleaning in the home, those types of things.

This model could really free up some homecare nurses to provide the services that homecare nurses need to be providing, which might include wound control or some of the other things that they need to do. We could really make some definite plans for allocating some of the new federal resources that are available. Some of the other things we can use, I mean, once we figured out what parameters or what areas we could spend that federal money is to document some of the best practices that might work in our jurisdictions, develop a model for care, i.e. the paid community caregiver, which I think there's some real opportunity there.

The big gap in our system right now is the lack of assessment tools for our community health nurses to use when trying to figure out what level of services a resident needs. We need to do that work. Until that work is done, we won't really be able to accurately quantify, you know, exactly how many positions we need. So we need to get that work done.

There's some desire, you know, to put some money in to get some feet on the street. We need to understand and we need to make sure that we get the right feet on the street. We need to make sure we do this work upfront. Now, there is a lot of work that I've outlined with respect to homecare, and it's our plan to have all that work done in time for the 2018-2019 business planning so that we can bring that information to committees, have the discussions on where we set our priorities, and as the Minister has committed to the two Members previously that's going to help them form how we set priorities. These are priorities; they're mandate priorities, and the government is willing to commit to these areas, the areas that have been identified.

We just feel that we need to be ready so that we can make informed decisions as opposed to putting

in maybe the wrong positions upfront or getting tied to positions that don't have long-term benefits. However, as we move to 2018-19, if we get to a point where we think we can move sooner on some of these things, we're prepared to come forward with a sup and present a sup to FMB for the possibility of supplementary funding. I can't guarantee that we'll even get to that point, but we're certainly open to doing that if we get there.

With respect to mental health and addictions, I was asked some questions today, and I think the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh had some really solid comments when he was doing his Member's statement. We're moving forward on the development of those action plans, so those action plans in and of themselves will help quantify and help form discussions between ourselves and committee when we're setting priorities and setting fiscal resources towards these initiatives for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

That plan, the first action plan, will be done this summer, so we'll have lots of time to share and discuss and talk before we get to business planning and work together to set the priorities where we're going to allocate resources in the future. In the meantime, we're continuing to seek other opportunities to get money from outside agencies, outside parties who might be able to help us do some of those things upfront.

Anti-poverty, obviously this is an area that I'm incredibly interested in. I've been working to help address poverty in the Northwest Territories for years. A couple of Members talked about it. I think the Members are exactly right. There are a couple things we need to do. We really need to come up with an evaluation framework. I talked about this the other day. In order to get an evaluation framework, I think we finally have to break that impasse and come up with a definition that everybody could agree to, and we've struggled with that between ourselves, NGOs, and our partners.

At this time, we don't have those resources to put into anti-poverty, but at the same time we did increase money available through income support to individuals who help individuals who are on low income get food, get groceries, feed kids, live healthy lives. We did, through solid discussion and input from Regular Members, we have fully come to fund JK, which is going to put up to \$12,000 in the pockets of many individuals in the Northwest Territories, certainly those with four-year-olds. We need to do some work around anti-poverty. There's no question. We continue to invest in housing.

In Health and Social Services, as we move forward with Building Stronger Families, one of the opportunities we have is when families are struggling they can now come to us for voluntary

support, and in some of those situations we can provide funding. We are providing a pilot project in Behchoko right now where individuals who are struggling and unable to pay their rent, they can come to us in Building Strong Families, and we actually have been able to help a couple people pay rent so they don't lose their homes and the children don't end up in a neglect situation.

So we're moving on a number of these things trying to move forward. So that goes to sort of the main priority areas. We're with committee; we agree with committee. These are areas that need investment. We're prepared to do it, but I'm simply asking for time to finish the work. If we get the work done in time and we feel comfortable with all stakeholders, including yourselves, that we can move forward on some of these areas, we're absolutely prepared to discuss possibility of sups with the Minister of Finance and certainly prepared to financing into these areas in the future.

I don't have a clock.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** One minute.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I don't even know where to go now. There are so many questions. I'll stop. I've addressed, I think, the three big ones. I know I'll be asked more questions on those, but just in closing before we go to line by line, there's no question that Cabinet agrees with committee. There's zero. These are mandate items. We're 100 per cent in, we're going to move forward with this work, we're going to work with committee, we're going to get it done, and we'll be able to have informed discussions about how to set our financial priorities in the best interests of the people, but without that work being done it's a shot in the dark. Let's get it done and let's get it done right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Does committee agree we proceed to the detail in the tabled document? Committee agrees. As has become custom, we will defer consideration of the departmental total until after we consider the activity summaries. The first activity summary begins on page 159, Health and Social Services, Administrative and Support Services, and continues up until page 162. Are there any comments or questions on page 159? Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask a question in terms of the reporting relationship in light of the changes to the one authority through the transformation initiative in terms of trying to streamline reporting. Could maybe the Minister highlight, just maybe outline in general, the relationship between his office and the district offices and the health centres at the community level in terms of raising some significant points in

terms of decision-making and perhaps information sharing on patients, things of that nature? If he could maybe just highlight how that's going to work as the move to a single authority has almost been implemented? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, much of that is actually legislated. One of the differences between the old system and the new system is, there are actually some lines of clear accountability that never really existed in the old system. In this system, the Minister is ultimately responsible. The Minister is responsible for selecting a chair and board members of the Territorial Authority who are providing some management direction to the operation of the healthcare system, the delivery system.

In the delivery system, there is a COO, or a CEO at the top of the authority who is the supervisor of the regional COOs. They also have a secondary responsibility to work with the chairs of the individual wellness councils, helping them tailor information at a local and regional level, but ultimately, their reporting relationship is to the CEO.

The deputy minister reports to the Minister and is responsible for the ministerial functions of Health and Social Services, where the CEO is responsible for the delivery mechanisms. Not all those functions have been fully transferred yet. We're still in a transformation phase.

When an individual has an issue, a patient or resident, we're strongly encouraging them to engage with quality assurance so that their issues can be reviewed, examined, and dealt with, keeping in mind at all times our obligations under the Health Information Act, which is to ensure that privacy is maintained.

As for communication with MLAs, as an example, when an individual raises an issue with an MLA, we require that MLA to get a consent form so that I and my staff can look into their issues because I, even as Minister, cannot look at somebody's personal information or health-related information without their consent.

All this is articulated within the legislation on how that whole structure works as far as who is accountable to whom. I'm not 100 per cent sure I got the Member's question exactly right. I hope I'm on track.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** No further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. We'll move to information items on pages 161 and 162. Do we have any comments on pages 161 and 162 before we move to the activity total? Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if the Minister could give us an update on the status of the employees working for the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am assuming the Member is asking where we are as far as bringing them into the public service. We are in the same place we were last year. We have not moved forward at this point. We still want to bring them in, but as I said in the previous government and early in this government, there are a number of things that have to happen first. We're kind of waiting to see what the lay of the land is, waiting for a number of collective agreements to be completed so we know what the lay of the land is. They are still ongoing. It has been quite longer than I think any of us anticipated. Once we know what the lay of the land is, we will be able to dig in a little bit more, figure out what the costs are, pension transfers, et cetera. We continue to quantify what some of those costs are going to be so that we are ready when the time comes. We believe that transfer of Hay River employees into public service could be anywhere from \$18 to \$23 million. Those numbers fluctuate from time to time. I have heard quite a range.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions on this side.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Further debate, pages 161 and 162. Do we have any comments or questions? Seeing none, we will move to page 160, the operations expenditure summary. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A couple of questions here. The fees and payments and travel lines seem to be declining over time, and I'm just curious to know what's going on with those two items. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, with respect to travel, we have worked hard to sort of control our travel and make sure that we're maximizing any travel that we have to do, and

finding other ways to get the work done that may not require some travel. It was part of our reduction plan, and we have found that we have been able to maintain the work necessary even with the reduced travel. The fees and payments, one of the things that has occurred there is the Chief Public Health Office, there's been some functions transferred into the Territorial Authority. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** No further questions. Thank, you, Mr. O'Reilly.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Further to page 160. Seeing no further questions, I will call the page. Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, operations expenditure summary, activity total, \$80,987,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, committee. We will move to ambulatory care services, which begins on page 163. There's activity description on 163, and an information item on 165. Questions or comments to those two pages? I see no questions. I will move to the operations expenditure summary, page 164. Do we have comments or questions on page 164? I see no questions. I will call the page. Health and Social Services, ambulatory care services, operations expenditure summary, activity total, \$64,560. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, committee. Moving on to community health programs, which begins on page 166. Are there comments on the initial page 166? Questions? Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think it is probably the place where I will ask my usual question about midwifery services, the status of the territorial program, and services in Yellowknife. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to answer the question here about the dollars for midwifery action of the nursing page. It is up to committee.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly, would you like to wait?

**MR. O'REILLY:** I'm happy to wait, Mr. Chair. I might have another question. Is this where there might be some discussion of the action plan on disabilities?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Chair, we think this is probably the right section.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give us an update on the status of the action plan on disabilities, where we are at with it? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I laughed, and it was funny, but just to be clear, the reason that we are not 100 per cent sure it is this section is because there is no budget for the work that we are doing. We are doing it with staff who actually cross a number of divisions and sections, but this seems as good a section as any, given that a number of the staff who are helping with this are in this division.

Mr. Chair, I will admit that I did not anticipate that Health and Social Services would be the first department up when it comes to budget discussions. We haven't usually been the first department, so I did intend to send a letter to committee. We are actually in the process of drafting it. We were supposed to be done the plan by the end of March, and in discussion with some of our stakeholders and our advisory panel; what has been suggested to me is that it is more important that we get this plan right as opposed to right now. We have struggled to sort of get agreement on some of the initial information that we have been pulling together.

I think it is going along well. It's just slower than anticipated. We won't be done on March 31<sup>st</sup>. I was going to come to committee and ask if we could have a briefing, just to give everybody an update, but we anticipate it will probably take a couple more months, probably three to four more months to get to the point where all the stakeholders are satisfied with the project and the product, before I'm prepared to come and have the discussion with committee on where we are, and where we go next. My apologies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the response from the Minister. Can he, though,

provide some assurance that there have been consultations, particularly with the Council for the Disabled? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can confirm that absolutely. The executive director is the chair of the reference panel for the NGOs that we have put together. The executive director is the chair. We have been working with them. They are one of the groups that suggested to us that we need to make sure we get this right as opposed to right now, so we are working with them and even more so as we move forward into the next step, which is going past the inventory and into the action plans.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is all I have for now. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to follow up a discussion that we had during the business plan review about the status of the grant-in-kind for the Rockhill Family Housing program. The department was to look at reinstating the accounting for the grant-in-kind. It sounds like some paperwork needed to be done. Is it possible to get an update on the status of the grant-in-kind to Rockhill Family Housing program? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if you turn to page 168, you will see the Rockhill apartments, which is the money I believe the Member is referring to. It is back in the budget. Just as a note, the lease does expire in 2018, and we are currently working with the YMCA to do a bit of an assessment of the space: is it still the right space? Does it still meet the needs? Will it continue to meet the needs?

Ultimately, though, just to be clear, we are committed to supporting the programs and services being delivered by Rockhill. We do have the option for a 10-year lease extension. We just want to work with them to make sure that that building is still meeting their needs, but we are 100 per cent in, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Rockhill is almost 50 years old. The plumbing system is going. The electrical system and fire suppression systems have been upgraded, but its lease on life is in fact coming to an end. Has the department started planning for where this program will be offered when Rockhill is finally declared dead? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have not done that work yet, but will be working with them. We are committed to working with them to look at the space to see what kind of life we have left and, if there is any life left, what needs to be done. Whether or not someday we do have to move from that building, we will work with them to find alternative solutions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that response concerns me greatly because what I have heard the Minister say consistently today is that various projects are delayed and behind schedule. This is a place where people live, and so there can't be any delay in meeting their needs, so I am distressed that there is no planning under way for a replacement. I am not an engineer, but I can tell you that that building is clapped out unless somebody is willing to spend major money retrofitting the plumbing system and the heating system. I would feel better about the future of transitional housing for clients across the NWT but taking place here in Yellowknife if I knew that there was at least a plan to plan to replace Rockhill. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Green. Would the Minister like to respond?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry that the Member is distressed. I don't know how to be more clear. We are committed to working with Rockhill. The Yellowknife regional office manages that contract. I understand that they are prepared to have some discussions with them and start looking at the building to see if there is any potential future there or whether or not it is absolute we have got to find another location, but we are committed to working with them.

We have no interest in seeing those people hit the street. We are interested in working with the organization to make sure those people continue to be housed, and we will do what we need to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** No further questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. We will open the discussion up to include pages 168 to 170, as well. Next, I have Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am looking at page 167, residential care for adults and children. I would like to first ask the Minister: on the expenditure category of this page, where are the expenditure categories that encompass residential care for adults and children? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Contracts and transfers to the authorities, so grants, contributions, and transfers. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister, on the contract section, what type of term? I realize there is a lot of detail, but what type of term on the contracts for this care, the length of the contract? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you. I am not 100 per cent sure that I understand the question, but I will try to answer the question that I think I understand, if that makes any sense.

---Laughter

Listen to everybody laughing over there. The contracts differ because every one of our residents who is going down for residential care in the south -- this is where people are often going for permanent stays or long-term stays -- really depends on the magnitude of services that they need as individuals, the care they are receiving, so the costs are different for every one of them. We continually, at least definitely on an annual basis, the department is looking to make sure that the level of care is appropriate, that more isn't needed, less isn't needed, and adjusting accordingly.

Every couple of years I ask the department to do an assessment of: do we have a group of individuals with similar conditions that we could look at repatriating? We have not been able to find that group of individuals at this point, but I will be asking them again if I am still here in a year-and-a-half's time.

The contracts are all different. The terms different. The level of coverage and care is different. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Minister has anticipated my question well. My question was the whole idea of repatriating. I know that the department had gone through one repatriation and created a community living complex in Hay River, so the fact that the Minister has indicated that he is looking at that all the time is something that I am satisfied with. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Would the Minister like to respond at all?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No. This is something that has come up for a while, and I know the Member was raising this issue previously. I know that, as a Minister, this was an area that he was also very interested in. I would really, and I think everybody would really, prefer to have our residents home, receiving care as close to home as possible, but, unfortunately, some of these individuals we are talking about are really high-needs and we don't have the resources. We had professional staff in many cases to accommodate them.

It would be great at some point to be able to repatriate some of the individuals with similar conditions in a facility. We would be able to keep the money in the Northwest Territories, employ Northerners. There are so many advantages. We just have not found that group of individuals with similar conditions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, moving on to a different topic, I noticed that the homecare and support services has been decreased a bit. It actually has sort of decreased over the last three fiscal years. Also, that there had been some marginal increase to the mental health and addictions. Like I had indicated during my opening remarks on this department, that's a huge cost driver for the department and I think there should be more funding put into at least those two areas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Would the Minister like to respond?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on the homecare line you will see a slight reduction from 2015-16. What it was, was we were

actually overspent and we had to seek a supp to cover some of the shortfall. In that fiscal year the budget has been basically the same. It's gone down a little bit this year because we reduced some of our duty travel in the programming to reduce the amount of travel to meet our similar reductions, but we're confident that we'll still be able to provide the same degree of services with that budgeting, with that reduction in travel.

There is a slight increase in community mental health and addiction services. Just for the record, that's the sobering centre and the extended hours. Once again, I agree 100 per cent with Members; we need to invest more in this area. This is our mandate; we're committed to doing so. We are doing the work that will be ready for all of us to review and talk about in great detail when we're doing our business planning to set some financial priorities and some target priorities and program priorities moving forward so that we can start making real differences in the lives of our people that are struggling and those that are looking for continuing care. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we had attended the Anti-poverty Roundtable in Inuvik as a social development group. It was very interesting. The Minister was there, of course, and listening to the group there talking about their work. We felt also that there should be more funds targeted towards the anti-poverty group. So that's just something I would mention here, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the dollars for the Anti-poverty Fund are in the health promotion and community wellness area. I hear the Members loud and clear. This is an area that is obviously really important to the Members, and we're always open to negotiations.

This year money went into different areas to support poverty or addressing poverty in the Northwest Territories. Addressing poverty is a responsibility of pretty much everybody, every organization, every NGO, every government. This year to help address things like poverty we did improve or increase the amount of money going to income support. With the guidance and wisdom of committee we have fully funded JK, and there are other areas that we've made investment and we're trying to get to utilize some of the programs that exist, like Child and Family Services, the VSAs.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's it for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next, I have Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have three questions. The first question is in regards to community clinics and health centres. In my general comment I made the point of an established health cabin on the Hay River Reserve, and I think just recently there was an effort by a doctor to provide at least care on the reserve. I just wanted to have an understanding if my expectation may be consistent with the Minister's in terms of trying to bring more services from the town of Hay River through the Hay River Health Authority in terms of trying to bring services to residents of the Hay River Reserve, whether this section here maybe reflects within a year in terms of maybe making more advanced initiatives of trying to bring healthcare services to the residents of the reserve. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is something that we're committed to, and I'm happy to say we've actually had some success in this area. Success that even I didn't actually anticipate that we would see this quickly. Although Hay River is technically not in the Health Authority because of the issues that have been discussed already, through memorandums of understanding and agreement we are acting and they are partnering as if they are.

One of the benefits we had out of that is, although K'atloodeeche was traditionally in the Deh Cho as far as health services, Hay River has been working really hard with K'atloodeeche and the Hay River Authority to make sure that they're extending some of their services in the community. We got really lucky; we had a doctor who was willing to leave the hospital and actually go across the river, across the river in wintertime and around the bridge in the summertime, and actually spend some time in the community providing services directly to the residents of the community.

In a single authority this was something we were never able to work out because of, you know, this is my employee and that's your employee, but under this model we were able to make it work, and I think that's the type of successes we need to continue to build on. There's always some concern it might be incumbent-related, but we've proved that we can think outside the box and find ways to work together to provide services.

We also have a member of the K'atloodieche Reserve on our authority in Hay River, which means they're actually having some insight and advice on how to expand those services into their community.

There are some good aspects of our healthcare system, there are some bad aspects of our healthcare system, but I think we're moving in the right direction and we finally have tools in place that allow us to make these changes that I think you and others have wanted to see for years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The second part to this question is that -- I like the phrase in terms of bringing services to communities, building upon that relationship and bringing healthcare services at the community level.

My other question is that there are two small communities, Enterprise and Kakisa, and in some instances Enterprise, you know, by geography is closer to Hay River, Kakisa sometimes by geography is closer to Fort Providence. Is there within the plans to ensure that healthcare services in terms of nurse practitioners or even nurses could be maybe brought to the community in terms of bringing healthcare right to the community and within their community? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the Member's vision is where we want to be. We want to be able to meet the needs of small communities, recognizing that, you know, certain communities fall under regional operations, but as a single authority we should be able to have individuals from Hay River come to Kakisa if the people from Providence aren't available. Once we're on a single information system, they won't have to and those sort of things. There are lots of opportunities.

Are we all the way there? No. No, we're not. Do we have the tools in place that will allow us to get there? Yes, and every day they're getting a little bit better and they're getting a little bit more broad, which means we will start to be able to raise those things.

I think the Member's point is really good, and I'll make sure that I share it with the chair, and I know my deputy heard it and we'll share it with the CEO, as well. That's the type of thing we want to be able to do is sort of cross over regional operations to get the services to where they need to be when they need to be there. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, other colleagues had raised the matter of the homecare services. It's pretty clear that we're trying to build upon that, but I also wanted to highlight the need to have the on-the-land program initiative continue. I think the concept behind that was, as I pointed out, to bring people out on the land to use the strength of nature to give healing and wellness to people who choose that venue to better themselves, so that concept was developed.

There have been some design issues in terms of program delivery in that we had several initiatives carried out. So the department is experienced and learned from that. I think the question that I had was: in terms of this coming fiscal year, how will the department continue or grow on-the-land programming for 2017-18? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member is right on all counts. The on-the-land program is incredibly valuable and important. We're hearing from our partners, the Aboriginal partners, across the Northwest Territories how valuable it is. There's no growth in this budget from the GNWT in on-the-land programming, but, at the same time, there are some federal dollars that have been made available, some of them going to the IRC and some of them will likely go through the GNWT and be distributed to our Aboriginal partners. It hasn't all been worked out. We continue to pursue other people's money as much as possible to help us expand this area. There is interest. There is real interest. So much so that, on behalf of the three territories, we are going to be holding an on-the-land summit at the end of March, middle of March, at some point in March. We are bringing stakeholders from all over the country and the North to talk about the value and how to really enhance on-the-land programming in this country. Thank you, Mr. Chair

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Next, I have Mr. McNeely.

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is in relation to the question on page 169. Looking at the org chart on 152, you have three authorities. I am just curious, on the HSS authority funding, in brackets there, \$112,945. Is it your operational

intention to divide that by three authorities to deliver the programs underneath the community health programs?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister, whenever you are ready.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Chair, I didn't fully understand the question, but I am pretty sure my deputy did, so we will go to Ms. DeLancey, who I think heard it better than I did.

**MS. DELANCEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe the Member is asking about the allocation of this authority funding. This is funding that goes through a contribution agreement to the three authorities for the delivery of community health programs. I think that is what the Member is asking. Yes, that is in fact what it is, and it goes to all three authorities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. DeLancey. Mr. McNeely.

**MR. MCNEELY:** This one is more of a comment. I am glad to see the anti-poverty fund continue. I think there is a real value in a collective approach in the opinions suggested from these anti-poverty conferences. Looking at the various community-based programs such as your Community Wellness Initiative Fund, for example, On-the-Land Healing Fund, those are programs that, now that we have clarification on your authority funding, to deliver these various programs, I am glad to see that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Would the Minister like to respond?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** No. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Next, I have Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of questions. On page 169, On-the-Land Healing Fund, I raised a number of questions on this in the past budget, as well. I would just like the breakdown of what actually goes to the communities. I know most of it does go to the land claim groups. I know in the communities, they want to do a number of programs. There is Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic. I would just like to know the actual number that is broken down available to each community to access. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Can the Minister provide that?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the deputy will have the detail in front of her very shortly, so I will go to the deputy.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. DeLancey.

**MS. DELANCEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't actually have the detail in front of me, but basically our policy allocates about \$1.2 million for on-the-land healing initiatives. That is in the budget. Our policy allows regional Aboriginal governments to access \$125,000 a year. It allows community Aboriginal governments to access up to \$30,000 a year. We do set aside \$100,000 a year out of this budget to go towards our on-the-land funding collaborative, which is a partnership with Tides Canada, where we put some money in, which then antes up matching funding from philanthropic organizations and other partners, like the diamond mines. This funding does go directly to Aboriginal governments, except for the part that goes to the on-the-land funding collaborative. It is through an application-based process. In most cases, we enter into multiyear agreements with those Aboriginal governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. DeLancey. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next, under the seniors' fund, \$205,000 available funding to support eligible applicants in their activities towards promoting the independent and well-being of seniors and elders in the NWT. As the Minister and deputy may know, in my riding, a number of elders still live on the land, whether it is at 8-miles or down the Husky River or along the Peel, throughout the Delta. Would they be available to access this program? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, the \$205,000 on this page is of dollars that flow to the NWT Seniors' Society for their programming and their operations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Under the current funding here, it should be available to all seniors. It seems pretty specific to one area whereas, say in the Delta, we don't have much for NGOs up in the Beaufort Delta region; there are very limited programs that elders up in that area can access. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I hear the Member. These dollars here, this seniors fund is funding to support elder applicants in their activities towards promoting the

independence and well-being of seniors and elders in the NWT. The NWT Seniors' Society, who is the recipient of these funds, are a territorial organization.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Under the definition here, maybe it should be specified for specific to that organization because, under this heading here, it should be almost proposal-driven, the way this is labelled here. When you read this here, it seems like anyone can access this. Maybe you should be more specific in the future. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Point taken. The Member is 100 per cent correct. We will fix it in the future main estimates and business plans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Next, I have Mr. O'Reilly. If I could just ask each Member, when you are discussing a page, just name that particular page so everyone knows where to find that item. Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am looking at page 168, the anti-poverty fund that is listed on this page. I am just wondering if I could confirm with the Minister that he is of the view that the money that is given out through this program is generally to NGOs and that NGOs make good use of this money and that we are getting really good value for the money that is spent there. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member will notice that there is \$650,000, and \$75,000 goes to YK for day shelter and \$35,000 goes to Inuvik for day shelter, and that was a decision made in previous governments that we have continued to abide by. The other \$500,000 is distributed based on proposals submitted by different NGOs and other bodies across the Northwest Territories. In order to allocate those funds we put together an advisory committee who reviews all the applications for us and makes recommendations, which I share with committee before approving them. I am confident that the dollars are going out to the NGOs and to the applicants who are successful, but we need to do a better job of determining whether or not we are getting a big bang for our buck.

We have all talked about evaluation frameworks and making sure that we are seeing results. At the last anti-poverty meeting, we shared some possible

evaluation indicators. There were a lot of suggestions for more, and there were some suggestions to take some of them off. We need to do a better job of identifying those indicators so that I can answer that question. I feel confident they are spending the money. I feel that each organization is certainly getting benefits. From a big picture point of view, it is hard to say without some indicators or evaluation mechanisms. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I heard him say in there that there was value for money, but it was sort of a little bit longer answer than I had expected. Can the Minister tell me how over-subscribed this fund is in terms of the applications that are received? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first year, we were pretty close to being almost exactly what was allocated, but since then we have been quite a bit lower. I think it is been about \$1.8 million on a \$500,000 package. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So we get \$1.8 million in applications for a fund that is \$500,000. That, to me, sounds like a pretty good case for why we should increase the pot of money. I understand the Minister wants to develop some sort of an evaluation framework, but I understood this evaluation framework was much broader than just looking at the value for this money that is invested. I had understood that the evaluation framework was really looking at: are we making progress towards eliminating poverty? Maybe the Minister can help me understand this. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Can the Minister clarify?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you. No, the evaluation framework is intended to help us identify whether or not we are making progress in poverty. It is not just the \$500,000, absolutely not. We are doing things through income support, through housing. There are five main pillars that we are trying to address under poverty, so it is not just this fund.

You know, we have some criteria that we ask for to ensure that the groups that are getting the money are spending the money, but I take your point. We put this out, and there is growing interest, and we

will continue to release the dollars. The \$500,000 was always intended to help people leverage more money, and in many cases it has helped individuals leverage more money.

I have had some individuals; Ms. Green is an example, say we have to look differently at how we are allocating these monies. Maybe we should block-fund some of the pillars or guarantee certain parts as larger sums and smaller sums. I have committed to looking at that; probably not for this go-around, because we have already issued the call with the parameters.

I am going to ask the advisory committee to provide me with some insight on how to distribute these monies in the future before we do a future call, based on the types of things that Ms. Green has mentioned to me in the past. It is a great fund, and it is certainly well-subscribed, as are many of the programs available through the GNWT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, we've got an over-subscribed fund. It is doing great things. We are going to be developing a broader evaluation system for whether we are making progress on poverty overall, not just money invested into this fund. I think I have made the case and the Minister has helped me make the case for putting more money into the fund, period. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister, would you like to respond?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly, anything further? Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Yes. I left my turn too quickly, and I did have another couple of things. When we reviewed the business plan, there was some discussion about a comprehensive review of homecare services taking place in the next fiscal year. I know you mentioned, Mr. Minister, about reviewing homecare services in a response earlier to one of my colleagues. Is this what you are referring to, a comprehensive review of homecare services? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I had homecare on the brain. What I am referring to is the Continuing Care Action Plan, and I apologize for the confusion, but it is the same thing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have any further questions on that, now that we know what that is about. Also, during the business planning process we talked about the tremendous backlog of need in both long-term care and homecare, and the Minister said that the department is aggressively exploring options to acquire additional long-term care beds in Yellowknife in the short term. I wonder if the Minister could give us an update on that issue. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we are currently working with Avens who, with support from us, some money to help them do the work, is developing a comprehensive business case for the expansion of 48 beds on the Avens site, a net gain of 48 beds on the Avens site. The other 172 beds, we are looking at putting into the old hospital, and we have got direction from FMB to explore that further and see what we can do to utilize that. That will give us the 120 beds that are required in Yellowknife as a result of the comprehensive review that was done, indicating we need 258 beds. I have also had some discussions with a number of different groups in Hay River who have expressed an interest in being partners or finding ways to work together to increase the number of long-term beds in that community.

Priority-wise, based on where the demand currently lies, our priorities are to get the 258 beds open by 2026 or within 2026, but, in order, priority would go Yellowknife; Inuvik, where we have people living in acute care units in the hospital, which is completely inappropriate; then Fort Simpson and Hay River are about equal. That is the majority of the 258 beds. We are working on different plans, trying to address the needs across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was an important piece about the timing there that was new to me. The timing is to have the 258 beds in place by 2026. I heard about the priorities, but is there any staging, that there would be so many by 2020 and then so many more by 2026? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are not working at it that way. We are looking at where the priority lies. We need to get the issues

done in Yellowknife, because that is where the greatest demand is. The next greatest demand is in Inuvik, and then Hay River and Fort Simpson are about the same. Ultimately, our goal is to have those facilities open and in operation during the year of 2026 or sooner, but, obviously, we need to start rolling these out quicker. Yellowknife Avens is an opportunity that we think we might be able to move on quicker, depending on the results of the business plan.

Then, obviously, putting 72 beds in the old Stanton building can't happen until the new hospital opens and they have moved out of that building, and we have appropriately done capital retrofitting within that building to meet the needs, so that is a couple of years out. We have nine years, so we are trying to figure out where we need to be in those nine years and backing it to make sure that the work can get done in all the regions necessary. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Further comments, Ms. Green?

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will make this my last point. One of the difficulties of the anti-poverty work, since it was really renewed with vigour in 2009, is that the territory doesn't have a definition of poverty. I am wondering if the Minister believes the time has come to create a definition. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pretty sure I have said a couple of times that we need to really get a definition here in the Northwest Territories. I would like to add that I had the opportunity to attend the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of the Ministers of Social Services last week with Minister Duclos and some of his representatives. He was not able to stay the whole meeting. We were there to talk about the national anti-poverty work that is being done, and one of the discussions is there has to be a definition in order to evaluate whether or not we're making ground or not making ground. Had every province said the same thing that all the NGOs and other governments said in Yellowknife when we tried to come up with one that passes, man, that's hard. Everybody's definition is a little bit different, but we have to do it. We have to find a way. So it'll be interesting to see what the federal government comes up with as a definition of whether or not that's something we might be able to use, but at the time we need to keep trucking forward to see if we can come up with a relevant and meaningful definition here in the Northwest Territories. If you have one, we're open. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** I'm ready for that challenge, Mr. Chair. The definition of poverty reduction in the NWT should be we pledge to reduce child poverty in the NWT by 25 per cent in five years. Could the Minister work with that please? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I like it. That's a target, not a definition, but I'm prepared to work with it. We still need a definition of poverty, and I think the Member's point is valid. I mean, that's a good target, but we still need to define what the poverty means in order to meet that target. There are so many different definitions out there, so many opinions, but we have to do it. It's not going to be easy; it's hard work. Like I said, I know the Member is passionate about this, so I'm open to some suggestions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green, further comments?

**MS. GREEN:** Just one more. Yes, I appreciate that that is a goal and not a definition, and for sure this work is going to be hard. I don't think that we should wait for the federal government. I think that we need to consider in our own context what poverty is. We often hear that people with low income don't feel like they live in poverty, so it's not only income driven, but we do hear that lots of people don't have enough food to eat.

So I think that we really have to make the effort to do that, and I think the biggest danger here is overthinking it and making it complicated, and that's why I'm talking about 25 per cent poverty reduction for children in five years. It should be something that you can spit out in a sentence that everybody understands and everybody can support without getting into a monster, you know, 150 words, this is what poverty means to us. So I just also say that with the provision of the new Stats Canada information starting to flow now, I think that we're going to see some additional indicators of poverty that may inform the kind of work we need to do on indicator. With that, I'll bring my comments to a close. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. I'll give the Minister a minute to respond, if you would like.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's good information. I look forward to seeing those indicators and sharing with the advisory groups and, you know, the department seeing it so we can start moving forward to put some indicators here in the Northwest Territories. My challenge, if

you will, is to the Member and all the Members, you know, the Member and I have been working on this for a while and we still haven't come up with a definition of poverty that satisfies the people of the Northwest Territories, and I think both of us clearly know in order to make progress that definition needs to be there. So I challenge the Member as I do all Members, bring us your suggestions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Seeing no further comments, I will call this activity total. Health and Social Services, community health programs, operations expenditures summary, total activity, \$158,460,000. Ms. Green.

COMMITTEE MOTION 48-18(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN  
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES, DEFERRAL OF COMMUNITY  
HEALTH PROGRAMS ACTIVITY,  
CARRIED

**MS. GREEN:** I move that this committee defer for the consideration of the activity community health programs under the Department of Health and Social Services, Main Estimates 2017-2018, on page 167 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. There's a motion to defer. The motion is on the floor and being distributed. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** We will defer this activity. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the Chair leave and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** I'll now rise and report progress. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing.

**MR. SPEAKER:** May I have the report, Member for Hay River North.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 261-18(2),

Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018. I would like to report progress with one motion carried and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Do I have a seconder? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Item 23, third reading of bills. Item 24, Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer):** Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

- Committee Report 6-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 7: An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
- Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

