



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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**18<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

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**Friday, February 17, 2017**

Pages 1763 – 1800

**The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Monfwi)

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Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, February 17, 2017****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom 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 10:00 a.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty):** Good morning, Members. I would just like to say thank you for taking it easy on my deputy speaker yesterday. Item 2, Ministers' Statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 136-18(2):  
MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made a commitment in its mandate to focus on mental health and addictions, to ensure access to culturally-appropriate programs and services, address gaps in services, and enhance treatment options.

We have made progress. Last November, we tabled the strategic framework, Mind and Spirit: Promoting Mental Health and Addictions Recovery. This framework sets the foundation for improvements to mental health and addictions programs and services.

Three separate action plans will be put in place to support that framework. Each action plan will focus on areas requiring specific approaches: children and youth mental wellness, addictions recovery, and mental health services.

These action plans will help address gaps in the system while improving service and program delivery by building on strengths. We are not waiting for these actions plans to be completed before we move ahead with needed improvements.

For example, enhancements have already been put in place to the NWT Help Line, which offers confidential emotional support to NWT residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The NWT Help Line has now expanded its service to include telephone group sessions as well as a Facebook page. The telephone group sessions offer residents

group counseling supports on a variety of topics ranging from depression and anxiety to addictions and recovery support. Residents can call in to these sessions using their own phones, and the sessions are free, anonymous, as well as confidential. The Facebook page will also provide information on mental health and addiction supports, tips, community events, and information on upcoming telephone group sessions.

The Department of Health and Social Services is also working on implementing the new Mental Health Act. This is a complex legislation which requires the establishment of a Mental Health Act Review Board to provide protection for rights of patients. We are in the early stages of establishing that board.

The review board will hear concerns from individuals who are being held involuntarily under the new act or examine the status of patients with long-term involuntary admissions to ensure that they are not being held for unreasonable amounts of time. Culture and tradition are also taken into consideration with the new act. The chair of the review board has the ability to engage an elder or other person as a cultural advisor to a review panel hearing.

Regulations are also being prepared, as well as training materials. The training materials will help front-line staff understand the multiple processes and procedures required in the direct delivery of legislated mental health services. The new Mental Health Act represents a substantive shift in practice, and our goal remains to have the act in force this year.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will bring your attention to the opioid crisis that is happening in Canada. As most of you are aware, there was also a surge of opioid overdoses here in the NWT last November. In light of this, I directed the department to establish an NWT Opioid Misuse and Overdose Task Group. This group was established in December, and it includes members from GNWT departments and representation from the RCMP as well as the public. The task group will respond to the ongoing issues related to opioid drug misuse and overdose and will provide strategic oversight, leadership, and coordination. Work is well under way on a public awareness campaign to highlight the dangers of

illicit drug overdose and misuse.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing mental health and addictions issues, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to strengthening the supports for mental health and addictions by looking at the whole person, mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual, and ensuring that we continue to increase our focus on culturally appropriate healing, which can include on-the-land based programming. Realizing our vision of community wellness and safety can only be accomplished by taking a coordinated approach with our partners, family, community governments, and agencies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 137-18(2):  
UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL INQUIRY ON  
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN AND GIRLS

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment in its mandate to support and participate in the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in collaboration with families, Aboriginal governments, the federal government, and other organizations. I would like to update Members today on the work our government is doing to fulfill that commitment.

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was formally launched by the Government of Canada on September 1, 2016. Since my last update on this initiative, the national inquiry has launched an official website that will be populated as the inquiry progresses. The Commission on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has also written to the friends and families of murdered and missing women and girls, advising of progress to date and of the establishment of a network team to connect to the communities. The commission has committed to ensuring that there will be health teams in place to support families before, during, and after the hearings.

The commission held a press conference on February 7, 2017, advising on what has occurred to date. The most notable items mentioned in the press conference are that the inquiry is meeting with families who volunteer to take part in the process and that the commission is only going to communities where they are invited. This being said, the commission is looking at different ways to gather information, from direct interviews to written submissions to visual representation. I encourage family members who wish to participate to contact the national inquiry office.

The commission has contacted all provincial and territorial governments to establish an intergovernmental liaison panel that will be a link between the inquiry and governments. No meeting of this panel has been called at this point. In the interim, our government has reached out to the commission, looking for ways to support the inquiry and to ensure that families in the Northwest Territories are heard.

The Government of Canada is providing funding to establish family information liaison units across Canada. These units will provide family members with information and emotional support throughout the process. In the Northwest Territories, the Department of Justice is working with the federal government and the Native Women's Association to establish a unit that will serve all Northwest Territories communities during the inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that provinces and territories have fully participated in a national inquiry. This will give the inquiry a full scope to assess evidence in all jurisdictions. Although the inquiry is an independent process, it remains critically important for all governments to work together and do their part to ensure that the national attention on violence against Indigenous women and girls remains in the forefront.

To guide and support the Government of the Northwest Territories' involvement in the inquiry, the Government of the Northwest Territories, led by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, is establishing an interdepartmental working group. We will also be collaborating with our Aboriginal government partners and with families and other stakeholders. Our officials have also been reaching out to the Nunavut and Yukon governments, to ensure that there is consistency in our support of the inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has long supported the call for a national inquiry, and now that this work is getting under way we will be giving it our full support. We believe that the inquiry is an important step in acknowledging and addressing the root causes of violence towards Indigenous women in Canada. We need the inquiry to address those who have been lost, but also to address the unacceptable amount of violence against Indigenous women and girls. It is our hope and intention that, through the participation in the inquiry, Indigenous women and girls will be respected, valued, and safer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

## Members' Statements

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I'll take the lead. Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to address the statement made yesterday in this House by the Minister of Transportation about airport infrastructure funding.

I was pleased to hear the Minister reference the great contributions made to the NWT's transportation system by the federal government. Certainly, maintaining up-to-date transportation infrastructure across Northern Canada is in the national interest, as well as the interest of NWT residents and communities.

I'm also glad to know how many improvements have been and continue to be made to northern airports under Transport Canada's Airport Capital Assistance Program. It's also good to know that our infrastructure of air terminals right across the NWT has been supported by other federal support programs like the Building Canada Plan and Canada's Infrastructure Stimulus Fund.

Having heard that good news, I was a bit perplexed when the Minister then started to outline the ways in which Yellowknife's airport, the biggest and busiest airport in the NWT, is unable to raise money, and I quote:

In other parts of Canada, airports of this size are usually able to pay for themselves without requiring substantial subsidies from the government. Those airports do this by charging tenants and users a fair price for services they receive from the airport. This is not currently the case in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, I think most people are aware of significant fees that are charged by DOT to various businesses and vendors at the Yellowknife Airport in the form of rent and leases; and, of course, there are already existing aeronautical fees applied to airlines. Everyone in this House is aware that this government subsidizes the operation of the Yellowknife Airport. Because of our location and remoteness and Yellowknife's position as the air transportation hub of the NWT, this airport plays a central role in the economic life of all communities in the NWT. Investing public money in crucial public air transportation systems is not uncommon; it is expected.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was confused as to where the Minister was going with that part of his statement; it didn't appear to be accurate. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. So, Mr. Speaker, I understand that perhaps the intent of the Minister's statement was to soften us up; to get us ready for the discussion of his department's intended airport user fee. One thing is accurate: this is a fee that is going to increase the cost of living for everybody in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME ASSISTANCE FOOD RATE CALCULATIONS

**MR. THOMPSON:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Since the early 2000s it is my understanding, thanks to the mines and government projects, we have maintained a significant higher per capita income than the rest of Canada. This would be great if it was across all 33 communities. Unfortunately, the latest statistics show that we have a huge number of residents struggling with low income. There is a vast income gap between the major centres and the smaller communities. Do not get me wrong; the big centres do have low-income residents, but they are not the majority, whereas the residents from the smaller communities are.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard it is what happens when there are limited employment opportunities for small communities, whether it is for private industry or government projects.

Mr. Speaker, of the six communities I represent, four of these communities are considered some of the smallest in the NWT, and the other one is small compared to other communities. Each community is unique and fascinating in its own way. As I continue to better understand their needs and wishes for a better way of life, I am impressed with how successfully they get along with their day-to-day lives.

Unfortunately, with limited employment opportunities they must revert to accessing income security to survive. When you take the time to speak to these individuals and families, they tell you they want employment or the tools to help them start a business.

Why are jobs important? People who have a job to go to, they would get up in the morning with a purpose. They would make breakfast, wake up their children and feed them and send them off to school; then they would get themselves ready to head off to work. Unfortunately, in my riding the

opportunity is not always available.

Without jobs, they need to access income security. I am informed that the program provides financial assistance to Northern residents when they cannot pay for basic needs such as food, shelter, and utilities. The amount of assistance that is provided is based on the community the applicant resides and the size of their family and their household income.

The problem is that I have two communities that do not have their own stores, so they need to travel to either Fort Simpson or Hay River, depending on the season. Mr. Speaker, at this time 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. When digging further, I am informed the program has fixed food rates for each community and there is a cost-of-living factor in the IA food rates. Unfortunately, it does not factor in the cost of the person's time, travel or freight to get the food. I will hope that the government will look into this matter to help out these two small communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of ECE in regard to the matter later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AIR TRAVEL COSTS IN NORTHERN CANADA

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to speak on the matter of the Yellowknife Improvement Plan that the Minister of Transportation brought forward to this House in his statement yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to lay out some of my own facts. Canada places 124<sup>th</sup> out of 141 countries ranked by the World Economic Forum for cost competitiveness of its travel and tourism industry, and a recent analysis says that much of this has to do with both ticket taxes and airport fees.

Mr. Speaker, airport charges alone account for 25 per cent of the price difference between airfares in Canada and the United States according to the Conference Board of Canada. In fact, a Senate report conducted in 2012 compared the cost of flying in Canada and the United States, and it found that a ticket from Toronto to Orlando, Florida, on a Canadian airline had a base fare of \$118 and a final cost of \$207; 43 per cent was taxes and fees.

A study by the Montreal Economic Institute

concluded that airports should be privatized to end the rent payments that are driving up many of these fees. This would free airports to make investments, lower the cost of flights to consumers, and increase demand and services for air travellers, this report concluded.

Mr. Speaker, these facts and these well-known concerns about cost competitiveness in Canada over its air system are well known, and I find it highly ironic that a government that has committed to fighting cost-of-living is opposed to any tax increases and initially opposed to a carbon tax in case it had undue economic impacts on our cost-of-living is inclined to increase the cost to fly to and from the Northwest Territories through our central air hub by an incredible amount.

We still have no clear plan for when the many improvements they are touting that will come out of these fees will actually roll out into the airport, and it does appear again that we are taking an expensive piece of public infrastructure and putting the costs on to consumers. I think, again, this should be retained as a cost-of-living initiative to keep that subsidy going and shield consumers from the high cost of travel that is already too high in this country and already too high in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POVERTY REDUCTION INVESTMENTS

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [English translation not provided]. Marci cho, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, Maclean's magazine reported that the federal government is setting up an advisory committee on poverty. This team will take the lead role in creating a poverty reduction strategy.

It is made up of top researchers as well as experts in the fields of business and social services, and significantly, people who have actually lived with poverty in this country, and it will evaluate ideas that come out of public consultation.

The committee's work will also be tied to the federal government's national housing strategy. The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has said the federal government must have a vision on poverty reduction, and ways to meet both poverty and progress in fighting it. Meeting this need has been made a top priority.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we need to see in our anti-poverty work: dedicated initiatives supported by

significant funding to make meaningful change. Maclean's magazine estimates that as many as 3 million Canadians live in poverty, and here in the Northwest Territories, our poverty rates are some of the worst.

From 2002 to 2014, the number of people living in poverty in the Northwest Territories actually outstripped the population growth by 11.4 per cent. That's not growth, Mr. Speaker. That's going backwards. I want to again point out that the government initiatives reported in the new anti-poverty investments aren't necessarily new or significantly targeted towards anti-poverty work.

Mr. Speaker, to actually reduce poverty, we need projects that target those living in poverty. Regular Members have asked for these types of focused investments, including \$500,000 to increase anti-poverty funding, enhancements to small community employment programs, and increased funding for Arctic Energy Alliance to make their programs accessible to small community residents and low-income families.

As it stands, Mr. Speaker, the government's response to poverty in the Northwest Territories is not sufficient to meet the challenges our residents are facing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPROVED RCMP SERVICES IN TSIIGHEHTCHIC

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a bit of a good news story for today.

Mr. Speaker, the presence of the RCMP has improved in Tsiigehtchic. In January alone, we have had three separate times the RCMP have come to Tsiigehtchic to overnight. On one occasion, Mr. Speaker, two officers travelled from Fort McPherson to Tsiigehtchic by snowmobile down the Peel River and upstream on the Mackenzie to Tsiigehtchic, checking cabins along the way.

Mr. Speaker, this was great to see as it hasn't been done for many years. Also, while in Tsiigehtchic, the RCMP do traffic stops on the ice road.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Tsiigehtchic is very pleased with the improved services since a housing unit has been put in place in the community for the RCMP to stay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**MR. MCNEELY:** Effective April 1, 2007, Mr. Speaker, all community governments in the Northwest Territories are responsible for planning, designing, financing construction and implementation of community public infrastructure in their respective community. Using a variety of sources, including annual capital formula allocation from MACA, gas tax, and others, community governments can then plan, construct, design infrastructure that meets the needs and priorities of the respective community. MACA provides assistance and support to community governments, such as they develop, monitor, and regularly update their five-year capital investment plan to reflect progress and address key emerging needs.

The Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories are investing \$25.8 million over the next 10 years under the New Building Canada Fund – Provincial/Territorial Infrastructure Component – Small Communities Fund to support infrastructure projects in northern Northwest Territories communities. The fund, which is delivered nationally, targets communities with a population of less than 100,000 people. The funding will be available from 2014 to 2024.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has produced a funding program, guide, and application form to assist the community governments in accessing funding. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions on these two projects, or these two programs, and how they are being assisted to deliver maximum dollars to the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ECOLE ALLAIN ST-CYR SCHOOL EXPANSION

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, I have raised fairly often the idea of increasing the size of a francophone school here in Yellowknife in the riding of Frame Lake. With the cooperation of the francophone school board in the Northwest Territories regarding this important project, as ordered by the court, it seems to be complicated. I asked the Minister of Education to guarantee a cooperative approach at the time of the presentation of the design for the increase in size by Heritage Canada. It seems that we should agree on the elements that will be presented, and that the supporting letters from the commission and the Association of Rights Holders

would accompany the submission made to Heritage Canada.

I spoke with those who are responsible for the proclamation on January 24<sup>th</sup>, and I learned that they had not received the submission file. They only received it on December 16<sup>th</sup>, and that they had sent their own letter to Heritage Canada. To weigh certain concerns about the application presented by the Government of the NWT, this situation does not make things easier. On working together, we could reduce the cost related to the increase in the size of the school so that Heritage Canada would take the responsibility of a larger share of the cost, and would improve the public establishment. This would affect all the parties. The allocations of additional funding to 2016-17 were approved during the fall session in order to start the work to increase the size of the school, the expansion cost.

We understand the expansion of the Ecole Allain St-Cyr school has been delayed far too long. It would be a good idea if work could start as soon as possible; however, the cooperation is indispensable. I will have questions later for the expansion and lack of a collaborative process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [End of translation]

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POLICING PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT ALLEGATIONS

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday, I related the experience of a Yellowknife woman who came to me with her story of physical and sexual assault, followed by intimidation from her accused attacker, and all met with a lackluster response from the police.

The Globe and Mail newspaper recently published a report that reveals just how often women are mistreated by the justice system. Over 20 months, investigative journalists analyzed policing data from every province and territory. They discovered that across Canada police dismiss roughly one in five reported sexual assault complaints as unfounded, meaning police officers believe no assault took place.

In certain cities and regions, like ours, rates are even higher. When we look at cases from 2010 to 2014 in the NWT, even accounting for potential false reports, police closed the door on 30 per cent of cases. That means the police don't believe the complaints of one in three women who come forward. Add to that the fact that only one in 10 women report a sexual assault in the first place, and we can estimate that less than 5 per cent of possible sexual assaults are investigated.

A few other findings, Mr. Speaker, to share with you: according to The Globe and Mail, small and rural populations show higher unfounded rates than large cities, due in part to limited resources and greater demands on fewer officers, although Yellowknife rates buck that trend. The numbers of unfounded cases are smaller in the regions than they are in Yellowknife. Not surprisingly, police forces with more women officers than average documented fewer unfounded cases. Finally and significantly, "unfounded" statistics are no longer being tracked by Statistics Canada. Yet again, sexual violence is being kept hush-hush. These findings are shocking, but next? It is not enough to be appalled. We must respond.

The RCMP have committed to reviewing all recent unfounded cases across the country, including here in the NWT. I also urge the Minister of Justice to follow his Yukon counterpart's lead and commit to prompt practical changes to close the service gaps. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, colleagues. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. To realize the spirit of Hush Hush No More, we must change hearts and minds. This will be hard work, Mr. Speaker. Change involves opening policing practice to thorough review and regular public oversight. It also means facing and changing biases ingrained in our cultures and in ourselves. To truly bring an end to sexual violence, we must walk the talk; we must believe all women, promote reporting, investigate complaints sensitively and thoroughly, and bring justice to all women who have been victimized. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUVIALUIT REGIONAL CORPORATION / RCMP PUBLIC SAFETY PROTOCOL

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on January 30<sup>th</sup> the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police signed a three-year public safety cooperation protocol that will benefit communities throughout the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.

This protocol was created to establish a trusting relationship between the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the RCMP to support public safety initiatives in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, community policing is a demanding job. It takes special skill to work in remote Arctic communities. The Beaufort Delta has some of

highest rates of family violence and suicide in the country. The future of children, youth, women, men, and elders requires safe, secure, and stable communities.

Mr. Speaker, this protocol was established to prevent situations and community crises and resolve problems at the earliest possible opportunity. It will help identify community liaison people to share information and suggestions to avoid or resolve conflict and crisis in Inuvialuit communities.

Mr. Speaker, detachment commanders will develop community plans, and officers will learn about the cultural values and sensitivities of people they work with. A joint training program will help both parties acquire knowledge and skills to apply lessons learned from past incidents to manage crises and prevent harm more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, respect for Indigenous people is essential to this protocol. It recognizes alternative justice processes that in some cases may be more meaningful to help people involved in an incident than the conventional criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Inuvialuit and the RCMP have taken this important step in improving public safety in our communities. We hope it will serve as an example for other Indigenous governments and enhance future work between the parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGH AIR TRAVEL COSTS IN HAY RIVER

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently Yellowknife Tourism announced that they were giving away 150 trips to the Northwest Territories. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I misspoke. NWT Tourism announced that it was giving away 150 trips to Yellowknife; well, 93 per cent of them to Yellowknife, anyways.

In a way, it is almost hard to blame them. If I wanted to fly return from Hay River to Edmonton next week, it would cost around \$1,400. It would cost half that if I was to fly out of Yellowknife. If I book a couple weeks in advance, a return flight to Edmonton from Yellowknife is a third the cost of one from Hay River. That's the norm for southern destinations. To put it another way, in the next two weeks, there are days that it is actually cheaper to fly return from Yellowknife to Beijing than Hay River to Edmonton. Although Hay River is the rail, road, and river hub of the territory, Yellowknife is the air hub, so I understand that flights out of the capital would be cheaper, but it should not cost two to

three times as much to fly out of the territories' second-biggest community.

These costs do not just apply to flights to the South. If I wanted to fly return from Yellowknife to Hay River in the next couple of weeks, it would cost me around a thousand dollars. That's almost 10 times more than it costs to drive. I can understand why the proposed airport improvement fees are of concern to Yellowknifers. They have become accustomed to reasonably priced flights. For those of us from Hay River, that is about a 2 per cent increase. That is not our concern. Our concern is the \$1,000 for a 25-minute flight.

Mr. Speaker, not only does the cost of airline tickets make it prohibitive for almost everyone in Hay River to fly anywhere, it virtually guarantees that none of the 30,000 tourists who fly into Yellowknife every year will make the trip to Hay River.

The only entity that appears to be able to afford to fly elsewhere in the Territory is the GNWT. Now, I believe that a fair and free market should determine prices, but preferential policies and agreements for government and medical travel are distorting the market, and those of us outside Yellowknife are the ones who bear the brunt of the negative effects of these policies.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a problem for far too long. This is one of those issues that is too big for a two-and-a-half-minute Member's statement. We are just scratching the surface, so consider this part one of many on this topic and stay tuned for much more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

#### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally recognize Ms. Sharon Firth in the visitors' gallery today. Ms. Firth, a four-time Olympian and Order of Canada recipient, was recently named a Canada 150 Ambassador by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Melanie Joly. Canada 150 Ambassadors are being asked to connect with Canadians all across the country and contribute to creating positive legacies for years to come and make 2017, the year of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of confederation, a defining year for all Canadians. Thank you, Sharon. We look forward to your contributions to this important project and to the exciting Canada 150 celebration events that will take place across the NWT and Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to recognize Sharon Firth, Ian Legaree and Don Moses. I think the Minister of MACA brought him here, besides recognizing Sharon, to stop me from asking questions today, so I will recognize him and I will be nice to her, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River South.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Cindy Jarvis, a resident of Yellowknife. It is her first time in the House today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to welcome my friend Sharon Firth to the gallery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we are missing anyone in the public in the gallery, welcome to our proceedings. It's always great to have an audience. Masi. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 592-18(2): POLICING PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT ALLEGATIONS

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. As I just mentioned, the rate of sexual assault complaints that are dismissed by police as unfounded is almost twice the rate in the NWT as it is nationally. The Yukon Government has mounted a robust response to the rates of unfounded sexual assault complaints, including training police and court workers in updated interview techniques, recruiting more women officers, funding specialized police work and victim services, and ensuring JP's are regularly retrained on emergency protection orders. What kind of response can we expect from the Minister? Thank you.

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

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to read the excellent story in The Globe and Mail several weeks ago. The Globe gathered its analysis from 870 police jurisdictions and found there was a very large number of claims that were dismissed as unfounded across the country. It was

between the various numbers, but generally it was between one and five, or 20 per cent of claims had been dismissed as unfounded. It has been found also, and I read this in the story, that looking at independent research from around the world only 2 to 8 per cent of these claims are actually false.

It was also surprising to see the wide variation in the number of claims that had been dismissed from as low as 2 per cent in the City of Winnipeg to a high of 36 per cent in Yellowknife. Even more surprising was that sometimes adjoining police forces had very different statistics. While there may be some issues as to how the information was gathered, the statistics are clearly very disturbing.

As a result of this study, the various police forces across the country, including the RCMP, have re-evaluated procedures. I can advise that I have met with the commanding officer here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate that the Minister read the article, but he did not respond to my question. So I'm going to ask again what he is going to do as Minister to bring these unfounded sexual assault complaints down? There are a number of very specific practical actions that are being taken by his counterpart in the Yukon, where the police are also on contract to address this problem directly beyond just having a meeting. What is his response?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** I simply wanted to give some background before I entered into a discussion with the Member opposite about what the RCMP here are doing. I'm pleased to advise that, in my meeting with the commanding officer, he advised me that all sexual assault files from the period 2010 to 2014 were being reviewed. As I mentioned, it was found in The Globe and Mail study approximately 36 per cent of the cases were dismissed or found to be unfounded.

Now, this is at the investigatory stage, not at the court stage. A closer examination of the figures, that figure of 36 per cent, the RCMP found that 21 per cent were actually found to be unfounded. The other 15 per cent was found that it was insufficient evidence to proceed to court. So they did a careful examination of the many files over the last five years.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate all the homework the Minister has done on this topic, but I'm not hearing a robust response to these findings beyond what the RCMP has already committed to do itself, which is to review all of those unfounded cases. I'm not hearing he is going to take proactive response to what is clearly a crisis in sexual assault complaints here in the NWT as it is across the country.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** In addition to what I've already mentioned with the police reviewing all of these cases, it has been decided that new policies are required so that if a file is found to be unfounded by the investigator all of those files will now be reviewed by a senior officer. So the police are doing something. In addition, they are increasing their training in this area to further sensitize investigators to this issue.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, that's excellent news. I think the other side of this is to make sure that police officers have better training to deal with complaints as they come in. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell us what changes might be made in training police officers to respond to sexual assault complaints? Mahsi.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can advise that there will be additional training provided to investigators. As recently as January there was some additional training provided. So the police are very aware of this issue. Additional training will be provided, and hopefully the rather shocking figure that has been mentioned by the Member opposite will decrease. I can advise the police are treating this matter very seriously.

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

QUESTION 593-18(2):  
YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE  
FUNDING

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of the Department of Transportation. I spoke earlier today about the airport infrastructure funding and that I'm aware that the Yellowknife Airport does, in fact, generate revenue through the forms of leases and rents and services provide to tenants and other users. Can the Minister tell us how much the Yellowknife Airport does currently earn from rents and fees and services charged to tenants and users of the airport? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that level of detail at the top of my head, so I'll have to get back to the Member with that number. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** I'm going to move forward to another question because my second question would have relied on that answer, so I appreciate the Minister getting that back to us as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please

describe how the determination was made to charge the amount of this user fee? How was the amount determined?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I'm assuming the Member from Yellowknife North is talking about the airport improvement fee. We had a consultant do a review of airports across Canada, similar size as Yellowknife Airport, and it was concluded that the fee that the airport improvement fee of \$20 and \$10 was justifiable to airports of similar size to us across Canada.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Then I think in order to determine what that fee would be and then using other airports to help determine that information that it would have also been known, and at least have been fairly up to date, as to what the current leases, rents, and service charges are being currently charged to tenants out at the airport. That said, Mr. Speaker, we know that we're in economic difficult times; we're in an economic downturn. Can the Minister describe if the department has done any work to determine what the induced effects of such a user fee would have on Yellowknife and the NWT economy?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** When we looked at this, the big part of the improvement fees and landing fees for the Yellowknife Airport is to help turn around the operating costs of running the airport. We presently subsidize the airport by \$4 million annually, which comes out of general revenue that could help support other initiatives in this House that we believe that we need to move forward; but the big thing with introducing this revolving fund to the Yellowknife Airport, it's also the largest airport in the Northwest Territories. It has 58,000 flights a year that land and come and go from this airport. There are a half a million people who go through the airport every year. So there is a possibility to raise substantial revenue that would help offset that \$4 million, but also generate revenue where we would not have to subsidize the Yellowknife Airport.

With that being said, though, we can move on with having that additional revenue to create other opportunities at the Yellowknife Airport that would increase potential: more traffic through the Yellowknife Airport through direct flights from Asian countries as such; business opportunities. We've had a number of people approach the department already about the opportunities that lie ahead with us implementing this revolving fund and be able to improve the full facility of the airport from parking to making the terminal larger, to make it easier for security clearances so people aren't lined up all the way to the north end of the building, and these types of factors. So I believe as the Minister of Transportation that bringing the revolving fund forward for this airport is going to bring nothing but

good for the Yellowknife Airport and the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the sales pitch that the Minister gave us; it relates to looking at the airport in a silo, but the question was more to do with the induced effects of such a charge and the effect it will have on the local economy and the cost of living. Has the department done any work to check into what kind of effects that this is going to have, a charge such as this will have on the local economy, including the cost of living? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, he's asked a couple of questions there; I'll answer the last one. The landing and the improvement fees are going to change a south-bound ticket by 3 to 4 per cent. On a north-bound ticket it's going to change it by 1 to 2 per cent, which is very minimal. The upside of this whole thing is the economic opportunities that this is going to bring to the City of Yellowknife in particular and to the residents of the Northwest Territories, and the economic potential outweighs any negative effects that I believe will happen to the citizens of the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 594-18(2):  
POVERTY REDUCTION INVESTMENTS

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I talked about poverty. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Poverty a couple of questions on that.

The federal Minister of Family, Children and Social Development has said that provinces and territories have provided ideas on how to engage the federal government differently. How will the Minister, our Minister, ensure the needs of the Northwest Territories are represented in the new Poverty Reduction Strategy under development at the federal level? Thank you.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it was about two weeks ago I had an opportunity to attend the federal-provincial-territorial meeting with the Minister that the Member opposite is referring to, and we did have an opportunity to discuss the work that the federal government is doing on a federal anti-poverty initiative. They're currently out doing a

number of stakeholder engagements across the country.

At that meeting, we had an opportunity to talk about what's happening in every jurisdiction, and I clearly outlined the work that's been done around anti-poverty work here in the Northwest Territories and our desire to do more. We shared with them the different action plans prepared over the years, both the territorial action plan as well as the government's action plan, and I strongly encouraged the Minister and his staff to engage front-line people, people who have actually lived in poverty, rather than just relying on input from NGOs. So we shared our information. We've getting them as much information as we can. We're looking forward to seeing what they come forward.

At this point, there has been no indication that the federal government is going to put any money into this anti-poverty plan, but they do have some levers that we know they can use, whether it's taxes or other mechanisms, that we hope will be able to support residents across Canada who are struggling with poverty, but also in the Northwest Territories.

As for all FPTs that we attend, we try to encourage understanding of the realities of living in small rural and remote communities in the North and how that might be different than somebody who is living in poverty in Toronto. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** I'd like to ask the Minister how he is exploring options to leverage funding for increased investment in anti-poverty initiatives?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I appreciate the Members during Committee of the Whole are very passionate about increasing our allotment to the Anti-poverty Fund, and obviously if money were available this is certainly an area that we would like to invest, and it is part of our mandate. So hopefully in the future we will be making some additional investments, but in this particular budget we did invest money in helping seniors who are living in poverty do some renovations to their homes. We have made some other changes that are clearly beneficial to residents who are struggling with poverty to the Northwest Territories, and we continue to work with our partners to allocate funds through the Anti-poverty Fund which can be leveraged for other dollars.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Anti-poverty is a big issue in the NWT. What new money is being invested and targeted to anti-poverty in 2017-18?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** There are five pillars that were utilized to help us address poverty in the Northwest Territories, and this is being used by our stakeholders as well, and that's the Children and

Family Support, Healthy Living and Reaching our Potential, Safe Affordable Housing, Sustainable Communities and Integrated Continuum of Services. In this budget that is before us today, we are investing \$750,000, new dollars, to provide services for homeless people in Yellowknife. There has been a commitment to fully fund junior kindergarten. There's \$3 million to enhance small community employment support, which is something we've continuously heard from the Member opposite. There's \$750,000 to extend the NWT Child Benefit, and there's \$500,000 to provide a home repair program to low-income seniors. This is on top of the dollars that we're providing in housing programs that meet the pillars, some of our education dollars that are helping to address the pillars, as well as many of the other things we're doing in the government; these are new dollars.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to increasing work and continuing to meet with the other social development Ministers of the GNWT to reduce poverty in the NWT?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, we have a number of different committees in Cabinet that we get together to work together as Ministers to help break down silos. Our deputies also work on similar committees to break down silos within the Government of the Northwest Territories. I'm continually raising the issue of poverty, as it is one of the areas I'm responsible for, and trying to find ways to work together to offer our residents more options to help lift them from poverty as opposed to just providing handouts, and we're working to that end, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the Member's commitment to increasing and supporting anti-poverty and we look forward to making improvements over the term of this government.

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

QUESTION 595-18(2):  
FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE  
PROJECTS

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of MACA on gas tax funding and small community funding, as they complement each other in a very meaningful way. These programs truly contribute to the small community economy and leave behind an upgraded image to better beautify the community.

The Northwest Territories has seen over a hundred projects and approximately \$68 million from these programs. My question is: what is the information

being shared with Sahtu communities as well as other communities from the regional office in preparation to access this funding during the season of? Thank you, 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 works quite closely with the municipal governments to access the funding, the infrastructure funding that is provided by the federal government, so we work one-on-one. We help them do their capital planning throughout the year; we identify areas that they might need to build more infrastructure on, and then we actually will sit and help them fill out the applications as needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MCNEELY:** As a benchmark of progress and production, will the Minister guarantee the House 10 per cent of the applications that access the program from last year?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I am a bit confused with the question being asked, but I can say that, in the Sahtu area, all the communities except for Colville Lake have actually applied and received confirmation of their funding, and we are working closely with Colville Lake within the Sahtu to actually submit their application, as well.

**MR. MCNEELY:** I wanted to see if we can set a target for production for this year on 10 per cent of the funds accessed by both programs, but that was the previous question. My question now is: is the department holding community-based workshops to work with the local governments to help design a funding program to support the wishes and projects identified by the respective community?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes, as stated previously, the department actually goes in and works with each community to develop a capital infrastructure plan that is used to apply for funding. We don't actually have public meetings on it, but we are available to each community as needed to go in and actually help them fill out their application process.

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

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is that, taking advantage of the low mode of transportation in the Sahtu called the winter roads system, is the department or the regional staff going to the communities currently? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, all of the communities in the

Sahtu region have applied and successfully applied for the infrastructure funding. We will be going into Colville Lake within the next two weeks to actually help them with their application. They are the only community in the Sahtu region that hasn't yet applied successfully.

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

QUESTION 596-18(2):  
INCOME ASSISTANCE FOOD RATE  
CALCULATIONS

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in my Member's statement, I was talking about income security. During my tours and talking to people, they are trying to understand it better, and I am not maybe doing the best job, so I guess what I am asking the Minister of ECE is: what factors are taken into calculating income support? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a few factors that are taken into consideration when we are calculating income assistance. As you know, income assistance provides financial support to anybody who is over the age of 19. Some of these factors include such things as where the person lives, the size of the family, as well as the income that is in the household. The IA program also has fixed food rates for each community. Therefore, the amount of assistance that a recipient receives for food depends on where they reside. In August 2016 the department introduced a new IA benefit called the community cost adjustment, which provides additional assistance to help offset the high costs of living in smaller communities. I encourage any residents in the NWT that live in small communities, if they have concerns, that they go and speak to their client service officers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for giving us that information. That is very helpful, and I will be able to utilize that in my office and when I go on tour. One question that does happen to me, in my riding, is: why does not the department factor in freight into these calculations, especially in my riding?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The income assistance program does not specifically subsidize freight. When we do the calculations, all the factors that I have mentioned before are what we use. Moving forward, however, the Nutrition North Canada Program offered by the Government of Canada provides vendors with a subsidy for freight costs.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Mahsi cho to the Minister for his answer. I am in a unique situation, and I think I am unique here in the 19 ridings, as I have two communities that do not have stores. They have to rely on going to another community. Does the department take into consideration this factor when they come up with the subsidy?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** When we look at the Income Assistance Program, the benefit levels are determined on a few factors in partnership with the NWT Bureau of Statistics, using information from the Northern Market Basket Measure, the NWT Community Price Survey, and the living cost differential. These are measures of costs of living in the Northwest Territories. We also use the Consumer Price Index, the Food Price Index, and the low-income measure scale, which are nationally recognized models for determining income assistance rates. Those are what we are using for each of the communities in the NWT.

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

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for his answer. It is still a little confusing here, though. We don't have a store in two of my communities, so the food basket is in, I would assume, Hay River or Fort Simpson, which, depending on the community and depending on the season, is either an hour-and-a-half ride to Fort Simpson or a four-and-a-half-hour ride to Hay River, which adds on to the costs of my residents. Will the Minister make a commitment to get his department to look into this unique situation for these two communities and come up with a subsidy that would help them move forward? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can take a look into the unique situation. Obviously, it is right across the Northwest Territories. We do have a lot of communities that don't have access by roads. However, all the factors, all the indicators that we do when we measure the benefits I believe take all that into consideration when we are looking at clients who are on income assistance. We can take a look at that unique situation. However, I think everything that I have said today takes every community, every individual and unique situation every community has and it is calculated to the best interests of the clients in that community.

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

QUESTION 597-18(2):  
LAND USE PLANS FOR THE DEH CHO REGION

**MR. TESTART:** Merci, Monsieur le President. [Translation] I have some questions for the Minister of Lands [Translation ends]. Again, the mandate commitment is complete land use plans for all areas, including regions without land and resource agreements in collaboration with Aboriginal governments. So I would like to ask the Minister, of the two regions without land and resource agreements, the Akaitcho and the Deh Cho, what is the status of those two land use plans? Thank you.

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

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Mr. Speaker, I can advise that, in the Deh Cho, a draft Deh Cho land use plan has been developed through the Deh Cho process. There are some remaining issues to be resolved, and the plan would then need to be approved by the parties involved, the Government of the Northwest Territories, Canada, and the Deh Cho. In all other areas, we are assisting Aboriginal governments in building capacity, and hopefully that will lead to resolution of these issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** On the Deh Cho process, my understanding is that the interim draft land use plan has been approved since 2005, so what has kept our government from signing off on that land use plan for over a decade?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** There have certainly been delays. There are serious outstanding issues that the parties need to negotiate, implementation, for one; zoning around communities, pipelines, and so on. So, we are attempting to move ahead with this, but there are complicated outstanding issues.

**MR. TESTART:** The government has had 10 years to work out these issues. Is it going to take another 10?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Hopefully not.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for being brief in his response. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister have any suggestions or new directions that he's going to take his department in getting this land use plan done and succeeding in his mandate, to his department and his own mandate, commitment to complete the land use plan? Thank you.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, certainly going back to the mandate of this government, we do want to move ahead with all these types of negotiations. I can advise that a senior member of the

government, the ADM of Environment and Natural Resources, is working very hard on this file.

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

QUESTION 598-18(2):  
ECOLE ALLAIN ST-CYR SCHOOL EXPANSION

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I'd like to answer my question in English about the expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr. Can the Minister provide an update on the status of this project? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Member's interest in this program. It's been an ongoing issue in the Court of Appeal since January 2015. The most recent update is that we have finalized the schematic design that was approved by both the CFSTNO and the departments. It has gone out for an RFP with the standard gym as the basis for evaluation with the option price for the expanded regional-sized gym that can be selected solely based on the GNWT discretion.

The RFP will close March 10, 2017, and we're expecting to break ground spring of this year and hopefully have the work completed in the fall of 2018. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister and, yes, this is something that's a passion of mine and it's certainly in my riding. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been a submission to Heritage Canada, but there's still some discussions, I guess, going on about what the final design is going to look like, and I don't believe that there's actually letters of support yet from the commission or the Francophone Parents Association. So is it the intention of the Minister to seek letters of support and come to an agreement on a final design?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The department did present and work with CFSTNO on a schematic design and finalized it based on what the Court of Appeal had brought forth and, in fact, the department has committed to assuming responsibility for funding of the project in its entirety based on the final design, which was more than what was recommended out of the NWT Court of Appeal, and that's the design that we are going with.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Can the Minister tell me then how does the department usually work with school boards when it comes to capital projects involving

expansion of the school? Is there a representative on the Design Committee or an Oversight Committee? How will the department work with the commission on this case and how do they generally approach these matters?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Based on the enrolment and the size of the school as well community size and population, there are a lot of criteria that comes into play here and also standards within the school. When working with the school boards, obviously it varies from community to community. We have another situation such as Colville Lake where we're looking at building the school to a set standard. The community wants to make some changes, so they have to go and look for third-party funding as well. So it's working with the school boards and we just follow the standards that are set out in legislation.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister and thank him for his response, but I guess I didn't really get an answer. I want to know specifically what role will the commission have in this particular expansion project. Is there going to be a joint committee that can look at placement, design of the classrooms, make sure that the facility meets the needs of the commission, the francophone community? What exact involvement is the commission going to have as this project moves forward? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned earlier, the department has worked with CFSTNO to look at creating that final schematic design based on the Court of Appeal order, which was two years ago. There was agreement on that design to move forward with option, and the RFP did go out with an option of the expansion. I do understand that the CFSTNO was looking for third-party funding, and we did make a submission as well to Heritage Canada, but yet have not heard any commitment of funding moving forward.

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

QUESTION 599-18(2):  
COMMUNITY POLICING PROTOCOLS

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, my first question about the recent protocol was mentioned. What community policing protocols are in place now across Northwest Territories to help achieve mutual respect between the RCMP and communities and prevent conflicts and respond effectively to crisis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think we were all encouraged to hear about the protocol referred to by the Member opposite between the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the RCMP. I can advise that in 2013 there was an agreement signed between the RCMP and the Dene Nation; a public safety protocol was signed. So hopefully these two types of protocols and agreements can be a template for other organizations and regions. Thank you.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Given the tenure of the RCMP members in our small communities, how often will crisis awareness training take place and how will it be fit into officers' workloads in small communities and remote detachments?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** I can advise that all RCMP cadets receive problem-solving training based at depot and where cultural awareness is woven in with concept of human rights, harassment, discrimination, ethics, and bias-free policing and crisis management. Cultural awareness training comprises of 66 hours of depot training curriculum, of which 17 hours is dedicated to Aboriginal-specific training, and I can advise also that members transferred to G Division must complete a mandatory six-hour Aboriginal awareness online course through the RCMP's internal education system. So hopefully officers are well equipped to deal with cultural and crisis issues in our small communities.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** I appreciate the response. Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Minister is: how are the provisions of the protocol different from what was currently in place in the Beaufort Delta?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** All communities do have, of course, policing priorities and action plans with the RCMP; however, specifically dealing with the protocol, the protocol establishes in writing a trusting and reciprocal relationship between the IRC and the RCMP. These relationships of course already exist; however, the signing of the agreement helps to support the relationships that currently exist and hopefully build on them.

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

QUESTION 600-18(2):  
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SUPPORT  
POSITION

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of times now I've asked the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment about why the position manager of traditional economy, agriculture, and fisheries is located in Yellowknife as opposed to the

centre of agriculture and fisheries which is Hay River. The position manages two employees. One is supposed to be positioned in Hay River. The role of this position is to set the direction for the sectors, design and deliver strategies, develop the terms of reference. It is centred on developing these sectors as future industries and opportunities in the territory.

Now, when I ask the Minister why this position is in Yellowknife, his answer is because it is pan-territorial. I would like to ask the Minister, what does he mean that it is pan-territorial that requires it to be in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've answered this question a number of times already, this is a pan-territorial position that represents all citizens of the Northwest Territories. We have reallocated the position in Hay River that was presently there, away from agriculture, to look after the fishing and agriculture industry to help facilitate that in the South Slave. The position that the Member opposite is referring to is based out of Yellowknife, and it needs to be here to look after the whole Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SIMPSON:** As I also mentioned, I believe 1.2 million pounds of fish were caught in the South Slave, brought to the fish plant in Hay River. I think 68,000 pounds were caught in the North Slave, and I think 10,000 up in the Mackenzie Delta. Clearly, the vast majority of work is in Hay River. There is an agriculture strategy, which the most employment and industry is going to be created in Hay River. Same with the fishery strategy. When the Minister says "pan-territorial," everything I am saying, it seems to be in the South. The only thing that I can think of that is really pan-territorial is these community gardens that are in all the communities. Is that what the Minister is referring to, the community garden aspect of the agriculture?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** There are a couple of things I want to say. First of all, Norman Wells grew 9,000 pounds of potatoes. That's not some small, little community garden we are talking about. There is a region at looking at extending their agriculture. I have had conversations with people in Fort Good Hope who want to do commercial agriculture in their region as well.

As much as the South Slave is maybe thinking they are the agricultural hub of the Northwest Territories, there are a number of communities that are already reaching out and doing it. Gameti is another good example, with what they have been able to accomplish there with the small amount of funds

that we made available to them. We want to grow this industry to make people self-sufficient in the Northwest Territories, and I don't think the discussion should be about if there is a job in Hay River or Yellowknife. This is about growing the industry, and diversifying our economy in the Northwest Territories.

**MR. SIMPSON:** I am glad to hear that agriculture is sprouting out to all over the territory. I guess my issue is that I have seen that fish plant sitting in Hay River, no work being done to it for decades, and its industry sort of floating along there. Things are moving now, but I cannot help but think that if the person who is responsible for driving the sector had to drive by that fish plant every day, things might move a little faster. Will the Minister at least commit to looking into the idea of moving this? Can he commit to exploring the benefits that might come out of having this position in Hay River?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I have made my position quite clear on this. I want to talk about fishing a little bit because he's talking about fishing. I had just happened to have the opportunity to go to the fish plant last week when I was home. One thing I can say, yes, fishing is a big part of Hay River industry, but the Member from the Beau-Del there, from Mr. Blake, has approached us about doing commercial fishing in Northwest Territories. This is going to have greater implications than just in Hay River, plus we also have money set aside, \$1.4 million invested in the Hay River plant as we move forward, if we can make a deal with Freshwater and the federal government.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Again, I would like to remind Members to refer to Members in their riding, please. Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's comments. I'd love to see that there is agriculture throughout the territory. There is commercial fishing growing throughout the territory, but if it is so important to have the position in Yellowknife because this is pan-territorial, how come the superintendent from the South Slave is going up to the Beaufort Delta to look into the fish plant? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason the superintendent from the South Slave is going to the Mackenzie Delta to help them on how to move their fishing industry forward is because all the experience that he has dealing with the Freshwater Fishing Corporation and Tlicho Investment Corporation, and he deals with the fishermen on a day-to-day basis as problems come and arise, and helps them move their businesses forward. Why wouldn't we send someone with that

amount of experience to help introduce a new industry into the Mackenzie Delta?

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

QUESTION 601-18(2):

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION MEASURES

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a set of questions that deal with the unfounded sexual assault complaints for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The questions for Justice really deal with what has happened after the fact, but Health and Social Services is in charge of prevention.

My first question is: how is the department integrating the Globe's findings into the work that it is doing, or planning to do, in combatting violence against women, and family violence? Mahsi.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have had some discussions between myself and the deputy about The Globe and Mail article and the very disturbing findings in there. I was really happy to hear the work that Justice is doing with the RCMP to attempt to change some of those results for the better.

In the Department of Health and Social Services, we are focusing on a couple of different areas. One of them is prevention. We are utilizing programs like what will it take to get out there and work with residents across the territories to change the perspective, change the attitudes around domestic, as well as violence against women.

We are also working on a different campaign, a series of rants that are very specific to individuals, sort of issues that are raised or coming up, the myth that perpetrators of family violence are simply have a difficulty with anger, that it is not the victim's fault. We are trying to address those issues through a number of these rants. Those are available online in movie theatres and other means across the Northwest Territories. We are making sure that we are trying to incorporate as much national data in those as we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for what sounds like a promising approach. I note that What Will It Take is really about empowering bystanders to intervene in family violence situations. I think that that is another downstream problem. The upstream problem is consent. I think that that is the approach that needs to be taken now, is to ensure that people understand what consent is. I am wondering if the

Minister has any plans to pursue that line of thought?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** The Member raises a solid point, and it is a good point. What Will It Take does have significant value. There is no evaluation framework, and that is something that I have committed to working on so that we can see what kind of benefits we are getting over time. We know that social marketing does and can play a key role in challenging people's perceptions, or bringing greater public attention. I take the Member's point, and I think the point the Member is raising is something we might be able to build into one of our future rants that we are sitting out there to get that information out. I would certainly love to sit down with the Member and get more of her thoughts on that particular area, to see how we might be able to incorporate that into one of our future rants as far as getting the information out there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his openness to this idea. One of the things that we have discussed previously -- I know he is working on some kind of an evaluation for What Will It Take. We have also talked about the possibility of redoing the family violence attitude survey. I'm wondering if the Minister is willing to work with his colleague, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, to find the money and make this repeat of the family violence survey happen?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I want to be clear that I am not saying "no," but it is going to sound an awful lot like "no." The survey was done in 2007. There is a lot of information coming from a lot of different stakeholders about the problems of domestic violence and violence against women. We are in a fiscal environment where we have got to make sure that we are getting as much maximum benefit for every dollar we spend. I guess my question to the Member and the Members opposite is: would I be better positioned to spend money on a survey, or would I be better positioned to spend money on the family violence shelters, putting more money into the awareness campaigns to help change attitudes, change beliefs, and put more money into the health centres to ensure that our healthcare providers are prepared, adequately prepared, to deal with the trauma that individuals who have experienced a sexual assault coming into the health centres are experiencing?

So I guess my question is back to the Members. Is this something we want to make a priority? If it is, if the committee tells me it is, I will certainly pursue that. I am always interested and willing to work with my colleagues, but I guess my question is: is that

where we want to invest right now, or do we want to invest in these other areas?

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I like the trend in this question period where I am asked the question. Mr. Speaker, the question about the family violence attitude survey, it is \$100,000. That is what it cost before, and it is a very important planning tool in order for the government to make the best use of the money they have in preventing family violence. I would like to think that it is not an either/or. I would like to think that, where the Minister is careful to do planning in other parts of his portfolio, that he would also consider this to be an important planning tool.

I recognize that money is limited, but prevention is really a cost-saving measure. If women are not assaulted in the first place, then they don't need the justice system, the health system, victim services, and all the other supports that result from being assaulted. So, I would like the Minister once again to consider putting this into the next business plan so that we can get a grip on what exactly needs to be done/ Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I didn't say no to the Member's request, but we do have to look at the work that is being done in the Government of the Northwest Territories, and I think there is a lot of information out there already about the significant negative impacts that this issue is having on residents of the Northwest Territories. I would much rather invest in more prevention than doing another survey, but if it is the wish of committee, if committee tells me that that is something they want to see, investment in surveys instead of actions, I am prepared to take their direction and lead on that.

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

QUESTION 602-18(2):

APPLICATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION  
POLICY IN DEPARTMENTAL AMALGAMATIONS

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Human Resources. Mr. Speaker, the government has proposed three separate amalgamations in this upcoming fiscal year and Infrastructure and the amalgamation of the Executive DAAIR and also Finance, Human Resources. My question for the Minister of Human Resources is: is there work being done with those departments that are amalgamated by him, as the Minister of Human Resources, to ensure that the affirmative action is being followed if there is to be any reduction in positions? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Human Resources.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. There is work that is being done. Thank you.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Is there work being done on ensuring that the affirmative action is being followed?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, there is.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** That is not what I am hearing, but in any event, if there is work being done, what type of work is being done? What direction has come from this Minister to other Ministers under the departments that are amalgamating to ensure that Affirmative Action Policy is being followed when they are reducing positions?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We all hear different things from out there, but I can assure the Member and all Members that work is being done. It is called an Affirmative Action Policy, and we have to apply the Affirmative Action Policy when we are looking at filling positions within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not necessarily talking about filling positions. What I am referring to is, during the amalgamation, sometimes when you amalgamate you get two positions at the same level. When those positions move forward and there are two positions of the same level moving forward, does this government apply the Affirmative Action Policy when they figure out which one of the two candidates is going to be receiving that position? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, affirmative action does apply, so if there are two candidates of equal qualification and one is affirmative action and they have the qualifications to do the work, then affirmative action does apply in this particular case.

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

QUESTION 603-18(2):

LAND USE PLANS FOR THE DEH CHO REGION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to my line of questions to the Minister of Lands. He had mentioned in his response where they are at with the Deh Cho process, so I wonder if he can tell me if there has been a decision on the dispute or the difference of opinion between land quantum. Has

the government moved its position on land quantum at all? Thank you.

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

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for his question, but that is not really a part of the land use planning process, and the question might be directed to another Minister. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you to the Minister for that clarification. Let's get back to land use planning. As it is not directly related to a settled agreement, what can the Minister do outside the Deh Cho process to move this file along, apart from assuring me that an ADM is on top of it? Is there any concrete policy change and political leadership he can apply to the file to settle this 10-year, this decade-long, lapse of approving the plan?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** As all Members know, it is a commitment of this government to move all of these land use plans and negotiations generally with Aboriginal governments and other stakeholders ahead. We believe we do have the people in place, and we are looking forward to progress.

**MR. TESTART:** Can the Minister advise if he can update the appropriate standing committee or perhaps members of the public, Members of this House, on the progress of land use planning on regular intervals, on this and all the other unsettled claim areas?

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** I can certainly update the relevant committees on how things are proceeding with respect to the land use portion. Again, it may be other Ministers could assist on the larger overall progress on these types of files. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, thank you, and a thank you to the Minister for that commitment. I just note that there has been a lot of discussion about this from the new federal government. Even His Holiness Pope Francis has made a very clear commitment to the rights of Indigenous peoples, so I wonder if the Minister then can give us some assurance that these plans will be in place by mid-term? Thank you.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Well, all of the progress on all of these types of files, it takes two to tango and sometimes three or four to tango, so progress is not solely determined by us. We clearly want to make progress on all of these files. However, progress sometimes can be slow and painstaking, so I can't make any guarantees as to date.

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

QUESTION 604-18(2):  
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SUPPORT  
POSITION

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have heard my honourable colleague from Hay River North ask the Minister of ITI about the position in Hay River and being moved there. Then he talks about it being pan-territorial. It is a position here in Yellowknife. Can the Minister explain why, magically, Yellowknife is the best place for a pan-territorial position? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I said earlier in the House today to the Member from Hay River North that this position is based in Yellowknife because it clearly recognizes the importance of being here looking after the broader Northwest Territories, with all the initiatives that are in place in all the different regions in the NWT, and it just totally makes sense to have that job located here in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. However, with decentralization today and the modernization of computers we can do things, and right now we've seen positions out there that actually are pan-territorial. So will the Minister re-evaluate this decision and actually put a position, which makes sense in the South Slave, into Hay River?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I've also answered this question today already and I said I'm not committed to moving that position out of Yellowknife. It belongs here and it needs to be here to look after the broader people of the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for the non-commitment. I mean, that's great to hear. However, we talk about decentralization and it seems that we have to be living in Yellowknife to look after the broader territory. So I understand the Minister. I will ask him again: will he re-evaluate this and see the importance of moving the position that would have a better service to the NWT in Hay River?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I don't know how many creative ways I can say it to answer this

question, but I believe this job has to stay in Yellowknife and I'm committed to keeping it here.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committee. Item 13, reports on committee on review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Transportation.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 285-18(2):  
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY FOR 2016 UNDER THE  
TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS  
ACT

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly for 2016 under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 286-18(2):  
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ABSENCES FOR THE  
PERIOD OCTOBER 13, 2016 - JANUARY 30, 2017

**MR. SPEAKER:** Pursuant to Section 5 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act I wish to table the Summary of Members' Absences for the Period October 13, 2016, to January 30, 2017.

Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

### First Reading of Bills

BILL 17:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. The motion is on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 17 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Health and Social Services.

BILL 18:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES PROFESSIONS ACT

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Health and Social Services Professions Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. The motion is on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 18 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, 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 Member for Sahtu in the chair.

Committee, 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 the business before the House.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** I 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), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018, continuing with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. We will consider the document after a short break. Everybody agrees?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Agreed. Mahsi.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Recognizing a quorum, we will call committee back to order. Thank you, Minister Moses. Do you have any witnesses you would like to bring into the Chamber?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Welcome. Minister Moses, please introduce your witnesses for the record.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my right, I have my deputy minister, Ms. Sylvia Haener, and on my left, Mr. Olin Lovely, assistant deputy minister of corporate services. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. We will begin with general comments on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Members are welcome to ten minutes for the general comments. After all Members have had an opportunity to make their comments, the Minister will have ten minutes to respond. Do I have general comments on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment? Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, just a few comments. For the last two years, I have always been doing a few statements on the need for funding for junior kindergarten, and I am glad to see there is some funding going towards this. Since we had the pilot project in Tsiigehtchic two years back, at the start I believe they had a little over \$45,000. I believe it is \$48,000. It has been a while since I have seen those numbers, but I am really interested to see the actual amount that will be going to the communities after this. I know some communities will decide not to take on junior kindergarten, but that is solely their decision under the DAs.

As we move forward, I know Tsiigehtchic, for example, they are keen on continuing with the program, and I am really interested to see the extra funding going to communities. I will probably be asking this a little later, but for the communities that are taking this on, will they be getting more as other communities decide not to take this on? That will be really interesting for myself and those communities that decide to actually take on junior kindergarten as we move forward.

Also, under take a kid hunting and programs like this that are offered through the schools, it is a really good program. It is really successful in communities that I represent, Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic. The communities and the schools really do a great job working together, and I hope to see that continue. That is all I have for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just want to provide some general reflections here, as you requested. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment plays a very important role in the NWT in controlling some key funds which are widely accessed, portfolios such as education

and income assistance, to name just a couple. I recognize that the department is looking at substantial change, with a view to improving service delivery in these areas, but I have to point to a very consistent pattern of communication breakdown that has happened between both the department and the public and the department and the Regular Members.

We have worked very hard leading up to today to understand whether junior kindergarten is fully funded in all places for all additional costs in the next school year, and we have not received a definitive answer on that at all. Junior kindergarten could have been a good-news story, but because of the way that the information was distributed, it was not that. Likewise, instructional hours; this is a very significant change that is being proposed by the department, particularly for the high school grades. We have yet to receive a briefing as Regular MLAs on this initiative, and that is simply unacceptable. We have heard in the meantime about an interim draft plan for Aboriginal language and culture; not that that issue isn't important, but the consequences of changing instructional hours affect every single child in the NWT.

The income assistance changes is another area that I will have questions on. I know that the Minister says that everyone is better off. I am still not a hundred per cent convinced that they are as well off as he thinks they are, but this is another area where a lack of clarity about what was on offer and how it was going to be funded has really hobbled efforts to understand what is going on here.

Those are three of my examples that I want to bring to the Minister's attention, and to his staff. We want to see, as they want to see, the best opportunity provided to the children of the NWT to make the best of their opportunities and to realize their full potential in their lifetimes.

We also want to see that people who access post-secondary education are able to receive valuable education that will keep them in the North. We need trained people in the North. Every measurement possible says that that is the case. Most of all, I just want to impress on the Minister that we really need to improve the communication with the public and with the Regular MLAs around these initiatives so that he can turn us into supporters instead of adversaries. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will try to just keep mine specific so we can get moving on this. I will try not to take the 10 minutes. I guess my first one is that I would have to agree with my

colleague who just previously spoke about communication. This is probably the biggest challenge that we are facing out there, is the messaging and how we get that messaging to the general public, because there is a lot of miscommunication out there. I say we, collectively, are doing a bad job because we are not getting the information or asking for the proper information and getting it out there to the people.

Junior kindergarten is a huge issue for the Northwest Territories in that it has an impact on a number of different organizations. For the record, junior kindergarten has been a big success in my region, and people have bought into it from the very beginning, except for one community. However, the caveat is it needs to be fully funded. We have heard it now in the House it has been fully funded, but, again, the numbers of communications on how much it is actually going to cost, it seems to be different from what we are hearing. We hear one thing, then we hear another thing. Then, getting communication, we find out from the press that it is fully funded; not from the Minister but from the press as we are going forward.

We understood from the Finance Minister it was going to be done throughout the sitting of this term, and then the Minister informed us it was going to get done. The advancement was going to be done during the time as communities are prepared to do it. I appreciate that, but, again, the actual costs of the funding, we still don't know. We have talked about inclusive schooling, language, busing. Those are the challenges out there that are not part of it.

I have heard the Minister speak in this House about how we have \$150 million going to school boards; they have to make decisions. Well, again, that to me sounds like we are not taking ownership. Education is our responsibility, the Government of the Northwest Territories. We work with the divisional education councils and, yes, it is alright to give them some latitude, but we have to give them clear directions, and it needs to be done so that people of the Northwest Territories understand we are working together. It does not mean that we are fighting against each other all the time. It comes back to the college. We talked about the college: well, we give them money, and we give them some clear direction; well, then you've got to find the money. They are not doing strategic plans, so cuts are happening without strategic plans.

I have no problem making cuts if they are logical and they are processed properly, but if we are relying on a third party to do it, which is the college. That's not correct. We need to be working with them. We've got to be making informed decisions. If we're not making informed decisions, then we're not doing any value to what we're trying to do. The Minister talks about SFA and a great system; I

totally agree with you. I totally agree it's one of the best, if not the best, in Canada.

I've had my children take the program. I've had my children take schooling down South and I've had children take schooling up North. Both are meeting the needs. The North is, for some people, their comfort zone, the ability to stay in their home territory or in a centre like Yellowknife or Fort Smith. That's because they have family. They can rely on family. If they had to move down South, they're not going to have that family to support them. So again, this needs to be all taken into consideration when we're making decisions. Hard decisions have to be made, but they have to be made based on good evidence. If we're not doing good evidence then we're going to have the struggle we're having. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start with some general comments about Education, Culture and Employment. I'll start with our youngest citizens. I've reviewed the business plan for the department, I've reviewed the main estimates, and I'm not sure where we are with the mandate commitment towards universal daycare. So I'll have some questions on that. The two-year deadline is coming up very quickly and I'm not sure what's being done by the department from that front.

Now, I'll talk about junior kindergarten implementation, and issues around this continue no matter what the Minister seems to say. There is no clear plan, there are no quarterly reports that he promised to the standing committee, and it's not fully funded despite whatever the government has said. The issue of inclusive schooling funding, Aboriginal languages funding for the junior kindergarten students, busing, those remain unresolved. What we need from this Minister is a clear unequivocal statement that says there's going to be full funding and that, if there are any shortfalls after talking to the district education authorities, I'm prepared to come forward with a supplementary appropriation that will deal with those shortfalls.

That's the kind of commitment and clear statement we need from this Minister, not this we're going to have magical mystery meetings with the district education authorities and try to get them to come up with the money. We need a clear commitment from this Minister. He's going to come forward with supplementary appropriation for any shortfalls.

Now, there still needs to be a lot of work done with Aboriginal Head Start, daycares, Montessori, to look at the implication of introducing JK for these other programs, and I don't see that there has really

been much progress made on any of those areas either.

When it comes to the school system, there are reductions in Inclusive Schooling Funding. I'll have questions about that. There is reduction in funding to the education authorities. They are also being told that they need to look into shared administrative services, come up with \$600,000. Look, I'm all for efficiencies, and if it's done in a collaborative fashion, great, but top down I'm not sure this is going to work.

I'm going to move on now to post-secondary education. There are cuts to Student Financial Assistance. Like my colleague said, we have a fantastic program, and my children have benefited from that as well, but I'm concerned about these cuts. They say there's no uptake on the program. Well, all the money has been spent, so I'm not sure what the problem is here, but I'll have questions around that.

Then we get to Aurora College. I don't understand why cuts are being made in our contribution. More than 10 per cent of their budget is being cut while they're preparing a strategic plan and while we're developing an accountability framework.

Why would you make cuts while you're doing these things? It just doesn't make any sense. You put the cart before the horse. I know Cabinet has its Fiscal Reduction Strategy and targets, but that's not a good enough reason to shortchange our post-secondary institutions.

There are, I think, also some issues with continued support for Dechinta and College nordique. I'm glad to hear that there's going to be a post-secondary education legislation brought forward this year; that's long overdue, but that's not where this has to end. We need a post-secondary education strategy for the Northwest Territories that will help move us towards university and a network of learning centres and so on, as I've said in this House.

There is some good news in this budget for this department and I've come to understand a little bit better the increased support for income support for our most disadvantaged people in the Northwest Territories, but as my colleague previous, the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, mentioned the communications around this has just been terrible. It's taken me a long time to understand, and I don't think the people of the Northwest Territories or the clients that we serve understand some of these changes very well, either.

I'll also have some questions, Mr. Chair, around the Small Community Employment Fund. Good to see more money going into it, but I'm worried we're not

going to be able to get that money out the door because, if it remains as a wage subsidy program, that money is not going to get spent. We need to transition that into a job creation program so that there are more jobs available in small communities, get folks retrofitting our housing stock, and so on. There are ways to do this and move it from wage subsidies to job creation.

Those are my opening comments, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, just a few items that I also want to speak about in my opening remarks on this department. First, the one that's having the greatest impact upon the communities I represent is junior kindergarten. The Minister has indicated that it is fully funded, but the amount doesn't fully fund junior kindergarten. At the outset, there was \$2 million taken out of the school boards' funding to address junior kindergarten the first year of rollout.

That \$2 million doesn't seem to be in the framework anywhere anymore, and I believe that these decisions were made by the school boards under some duress as well. My understanding is that the department had determined that there is a surplus of funding based on the way they're funding the PTR, which is another whole different issue as well. Based on that, there is a belief that there is accumulated surplus in the various boards.

So, essentially, the direction from this department to the school boards and the schools, I suppose, was that you guys had the money to take on the junior kindergarten and, if you don't take on junior kindergarten, then the corresponding funding that the department thinks is targeted to support junior kindergarten financially will be removed from their budget.

So it's either take the kids or lose the money. So they did. So it cost the boards \$2 million, but now that \$2 million is not in the framework at all. That's a very important part of funding the junior kindergarten, when you consider there was also no inclusive schooling for the junior kindergarten students. I think it's known right across this country, maybe right across the whole world, that when you invest in the earlier ages, the greatest return on investment occurs at the youngest age.

Four-year-olds are now the youngest of the people that Education is responsible for; however, a decision has been made that, because your funding level is 2 per cent higher than the legislated amount in the Education Act, that it's fine; but it wasn't enough to start with. I mean, at one point there was

no money in inclusive schooling. It's teachers who recognized that there had to be some funding put in inclusive schooling in order to support individuals.

There are two types of agreements that students get into; it's some sort of individual assessments on students that are maybe one or two years behind, or maybe more than that behind. Those students are supported by inclusive schooling. There is a high number of those students in the small communities, and it's not being funded. Now, on top of that, we're adding four-year-olds with no targeted inclusive schooling dollars and no targeted Aboriginal language instruction.

So now things start to get a little bit thinner in those areas in the support for students, I think, in Aboriginal instruction up to grade nine, and I think inclusive schooling also up to grade nine. So when you put in all of these, things start to compound the issue. So to pull out a number to say, well, we'll add \$5.1 million, well, this side of the House makes the assumption that includes any money that's already been put into the framework, or asking the school boards to put in that money. I mean, this is a real mess here, and the department or the Minister is not seeing that. I can't understand why the government is not able to see that.

You've got four-year-olds going in, they have the best possible return on investment in all of the people that they're responsible for, and they're refusing to invest in it. Like I'm saying, it's known, when you start to deal with early childhood development, the returns are 7:1.

There is a saying in the business of early childhood development that if that was an actual investment, that would be the greatest investment that any person could make when you think about all your investment portfolios, and that is in young children. Early childhood development investment is the best there is, but we're not doing that. This budget doesn't do that, and it's very, very difficult to understand. When you have these things where you make an investment and you have a tremendous return, it's not happening, and I just don't understand.

The other thing I'm just going to touch briefly on, I have a few minutes left here, is the Small Community Employment Program. It was a really good thing that the government put \$3 million into that program. We, on this side of the floor, were asking for \$5 million, but that was the total. So \$3 million was in addition to what was there, but our understanding when we finally said that's not too bad of a deal was that there was \$1.3 million in the framework already, or in that budget item. There was actually only \$300,000.

So we kind of were offered something that's \$1.7 million short of our target, and having said all those things about kindergarten, you look at the budget, there's a cut to inclusive schooling. Now logically, if we lost a whole bunch of students, that kind of makes sense, but I don't think that's the case. I think the inclusive schooling situation is compounded by adding four-year-olds to the school system. It hasn't decreased the amount that we need for inclusive schooling. There's no indication that taking inclusive schooling money out of the budget is going to help the students or help the people of the Northwest Territories, no indication at all, but it's gone, \$1.5 million. Maybe that's what went into junior kindergarten; I don't know.

In inclusive schooling, if you look at it statistically, we have one of the jurisdictions that had the highest rate of special support for students. We have one of the highest rates in the country for individual plans for students who are looking for support to advance to their grade level. Because we all know you no longer have grade 5 teachers, essentially; you have teachers of 10-year-olds, and they're at various levels. In order to make sure that individuals are advancing to the next level and are able to handle it and are able to go on, we need inclusive schooling to support them. If we don't have it, they're not going to advance.

When they get to grade ten and they're no longer getting that support, they're going to fail, and that's what's been happening. This inclusive schooling was negotiated by teachers so that they could support the students to increase the graduation rates. The students are a little behind, we're going to give them support, but no, this government is actually cutting that back. These are real serious issues in our education system.

I'll have a lot to say about Aurora College's TEP and social work programs, but that's going to have to come at another time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Nakimayak.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm looking at the pages and I see some lines for Aboriginal languages, cultural component and sports events, early childhood programming, healthy food for children and youth. I see the partnership between the Aboriginal Head Start Program and the junior kindergarten in my region.

I'm going to talk from a small community perspective. I see the benefits of the program, how it's rolling out in the region. In January it just rolled out in one of the smallest communities in my region, and it's starting to benefit especially families who can't afford a babysitter sometimes, or sometimes there are no childcare services in the

community, and I see the benefits of that and I support that.

You know, every program when you start to see it rolled out, it's never perfect. If we wait until everything is perfect, it will never roll out. So we need to start looking at how we can improve things, and I see this as a good opportunity for that.

I see Aboriginal languages. Last week there was an agreement between the Crown and the Inuit, and I hope that we can develop partnerships between the Inuit and Indigenous peoples with the GNWT to ensure that our Indigenous communities are getting a fair share of funding and they're working specifically for each region's culture and language.

Healthy food for children. I know the cost of living in my region is the highest. We need to ensure that the kids are fed with breakfast programs and programs alike that will help them just to concentrate in school. Sometimes when you're not fed, school is the last thing on your mind, and if you can feed the children you're making a difference for them to carry out their days.

I agree with Mr. Blake; he talked about on-the-land programs. We need to ensure that the cultural aspect of our community is never lost, and actually we need to strengthen those a little bit every opportunity we can. I know the Minister mentioned that there would be less class time and more time on the land; I think that's a huge benefit, especially in my region, where subsistence harvesting is a main staple for food. We don't have the opportunity or the likes of five or six grocery stores in one community; sometimes there's only one. One of the Members stated that there was nothing in one of his communities, so programs like that are important to roll out, and sometimes they don't alleviate the issue but as well again they contribute to the success of people, ensuring that their cultures stay strong and healthy in every aspect they can.

I don't have much more to say, but, you know, all in all in junior kindergarten I see the benefits in my region and I'd like to see how the Inuvialuit themselves and the GNWT work together to ensure that this program is refined more to the needs of the children, and also the parents. Junior kindergarten is not about just the kids. It's about the parents as well, too. It will help strengthen those bonds between teachers and parents and their children as they roll into kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Nakimayak. Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Chair. [English translation not provided]. I, too, had some comments in terms of some common themes that reflect the riding that I represent.

Just to start off, this department saw a decrease from last year of 1.5 per cent. It is one of two biggest departments besides Health and Social Services that take a big chunk of this \$1.8 billion operation that we call GNWT.

Just some things that I wanted to highlight. I know this department is moving forward on the Education Act. In my recent discussion with one of the communities that I represent, they wanted to ensure that, if there is a sincere effort in terms of the recent cooperation agreement with governments and communities, in the spirit of devolution and looking at collaboration and working together, the Education Act has to reflect the rights of people, and especially Indigenous people that uphold the treaty of 1921.

I understand that section 35 as a guide in terms of legal jurisprudence is defined in the courts at the same time. It also affects policy in how government operates its programs and services, especially for First Nations people. In this particular case, the Education Act has to consider that and ensure that there is proper consultation and consent from Indigenous people either in respect of programs and services, or else just the nature of government and how they act in terms of delivering those general programs for all communities, but especially for First Nations communities.

The other point that I wanted to highlight, too, is the concern in terms of enrolment in the schools that have been brought up, and whether that affects budgets. There is always some fine-tuning at the end of the fiscal year. There are some anxieties, maybe in some respects, in terms of maybe more efforts could be made to ensure that our enrolment figures, and especially in small communities, are up to par with the larger regional centres, also like Yellowknife as well.

On that note, it is just recently that we came across the declining population of small communities. I think most of us around the table have at one point or another come from small communities, and we want to ensure they continue to exist and thrive within, at least, the mosaic of the NWT.

On that point, what concerns me, there are two reasons why people are moving from the smaller communities into their regional centres and the larger cities like Yellowknife. One of them is job opportunities, and the other one is education. Education because parents want to bring further opportunities and more growth and vitality in terms of programming services, activities, extracurricular activities to their children so they can get a well-rounded education in the larger centres, and perhaps in the city as well.

I think that has to be cited as a concern. Perhaps, in terms of reflection, the department has to address that. How do you ensure that we have a very effective school system with adequate resources and adequate teachers to ensure that the curriculum is properly and effectively delivered for our students so they can be successful in the small communities? I think that's a concern that the department has to reflect on, and perhaps respond to that.

In that same note, too, it's concerning that we are seeing some cuts and pull-backs of program initiatives, especially for post-secondary students, students who want to further their education beyond high school. There is some indication that perhaps community colleges could be in jeopardy.

As I speak right now, there is a leadership program in my home community, and more likely other communities, too, as well. This is trying to at least give the formal basic framework of leadership program development at the local level. When people choose to try and live in their communities and decide not to move beyond their communities because they can see those services being delivered in the community, then we need to make sure that it is successful and the government commits to maintaining that service.

The other big point, of course, is Aboriginal Head Start versus JK. It doesn't have to be like that. I keep hearing about it: junior kindergarten versus Aboriginal Head Start. I think the lines have been drawn. I think more effort has to be made to address that. Perhaps it is becoming entrenched. Maybe it is beyond repairable.

We did have a motion in the House recommending that the government act so that those two initiatives will continue to operate, but at the same time, in parallel, co-exist, in that we need to draw some attention to that to ensure that they both succeed.

At the same time, it has been noted that perhaps this Minister has to work with his federal colleagues. Recently, the Prime Minister of Canada came up North and made a very visible effort to be in one of the Aboriginal Head Start Programs in the NWT. Similarly, the Minister should take some efforts in terms of working with the federal colleagues to give assurances to the Aboriginal Head Start program staff to the program itself, despite the commitment of funding until 2020, there has to be more measured assurances that that program will continue.

My final point is in terms of languages. There are lots of buzzwords: "promotion," "preservation," "revitalization". I understand this department is going forward with an accountability and planning framework in ensuring that -- not a matter of

throwing money to the situations or problems and then walking away from that. We have seen that. We all have responsibilities to communities, and they have tackled some very fundamental challenges in terms of capacity.

Similarly, there used to be at least a point of consideration in terms of understanding the roles of this government, its obligation to the Official Languages Act; namely, to Indigenous languages, that more could be done, but at the same time, if there are projects and programs out there that are successful, we need to build upon that and ensuring that we are just not devolving dollars to regions or communities and then walking away from that. We need to ensure that we have sustained effort, and that those are measurable outputs that we seek, at least, to hail as being very successful.

My final point is that my colleagues had raised the idea of small community employment initiatives. It is not just a wage subsidy. When I think of a wage subsidy, it is basically looking at the summer employment program initiatives for student who come back for the summer; we give them jobs. That wage subsidy does exist, but I think more has to be done in terms of ensuring that there is a focus on job creation so that it is successful; at the very least, we expect it from the small communities. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have some opening comments for this department. Much has been said by my honourable friends on the issues surrounding junior kindergarten, inclusive education, Aboriginal Head Start, and many of the more high-profile issues that we have debated in this Chamber. One thing is clear: the focus of the Minister's responsibilities are very much geared toward education, and currently the priority seems to be on pre-kindergarten-to-12 education, and the supports for students after the fact.

We are not taking a hard look at some of the other responsibilities and giving them, I think, proper emphasis, one of those being culture and heritage. There is a new heritage plan, and the Minister provided a briefing on just the other day. I think it is good, but that plan, it is fairly clear that we are only now just starting to think about what culture and heritage mean to our government and developing these resources. I think perhaps we need to rethink where culture sits within the responsibilities of this government and start really emphasizing how we can develop our arts programs, our arts infrastructure, and seeing those as real opportunities to invest in Northerners and, equally,

to invest in new opportunities for destination for marketing for tourism.

This department has a very important role to play in supporting tourism and making the North an attractive and vibrant place for people to live and people to visit. There is some work being done, but again, I think we need to bring that part of the portfolio into sharper focus and to have a more concrete emphasis on delivering that.

Post-secondary, as well; I think we are only starting to think about post-secondary, and the longer we take to figure out what we are doing with post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories, the more ground we lose to Yukon College, which has done amazing work. We have a real opportunity to develop our own style of post-secondary here in the Northwest Territories that is distinct and that can fulfill that long-stated goal of a university for the Arctic in Canada. We have fantastic partners in College nordique and Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, and we have seen a bit of funding increases for both of those organizations, which is welcome, but, again, they are being held back by a lack of focus on where we want to take post-secondary education.

Even now, we are seeing huge cuts and very unpopular cuts to Aurora College that surprise students, faculty, and MLAs. That is a short list, but it clearly shows that people are not ready for this shift so abruptly. That strategic plan, it is not just a piece of bureaucratic work. It is certainly a plan that needs public engagement and investment so the people can get behind it. A lot of people care about Aurora College, and what it represents as an opportunity to Northerners can't be overstated. So we can't be seen as a government that takes opportunities away from Northerners. We have to be seen as a government, and we have to be a government that invests in new opportunities for Northerners, and enhancing the current opportunities for Northerners, as well.

Personally, I can't support nor do I think the government should support drastic program cuts without completing that strategic plan. Furthermore, I think that we really need to think about where we are taking our other post-secondary partners and how we want that playing field to look. Do we want Aurora College to be a polytechnic? It is in labour market development, so it seems to be geared towards job creation, and yet it hasn't very much changed. These are questions we have to ask. Until we see that strategic plan, they are very hard to ask.

I think there are also millions of dollars of research funding, as well, endowments across the country that could be flowing into the NWT if we really capitalize on knowledge economy opportunities.

Currently, the ARI, Aurora Research Institute, there is a North Slave office that does not even have technical facilities to work in. All those facilities are in Inuvik, and that position does not have a travel budget to go to Inuvik to work in those facilities, so they have to raise the money through granting, grants and endowments in order to travel to where we have the facility in the first place.

It is things like that that are unrealized opportunities to leverage knowledge and research opportunities to bring more investment and skilled technical people into the Northwest Territories. We had scientists even here for two, three years. It makes a difference. It makes a difference in what they can contribute. The North is a leader in climate change research, probably more so in northern Canada and certainly the world, and we could be applying for a research chair within the ARI and bring basically free investment and more research opportunities here. We are not doing these things. I am not sure if it is because we have not thought to do these things.

I think the very thorough examination of the K-12 and early childhood supports, I think the department is very mindful of those. They clearly have issues rolling those out successfully, but the other components of the department, I think, need a lot of work. This budget does not really address those. There are, of course, the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning to fully offset the costs of junior kindergarten, and there is some dispute on whether or not that is actually occurring, and, of course, enhancing the small community employment support program by an additional \$2 million to a total of \$5 million.

These recommendations continue to be held by the honourable Members of the standing committee, and we will continue to pursue those, as we believe these are crucial investments that will support the long-term health and success of our people and ultimately reduce the cost of supporting people who do not have jobs and do not have those opportunities that they are so desperate for. We will continue to support those. We will continue to discuss these issues as we go into this business plan, and I look forward to more thorough discussion with the Minister and his staff about what we can do to support culture and post-secondary in particular. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Vanthuyne.

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just touch quickly on some of the aspects that my colleagues touched on that I, too, will be sharing some concern about and raising questions on but remain hopeful that we can find solutions together.

Of course, that is junior kindergarten, early childhood development, our Aurora College and what it means to our territory, and recent cuts to programs there, in particular social work and the Teacher Education Program.

I also want to raise some points, Mr. Chair, as it relates to, aside from the education aspects, but the labour development aspects that this department is accountable for and puts out in terms of programs and services and what have you. I think, obviously, the Skills 4 Success program is something that is really tied into this area and in helping us work toward developing and continuing to develop our efforts in trades development and technical skills through support for apprenticeship programs, mentorship-type programs. These are critical for us to start to fill gaps within different industries.

Speaking of gaps, I think it is very important that this department works with other departments in identifying where particular industry gaps are and developing some specific skill sets that can help to fill those gaps. We know that there are some initiatives under way right now with regard to tourism, which is very positive to hear.

As one of my colleagues alluded to earlier, the creative arts are very important. This is an area I think that once upon a time received no focus at all but is now proving to be an industry unto itself, and one that, in fact, contributes to innovation more than we ever expected and is going to continue to do so and, in fact, is arguably going to lead the way as it leads to innovation. So I think it is very important that this department recognizes the goals and objectives of this government and the goals we have set out as a territory to begin to diversify in a number of areas. The creative industry is certainly one of those areas where we have got to put some prime focus.

I think that, as it relates to post-secondary education, it is going to be very difficult for me, if I can just get into the weeds for one moment, to support a budget that is going to see the reduction of the social work and the Teacher Education Program. I have trouble understanding how that meets the mandate goals of this government. I have trouble understanding how we will meet our TRC obligations when these are the types of programs in our Northern-made college that are designed for us to specifically reach and attain those goals and meet those obligations. So I'm sure there will be a lot more questioning and comments raised around that.

To Aurora College, like other colleagues have shared, I like Aurora College for what it is in terms of what it provides to the young folks of the Northwest Territories and what it is intended to do. I think we have a lot of opportunity to enhance what

it is, and I'm looking forward to what comes out of the review and the plan. I, for one, am not one who supports reinventing Aurora College and trying to turn it into something that it isn't, like a university or what have you.

Because I do believe that we as a territory need to support more than just Aurora College, that we most certainly have to start supporting alternative post-secondary education opportunities. There are folks on our doorstep proving, and proving statistically, that this is something we're capable of doing here in the North, and we certainly have got to show that we're investing in that and that we're going to work to build those partnerships and enhance those partnerships.

I'll touch also just quickly, because I think it falls in line with this department as well, is the fact that, you know, just the last Assembly Mr. Chair was working heavily toward a population growth strategy, and it seems to have taken a back seat to some degree, and I know it's through Education, Culture and Employment that we have to tie into the immigration policy. We've got to make sure that immigration efforts are being streamlined and that they're accessible and they're actually delivering upon the goals that we've set out as a government to promote immigration.

So I think, Mr. Chair, I'll let it at that for now and I look forward to us engaging in this department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Vanthuynne. Seeing no further general comments, I will turn to the Minister for a response. Minister Moses, you have 10 minutes.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank all the honourable Members for all their comments and their concerns, and over the past three weeks there's a lot of common theme that every honourable Member has mentioned here today. I don't really want to get into detail regarding those, but first off I just really do want to emphasize that this Department of Education, Culture and Employment does, in fact, do a lot of good work as well in the territory. We have a lot of good employees who do a lot of good work for residents, whether it's in income assistance, the JK-to-12 system, post-secondary. So as much as it seems like there's a painting of a grim picture that we do support our residents of the NWT and that we also do have a lot of success stories, and I think some Members can appreciate that and agree with that as well, and we see it in all the communities across the NWT.

First off, the Member for Mackenzie Delta did mention funding for junior kindergarten, and I just want to clarify that junior kindergarten will be rolled

out in all communities across the Northwest Territories. There was a little bit of confusion there, I think, where he was saying that some communities might take it on, some might not. It is optional for the parents, the families, so I just wanted to clarify that.

I do want to continue to support the Take a Kid Trapping in schools. We do work with ITI and ENR, and we'll continue to work with them to make sure that we provide that cultural awareness and traditional knowledge in training for our youth right up until grade 12.

There was some concern about communication. I don't disagree. I think we could have done a better job. The Member from YK Centre did bring that up as a concern. I do think that there could have been better communication on some of the initiatives as we were rolling them out earlier on in this Assembly, as well as early on in the session, and we'll continue to work on that. It is a learning experience.

In terms of the instructional hours, that was work done with three of our education bodies, as well as the NWT Teachers' Association and Education, Culture and Employment.

We do want to see success in our students and get the best outcomes, but we've also got to make sure that we take care of the health and wellbeing of our teachers and our instructors. They're the adults that our children see probably the most or second most throughout their lifetime from when they're a child to when they graduate, and we want to make sure that they have every opportunity to provide the best education to our students.

Language culture and income assistance is also a concern, and when we get to the line-by-line item we will clarify again, but we are seeing more families across the NWT receiving more money in the Income Assistance Program. The Member from Nahendeh did mention some other concerns, and communication and messaging was another concern; as I mentioned, I don't disagree with that, but we can work on making improvements.

Junior kindergarten, we have seen really strong success in the Member's riding. Having it as a huge issue, I know we were having some pushback when it initially started, and even now that we're implementing we're still getting some concerns. We just want to let all Members know that we have had those consultations with the daycares, we have had those consultations with Aboriginal Head Start, and any other daycares or day home providers and making sure they're aware of the work we're doing. It's not that we're forgetting them; we have made changes to our early childhood programming where costs go up for infants who come in. In some

communities, such as Yellowknife, there are waiting lists, and we want to make sure that every family has an opportunity to have their children be able to partake in some kind of early development.

That's something that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh mentioned, and I do appreciate his passion for early childhood development. As I mentioned, we made changes to early childhood programming and we have excellent start-up costs for daycares and day homes, and we have actually been working with some of the smallest communities that don't have daycares right now to help them set up and start up, as well as training for early childhood providers that they get better training but they also get increase their wage subsidies.

There was also some concern about the structure of authorities within the education system and who is kind of in charge of who. As a department, we provide over \$150 million to all our education authorities. It's the mandate, the responsibility of the education authorities to roll out our contributions with them, so whether it's busing, whether it's inclusive schooling, whether it's where they want to put money in their arts and languages, that's the sole responsibility of the education authorities. We provide funding, we work with them, we provide resource services, but when we give the dollars to the education authorities it's their responsibility to see how they budget those out. We can discuss that in detail further.

There still seems to be some confusion on the dollars for JK. We're not just throwing a figure out there. The \$5.1 million was based on estimates of the four-year-olds going into the education system this year, and as soon as we know the final cost we will make the necessary changes to that, and you've heard that within this government. I know the honourable Member for Frame Lake said that we need come back if it's more; then we'd have to have that discussion with our Finance Minister. That is something that we have discussed, and so that's where we are.

Any decisions that we make, I know the post-secondary with Aurora College has been a common theme and has been in the news quite a bit. We do make evidence-based decisions. We didn't tell them what to do; they didn't tell us what to do. It was collaborative work between our departments, Aurora College, and the executive to see where we can look at those reductions.

Universal child daycare, we will give an update as we get into the line items. Inclusive schooling, there was discussion around that. As you know, they were from the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly in transition to the 18<sup>th</sup>. There was a Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. We wanted to ensure that the dollars, the money that we've given to inclusive schooling,

and you'll see the line item there, it's over \$25 million I believe, we want to make sure that that money goes to the child's needs. Before that, there was no accountability behind that; some schools didn't have any program support teachers. Under the new ministerial directive every school in the NWT will have a program support teacher to ensure that the child's needs are met, and that directive is ensuring that those dollars that are flowing go exactly to the child's needs, where before there wasn't a full plan in place

I know there was some discussion about a decrease in the education authority's funding, and the Members are right; it is in administration, and we do want to see some efficiency in administration across the NWT.

Now the student financial cuts, when we do get to the line-by-line item, this is something that we brought up before, almost on a yearly basis we get about \$1.3 million that's over-lapsed funding. So because we kept on seeing it coming around regularly, we figured that we could just take that into the reductions.

I'm also glad to see that there was some concern round the Small Community Employment Support Program. As I mentioned in my statement a couple of days ago, with the \$1.2 million currently in the SCES funding we had 200 residents in the NWT participate in on-the-job training and then another 69 in community initiatives. So that funding is working and we've increased it by putting \$3 million into that program.

In terms of the decrease in budget, there was a comment that this budget has decreased by 1.5 per cent. The reality is, and I did make it in my opening statements last night, our budget has decreased by 0.3 per cent, and we're still providing programs right across the broad spectrum of this department.

I also understand the proper consultation that the honourable Member from Deh Cho has mentioned, and we're continuing to work on that and we'll make it an emphasis when we're working with First Nations communities that we do, in fact, do a proper consultation and make sure that they're involved in some of the decision-making.

Enrolments, we have been seeing a decrease in enrolments in the school system, specifically in some of our small communities, and we need to find a way to address that and work with families and communities as well.

In terms of Aboriginal Head Start in junior kindergarten, we do have two communities where it's working really well, and that's Fort McPherson and Ndilo, where families now have the opportunity to have full-time early childhood programming

provided to them, where before it was just half a day. With JK itself, schools will have the option of providing half- and full-time programming.

With just that said, I just want to say that a lot of good comments and a lot of good feedback, and I appreciate the passion that the Members have. As we go line by line we'll get into more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a quick 10 minutes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister, for covering the 90 they had versus your 10. I allowed a couple of seconds.

Thank you, committee. The department begins on page 23. As it is our custom, we will defer the total department until after consideration of activity details. The first activity is corporate management. The activity description is found on page 30. The activity details are on 31, and the active positions information item is found on 32. Does committee have any questions, and can the Member refer to which page item within that activity, please? Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would this, the corporate management, be an activity to start to have a discussion around communications issues within the department? Thank you

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this would be the area, under policy legislation and communications.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As many of my honourable friends have mentioned, the communications exercises that the department has been engaged in I don't think have been meeting either the department's goals or the public interest. Junior kindergarten, quite frankly, was a mess from the first roll-out to where we are today; we're still trying to sort through that mess. My honourable friend the Member for Frame Lake referred to it as slippery as a dead fish; that made, I think, the front page of the local newspaper, and I think we're all feeling that way.

I know the Minister is trying his best, but I think it's so hard because the communications function of this department is severely lacking. What is the Minister proposing to do in light of this and other significant communications issues in the past to improve this function and ensure that the right information is getting to the public and to honourable Members of this House? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I don't disagree with all the honourable Members who have mentioned the communication issues surrounding junior kindergarten. I definitely think that it could have rolled out a lot better, getting that information not only out to the Members but to the residents. We are working on our communications protocol and making sure that we're making it as sufficient as we can in the future. As I mentioned earlier, we take it as a learning experience and we'll be learning from this and making sure that, as we communicate, there will be more efficiency a lot sooner than later. I will go to my deputy for a little bit more clarity as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Deputy Minister Haener.

**MS. HAENER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Minister has said, we do take our responsibilities around communications quite seriously. We did have a strategic communications plan around junior kindergarten specifically, and that included providing technical briefings to the media and engaging stakeholders as well within the education system and others.

One of the realities that we face, however, is that there are often several different speakers when it comes to communication, several different voices that can be heard, including those within the education authorities, and at times the messaging is not consistent between us in the Ministry and the education authorities because we're not always in agreement on how to structure and proceed with different programs. I think you're well aware of that, that tension that does exist.

Despite the fact that we work very hard behind the scenes with the superintendents and others within the education authorities to make sure that we do have a common understanding of funding, for example, for junior kindergarten, at the end of the day, despite our best efforts the Minister did, on junior kindergarten, for example, hold a meeting with the board chairs to make sure that there was a common understanding of the funding model.

You know, when you're talking about difficult subjects, sometimes everyone isn't on the same page at the same time. So we do have an intention to continue to work on that. For example, at the last Minister and chairs meeting the Minister raised that with board chairs, specifically communications, how we work better together, so that the system can be more cohesive and work together on communications issues. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Deputy Minister Haener. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to comment on what the witness was saying in her statement. I appreciate where the witness is coming from on this point. I do think that a healthy tension between elected bodies, whether they be school boards or Members or municipal governments, perhaps having a different opinion on how policies are implemented or rolling out, I think that is not confusing the issues. I think what was confusing the issue was who is paying for what? The role of the consultants' report, the role of the standing committee, how much information was being shared, whether the department was open to hearing the concerns? Those are all the kinds of questions.

I don't want to belabour this too much, because I know some of this ultimately rests on the Minister as the one who is accountable for this. I just think that we have a lot of work to do on, whatever the department or the government as a whole is proposing, that that proposition be put clearly to the public in a way that is easy to understand and easy to absorb. If people disagree with that, that is fine. Just make sure they are disagreeing with the merits or with the policy in itself and all that information is available.

My question is: how many communications staff positions are within the department? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We currently have three communications staff positions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. How many policy analysts, policy positions, are within that line item, policy, legislation and communications, on page 31? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We have three policy officers and one manager.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Does the department feel that this is a sufficient complement of staff to succeed in its legislative agenda as it is currently envisioned and adequately consult and communicate that legislative agenda with Members

of the public and the standing committees as appropriate? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Deputy Minister Haener.

**MS. HAENER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we do. I just want to say that, in terms of the approach that we generally take, it is not the policy shop and the communications folks working alone. There are supports there from the program, people in both the labour standards areas, for example, and the education branch. Obviously, there are also supports from the corporate communications unit within the Department of the Executive, so there are other supports there to assist with those pieces of work. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Deputy Minister Haener. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Just on the matter of the Education Act, in particular vis-a-vis communications, there was a change in instructional hours that was negotiated between the Teachers' Association and the government. Now, that change needs to be reflected in legislation. However, that is coming late in the day to legislators, so are those kinds of realities being properly understood by the department, and are we going to catch those in the future? I think it is very important we remember the very important role that standing committees and elected officials play in reviewing legislation and ensuring that this legislation is the best possible legislation it can be, so is that properly envisioned by the work that policy, legislation, and communications is doing within the department? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. During the whole negotiation process for the instructional hours, we did have staff at those negotiations, so they knew what needed to be coming out of those meetings that was going to impact the Education Act. They knew the legislation that was going to be coming forward. I will go to my deputy minister for more details.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Deputy Minister Haener. Although the time is up, but it is the answer, so go ahead.

**MS. HAENER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the instructional hours, just to clarify the process, we obviously have a number of goals that we want to achieve under education renewal, including improving outcomes for teachers and for students, and identified those prior to going to the bargaining table with the Teachers' Association and, therefore, identified this jointly at the bargaining table as a

potential solution and way forward and then worked very closely with the Teachers' Association around communications and with the Superintendents' Association on how to communicate the outcomes from that process.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Deputy Minister Haener. Members? Go ahead, Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in response to the deputy minister's last answer, there are some significant loose ends around instructional hours at this point, specifically whether there are enough hours for the high school courses to count toward the diploma and be equivalent to Alberta.

Given the fact that the department had months of lead time -- I think the first MOU was signed in September -- where is the problem here in trying to give the information to the primary stakeholder here, which is the parent? I mean, the students often are too young to be considered the primary stakeholders, although that is not the case in high school, but it is parents who fill up my inbox and my phone message system saying that they do not understand what is going on. They do not feel like they are getting the information they need. I guess I am looking for more than just an intention to change. There needs to be change, actually. Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As this is a piloted project for the next three years, each school will develop their own plan in terms of instructional hours. They are working on those right now. They should be done, each school should have their instructional hours plan developed, by the end of March, so my suggestion to you, as any parent approaches you, ask them to go and speak to the principal or the superintendent on how this is going to roll out in the specific school's plan.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister, but that completely misses the point. This is an agreement between the GNWT and the Teachers' Association. The onus is on the GNWT to communicate with parents about the MOU that they reached with the Teachers' Association and to be proactive in telling them what this project is about, how it is going to be evaluated, and what impact it will have on their kids. I mean, up to this point there are no clear answers on this from the government, and I believe that it is the government's role. It is not good enough to say, well, each school needs to

respond to this. This is direction being given by the government. Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have tried to use numerous outlets, such as the media; we have information on our websites; there was a technical briefing. For further details, I will go to my deputy minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Deputy Minister Haener.

**MS. HAENER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have been trying to get as much information as possible out to the public on the reduced instructional time, obviously doing that in partnership with the superintendents and the Teachers' Association. For example, there was a meeting this morning that folks participated in, in a venue for the Tlicho to provide information there. We continue to do that where needed. In terms of specific details, I completely understand that parents want to know exactly what is happening in specific classrooms and in specific schools. That work is ongoing. Each school has to determine what the pilot will actually look like for them. Specifically, we don't have that level of detail yet in terms of what that will look like. They are working on it, and the education authorities will have more particulars available for parents in the near future. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Deputy Minister Haener. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry to belabour this point, but what I am talking about here is communicating the policy direction. The policy direction we are going to go despite lamenting low attendance and low achievement rates is to cut instructional hours, and here is why. That is the kind of detail that parents want. I think they appreciate that there is another level of decision-making at the school that will decide how to implement this policy direction, but they want to hear the policy direction from the department. They don't want to hear it from me, and they don't want to hear it from the media. They feel like their best source of information is directly from the agency or the department that is responsible for implementation.

I feel like there is a real re-think that needs to be done here about who the audiences are for the department's messages, and to think about getting as close to the people most directly affected as possible. That is not to put this onto the school boards, but to talk directly to parents and students. I would like to think that, while the efforts are

ongoing, they may also take a new and productive direction. Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have good partnerships with the education authorities. They also play a role in these pilots and the work that is being done. They are the front line to the parents. They are the ones that see the parents most of the time with the boards, as well as the superintendent and the principals. That would be the best way to get that information out, is to have our school boards and educational authorities getting that information out to the parents. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Yes, I am going to try one more time. The government has made a policy decision here on instructional hours, to pilot the reduction in instructional hours. It is the government's responsibility to communicate with parents, not through any intermediary who is tasked with implementing this, but to tell parents and students what the rationale is for this policy, what the benefits are, what consideration was made to alternatives, and so on and so forth. It is not up to the school boards to do that. They are following instructions. Eighty per cent of the Yellowknife school board budgets come from the government, so it is not like they are free actors here. They have to follow the direction given to them by the department.

What I am asking for is a re-think where the department communicates with their primary stakeholders, who are parents and students, rather than asking that work be done by the educational authorities and school boards. Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are an education system. There are a lot of partners at the table. It is specifically around instructional hours. We have the NWT Teachers' Association, educational authorities, ourselves, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. If the Member is wanting us to do another information blitz, getting out there and letting the public know, again, we would have to do that in cooperation with our partners that came to an agreement on the instructional hour times. We want to get that information out there, but we also want to make sure that we protect and give the best opportunities for teachers to take care of their health and their wellness so that they can provide

the right amount of education to our students. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am not aware that there was ever a blitz, let alone a follow-up blitz. I think that the government could do a better job of communicating the information about instructional hours with parents, and I encourage them to take the earliest opportunity to do that. Thank you. Those are all my questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. To the comment, Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned, we did use media. We got the information on our website. The department did a technical media briefing. We also sent technical packages out to all MLAs regarding the information on the agreement that was made. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I want to follow up with the sorts of questions that my colleague from Yellowknife Centre had, because this is a communications problem again. It's not just a communications problem with the public. It's a communications problem with MLAs.

The MOU was signed off as part of the negotiation process. I get that. Some people have said that the reason it was done that way was to avoid having to pay teachers more, and to set an example for other negotiations that are going on. That's the kind of a deal. I don't -- whether that is true or not, you folks can laugh -- it was on the radio earlier this week. Maybe you don't listen to the radio anymore. In any event, people are talking about that in this way.

The MOU is signed. Then, there is a technical briefing for the media. The MLAs still haven't been told about this. Now, we've got a bill before us to actually change the instructional hours without a lot of evidenced-based decision-making that I can see that is going on here.

Yes, our instructional hours are higher than some other jurisdictions, but are we still going to have Alberta recognition? The Minister said in the House when he was asked, "I'll have to get back to you, and I'll have to check to see that." Two days later, the same Minister gets up and says that he had a meeting with the Minister of Education of Alberta, and that things seem to be okay. I didn't quite get it. The communications around this with the Regular MLAs have been confusing at best, and we've got a

bill now before us without any evidence of whether this is going to be a good move or not.

Look, teachers, they work very hard, and hats off to these guys. They deserve everything they can get, but when they're at the negotiation table trying to get a deal that they can sell to their membership, that's the only kind of concession that they can get from this government, that is what they are going to go for. Hats off for them in getting that.

The way that this has been communicated to Regular MLAs, let alone the public, has been a disaster. What is the Minister going to do about this? We haven't even had a technical briefing around this yet. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, I'm getting worked up because the other side doesn't seem to think that there is a problem, as usual. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. I must remind Members of being respectful for one another, and there is still time allowed, Mr. O'Reilly. If you want to ask a question pertaining to communication, you still have time.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did have a question at the end. I asked the Minister: when are we going to get a technical briefing on the instructional hours, and some actual evidence that this is a good move? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the honourable Member for recognizing that our teachers are overworked, averaging 52 hours a week. Research has shown that when teachers have the opportunity to have prep time and prepare for their courses, that students get a quality education, they have enough time to provide quality education, and this was something that came out of a legally binding agreement, collective agreement, between the Teachers' Association and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

If the Member would like, the honourable Members would like, we can resend the package that we did send them. Our office is looking to set up a meeting with the Standing Committee on Social Development to look at giving that briefing to Members, but this was a collective agreement, and I just want to let the Members know that, and it's something that's going to enhance the quality of education and quality teaching that teachers provide. Plus, it also gives them the opportunity for professional development.

So there was research done behind it, and we're not just throwing things out there just because we think it's the right thing to do. We work with our

teachers and the NWT Teachers' Association. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to be clear, this wasn't about money at all; this was something that was collectively agreed upon between the NWT Teachers' Association and the GNWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So just in case anybody misunderstands, I fully support collective bargaining; it's the right thing to do, and as long as both sides can reach an agreement, that's fantastic. It would be helpful, though, if the Regular MLAs were once in a while actually informed about what's going on with collective bargaining, but that's perhaps a bigger issue.

So the Minister is going to offer a technical briefing; great. Can he tell us, though, the instructional hours for high school students, has this been discussed in detail with Alberta and will our high school students, under the reduced instructional hours, still be fully recognized as having an equivalent degree as students in Alberta? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you. We have had officials speaking with Alberta officials, but I also mentioned that Alberta has taken a different model as well and being flexible in the way they teach their hours, as I had answered questions in the House I think to the Member for Nahendeh when he was asking the questions earlier this week. As I mentioned, these plans aren't going to be divulged until the end of March for each school, and we can ensure that we give the supports to the principals and the teachers as they're developing these plans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So as I understand it, it's still under discussion, then, with the Government of Alberta; is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I'll go to my deputy minister for that one. Thank you

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Deputy Minister Haener.

**MS. HAENER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we do follow the Alberta curriculum and we work in partnership with Alberta to ensure that we have

good, strong programming in schools. As the Minister mentioned, Alberta as well is looking at its instructional hours and has been engaging in change there in terms of the number of instructional hours that they have in many of their schools, so we're not alone in that area.

Rest assured we are not doing anything that would jeopardize the validity of a high school diploma here in the North and the link to that Alberta curriculum. There's no risk there at all. We continue to have the departmental exams as well that we utilize, and that is linked to Alberta. Officials continue to discuss many facets of our curriculum and instructional time and those types of things with Alberta on an ongoing basis. Thank you

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Deputy Minister Haener. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll take the deputy minister at her word; I appreciate the response. They've got to find a way to get that kind of message out to MLAs; thankfully, you've done it today, but we've also got to get that out to the public. Thanks, Mr. Chair, that's all I've got.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few things in regard to this communication challenge or issue. The Minister and the deputy minister talked about things they learned from getting the messaging out. Can the Minister or the deputy minister please give us an update on what they learned on how to get this communication out? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're still working on some of the details, not only this but some other initiatives in terms of the way we communicate not only to the MLAs but to residents of the Northwest Territories. We're working with our communications staff as well as with the executive on how we give out the same message. So we're working on making our protocols more tight and making sure that we have precise and concise messaging to the public moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. Once they've come up with the process, is he willing to share with us, the Regular MLAs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Can I confirm: does the Member want our communications protocol? Can the Member confirm? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson, clarification or rephrase the question, please.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to clarify it, and I apologize to the Minister if I wasn't getting my message across. We just went through two things that have been brutal, the best way to describe it. It's been bad for your department, bad for everybody. So what I'm asking you is, you're working on developing the strategy to get the messaging out. Are you willing or able to share that strategy once it's all said and done, the policy or the direction that you're developing to get messaging out with us here? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When it comes to communication, the strategy that we do develop, it's sometimes on a case-by-case basis depending on what's being discussed. We're also working on a protocol with all the board chairs to make sure that we do all work together in getting the right message across throughout the NWT to all the communities when we come up with discussions such as inclusive schooling or junior kindergarten, and that's what we're working on right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for that answer. I understand that, communication, sometimes strategies have to be different for different things. However, if we're going to sell something or be able to promote and inform the people, we as ordinary MLAs should be part of the package. So if you're willing to work with us and get the messaging out, it makes things a little bit easier.

So that's why I'm asking for this, is so we can work together, the 19 of us, so when we're getting out the message, we can get the message to the prime stakeholders, who are the parents. So it doesn't hurt us getting the message out there. So again, I'm asking the Minister if he's willing to share with us or keep us in the loop or access us to get this messaging out. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To be honest, it goes beyond the 19 of us in this House. We also have a lot of partners with the education authorities and the board chairs, and we don't always come to an agreement. When we're putting one message out there and we have other education authorities, it could be even other Members putting a different message out there, it's not putting out the best face in favour of us as a government. So obviously we've all got to work together and that messaging has to be a shared and common message moving forward, and, as I mentioned, it goes beyond the 19 of us. We have to have our board chairs involved as well as our superintendents who were making sure a common message, a common theme, shared with the parents and the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Minister for his answer. I understand it's more than the 19. The reason I'm asking this, and you talk about partnerships, in Fort Simpson last night they were talking about instructional hours. The messaging came across that this is a DEA responsibility. They're the one pushing this agenda. Then it becomes an issue of who is responsible for it. So the messaging is, as well as we tried to get it across, I understand the partnership, but we need to be able to get the message out there and need to be working together and the partners shouldn't be the ones holding the bag.

This is my problem. I'm sitting here, I've got a number of texts, a number of calls from my community saying the DEA is changing the instructional hours, and the Superintendent of the DDEC has done her job of trying to get the messaging across, and I'm trying to come across saying this is the information that we have, but again it comes down to the process. So if we're part of the process, we can help sell this message. So again, I'll ask the Minister: will he be willing work with us, or share with us, or update us, on how they're going to message these new initiatives? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and as I mentioned this is collective bargaining agreements, legal binding agreements. The DEAs do sign off on the schools' plans when they're developed, and we will share that information with the Members. We are working on finding a date to do a briefing with committee, and as I mentioned we could send out that technical package to all Members again. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and I thank the Minister for his answer. I'm not worrying about the technical package. I understand the technical package. It's the messaging we're trying to get across, and I thank the Minister being willing to work with us and brief us as we move forward.

Do not get me wrong; I've seen the research, I've talked to the staff, I've talked to the teachers about the importance of this decision, whether it's collective bargaining. It could potentially, most likely will be, a very positive thing for our students, so I'm not worried about the negotiation part. I just want to get the messaging out, so that's why I've been asking that.

My last question is in regard to junior kindergarten. As I said in my brief summary, we had a miscommunication going out there from the department and the Minister. Can there be an explanation of why we had this huge discrepancy as we move forward implementing junior kindergarten? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Moses

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Obviously there was mixed messaging going out from various parties, as well as the change in funding. At the beginning of this session, when we started, we had a funding model going through, but that had changed by the time we got started and had the budget addressed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for that clarification. At this point in time, I have no further questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Thompson. I see no further questions or comments from committee. Please turn to page 31, Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$12,671,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the visitors from the Chamber.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Sahtu, may I have the report.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. MCNEELY:** Mr. Speaker, committee has been considering Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

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

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Monday, February 20, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions

## 18. First Reading of Bills

## 19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act
- Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Health and Social Services Professions Act

## 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:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 20, 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

