



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

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## **HANSARD**

**Wednesday, March 22, 2000**

**Pages 203 – 234**

**The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker**



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## YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2000

## MEMBERS PRESENT

Honourable Roger Allen, Honourable Jim Antoine, Mr. Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Dent, Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Honourable Vince Steen, Honourable Tony Whitford.

## ITEM 1: PRAYER

--Prayer

**MR. SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Please be seated. Members of the House, before we begin our day, I have a message from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

It is highly appropriate that the theme of Commonwealth Day at the start of the new millennium should be The Communications Challenge. For much of the millennium just ended, the challenge was to relay information as speedily and accurately as possible. What once took weeks, is now instantaneous.

But the advances in technology bring a new challenge of how to use rapid communication responsibly and for the common good. We have to strive to ensure that the advantages of modern communication systems are available to all, and are used to bring us all closer together, not to create fresh divisions. And we need to remember that exciting though the new ways of communicating undoubtedly are, what matters most is what we say to each other.

The Commonwealth is an organization so diverse and widespread that it has always depended on good communications, which are helped, of course, by having a common language. Recent advances in communication technology are particularly helpful in fostering the non-governmental networks, which help to make the Commonwealth so unique.

The exchange of information and sharing of experiences between representatives of civil society in the different countries form an important part of the Commonwealth's activities at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both in these networks, and in our cooperation at government level, our shared values and traditions provide a foundation for using the new technology to our common advantage.

The challenge for the century just started, will be to find ways to use ever faster communications to bring greater harmony and understanding both within each of our societies and between them, and thereby to strengthen the Commonwealth.

Elizabeth R.

Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

## ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

**Minister's Statement 17-14(2): Appointment of New Commissioner**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Glenna Hansen of Inuvik on her appointment as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Ms. Hansen was born in the Delta, in Aklavik, and has lived her life in the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Hansen has always exhibited a high level of energy, confidence and creativity. She is able to take information, assess it and reach conclusions objectively. These strong personal characteristics have made it possible for her to make lasting contributions to the people in her community and to the Inuvialuit.

Our new Commissioner has a strong interest in the social and economic welfare of people in the Delta. Ms. Hansen's accomplishments in these fields are many. She has been a strong advocate of education, so vital to the future of all Northerners. She has sat on education boards at the local and regional level and on other community and regional boards including that of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Ms. Hansen was also co-chair of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services.

Not only has she herself been active in business but has used much of her time, experience and knowledge working for the betterment of others through participation on the Board of Western Arctic Business Development Services and as a director of the Inuvialuit Investment Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the Commissioner has dramatically changed in the last quarter century. Until the late 1970s the Commissioner was the centre of government in the Northwest Territories. Since then, the position has evolved into one similar to that of a Lieutenant Governor in the provinces. The Commissioner's role is largely ceremonial, but is important in the continuity of governance from one government to the next and a symbol of our growing place in Canada.

The new Commissioner brings with her a strong sense of commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories. This sense of commitment, her tact, her communication skills and her abilities as a team player will enhance her ability to carry out her duties as Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I would like once again to congratulate Ms. Hansen on her appointment. I look forward to a positive and productive working relationship with the Commissioner. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

### ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Member's Statement on Congratulations to New Commissioner Glenna Hansen

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents and myself, as the MLA for Nunakput, I would like to offer my congratulations to Ms. Glenna Hansen on her appointment as Commissioner for the Northwest Territories. I believe that the Prime Minister of Canada has made a very wise choice. Ms. Hansen is knowledgeable of the people, cultures, and lifestyles of the Inuvialuit, Dene, Metis, and all Northerners.

Her personality is one where she is respectful and reserved enough to carry out her Commissioner's duties and responsibilities with dignity, while being friendly and always approachable.

I am very pleased to see a young Commissioner who, in a way, reflects the beauty and agelessness of this great land of ours. Her age also makes her equally approachable by both our youth and our seniors.

I am sure I speak for all Inuvialuit when I say I am extremely proud that the new Commissioner is from the Beaufort Delta region of the Northwest Territories. I am pleased that Ms. Hansen is of Inuvialuit descent; however, I know that with her experience working with all people in the North, she will provide balanced representation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a farewell and my best wishes for the Honourable Dan Marion, who has represented the North admirably during his term as Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. I personally have hosted Mr. Marion on a tour of the Beaufort communities. This tour was well received by my constituents, and Mr. Marion was an able representative of the North, this government, and the Government of Canada. He will be remembered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

#### Member's Statement On Congratulations to New Commissioner Glenna Hansen

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a courtesy, I would personally like to congratulate Ms. Glenna Hansen as the newly appointed Commissioner for the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Hansen not only comes from my riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes, but also from my home town of Aklavik. At this time I would like to express my sincere well wishes in her role as the newly appointed Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

#### Member's Statement On Congratulations to New Commissioner Glenna Hansen

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to congratulate the decision that was made to put Ms. Glenna Hansen as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. I believe she will prove that she was the right choice, and of course, coming from and living in Inuvik at this time, it always makes us proud to have another representative in government, working at the business of government.

She has proven over the last number of years that she is very capable. She is a strong lady, and I believe that she will be able to carry on the business that is required of the Commissioner to properly show the Government of the Northwest Territories, to the residents of the Northwest Territories. I would like to congratulate her, and I know that she will do a great job. Thank you.

-- Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

#### Member's Statement On Congratulations to New Commissioner Glenna Hansen

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take this time to congratulate Ms. Glenna Hansen on her appointment as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. I have known Glenna for a number of years, and I know for a fact that she will do a great job.

Glenna is not only a mother, she is a lady who is involved in aboriginal politics, and is also involved in the social and economic well-being of people in the communities, through her involvement in different forums, education boards, health review committees.

Most of all, I think one thing that Glenna brings to this responsibility as the Commissioner is her being an Inuvialuit, and a woman. Commissioners in the past were primarily men. At this time, I would like to say that having had the opportunity to work with Helen Maksagak, who is now the Commissioner of Nunavut, I considered it an honour and a privilege to have been involved with her during her term as Commissioner of this Territory.

Other people from the North, especially the Mackenzie Delta, did play a role in the past. We have had a Deputy Commissioner, an Inuvialuit, from the Mackenzie Delta, who also played that role. The past Commissioner, Mr. Dan Norris, who is also from the great Inuvik region, served as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories from 1989 to 1994.

With that, I would like to extend all the best, and say again that this role, I feel, is unique because she is not only an Inuvialuit, but she is the first Inuvialuit woman to take the role on as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. I look forward to working with her, and I ask my other colleagues and Members of this House to bring her in with open arms and work with her for the next four years, to make her job that much easier.

The benefit this brings is recognition to this government that reflects the unique cultural differences that we have in the North, and especially with the first Commissioner for the 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly. With that, congratulations, and thank you.

-- Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Member's Statement on Forced Growth in the Department of the Executive**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I come from a community of about 2700 people. It is a relatively small community, where people, like many of us in the North, are struggling to make a living, to have a strong community, to broaden our economic base.

Since becoming their representative in the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly, I entered the Assembly with a feeling of strong optimism, telling people that division would be the best thing that ever happened to the Northwest Territories, that we sit on a tremendous storehouse of wealth. If we could just get the politics right, we can, in fact, become a "have" jurisdiction.

While telling them this, I recognize as well that as a Territory, my community like every community represented in this Assembly, has faced five years of relentless restraint and the erosion of services and programs as we attempted to deal with the deficit. That continues today.

As Members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the people are watching us very closely. If the comments I have heard about the apparent penchant of the Premier for first class travel and stretch limos is any indication, they are watching very carefully.

They are looking to us for leadership. Mr. Speaker, it is not a case of do as I say, not as I do. If we are talking leadership, we have to demonstrate that. I am speaking specifically about the 18 percent forced growth figure in the Executive budget. It is unconscionable that we can come forward with that kind of number while telling people across the Northwest Territories that while the future looks good, it is not for another six years. In the meantime, there will be minimum support from the federal government. Be prepared to tighten your belts.

Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, as long as there is the potential for one person to be laid off, for one program not being funded, of one contract being deferred, as we have deferred millions of dollars worth, the Executive should show leadership and not bring forward a business plan and interim appropriations that layers on many new positions at a time when we are telling everybody else to tighten their belts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Member's Statement on a Tribute to Mae Wright**

**HON. JANE GROENWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to pay respect to a long time resident of Hay River. Mae Wright passed away peacefully in Hay River on Thursday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at the age of 91.

Mae Wright, affectionately known to some as Maw, moved to Hay River from Grand Prairie with her husband, Don, and their young family in 1949. As a graduate from St. Boniface School of Nursing in Winnipeg, Mae Wright quickly made her mark as Hay River's first nurse. She was a woman of many talents

when it came to nursing, not afraid to tackle whatever task was at hand to meet the needs of her fellow residents in a small northern town. Her vision and work ethic combined with her caring nature was the impetus for the opening of a nursing station in Hay River just a few years after her arrival.

Mae Wright was committed to her community beyond the nursing profession. She helped in other ways; like organizing a Christmas Seal Tuberculosis Campaign and by giving leadership to the Sunshine Club that established the first library in Hay River. She was also a businesswoman, co-owner and founder of Wright's Hardware, owner of the first insurance business and later involved in real estate.

She was also actively involved in politics, serving on Hay River's town council and active with the Federal Progressive Conservative Party. In 1974, The Chamber of Commerce recognized her outstanding contributions to Hay River by naming Mae Wright "Citizen of the Year".

Her three daughters and their families survive Mae Wright. Her daughter, Nancy Jameson, along with her husband Rob, still make their home in Hay River. They have expressed their appreciation on behalf of the family to the staff of the H.H. Williams Memorial Hospital where Mae was a resident of extended care for the past number of years.

Mae Wright will be fondly remembered as the embodiment of community service and community spirit. The imprint that her life has left on Hay River will live on in the memories of all who knew her. The service being held in her memory today in Hay River will be a celebration of a life well lived. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

**Member's Statement on Reimbursements for Extended Health Benefits**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents have brought a serious concern to my attention. Hopefully this Assembly, with the cooperation of the department, will be able to address the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the current manner in which patients in the North are reimbursed under the Extended Health Benefits Program run by the Department of Health. Specifically there is inconsistency in how Northerners are reimbursed or pay for medications.

Patients who qualify for extended health benefits for specified illnesses are able to receive 100 percent payment for their prescription medications. Under this plan, the pharmacist direct bills the Department of Health and Social Services for the entire amount. This seems to work well.

Problems arise for people who already have some other form of partial coverage but who rely on extended health benefits to top up their coverage. In this scenario, the pharmacist direct bills the initial insurance policy but requires immediate payment for the amount covered by extended health. It is up to the patient to pay this amount and then apply to the GNWT for reimbursement. For example, a GNWT employee who has 80 percent coverage under their main plan and 20 percent coverage from extended health must pay the 20 percent out of pocket.

Mr. Speaker, the 20 percent outlay may seem relatively minor to some of us but considering the expense of prescription drugs used to combat something like multiple sclerosis, this 20 percent can be anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this government should have on-line billing implemented for extended health benefits which would improve tracking and payment and ensure our constituents are not out of pocket for a substantial amount of money each month.

At the appropriate time, I will be questioning the Minister responsible for Health to see if she is willing to look at correcting this serious shortfall in service.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

#### **Member's Statement on Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 5, 2000 I attended the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference (PDAC) in Toronto along with the Deputy Premier, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen, the Honourable Joe Handley, other MLAs, City of Yellowknife and northern mining representatives. This is a world class event at which more than 10,000 participants attended this year.

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada is the national organization representing the interests of the Canadian mineral exploration and development industry. The PDAC recognizes excellence and achievement in the mineral industry through its program of annual awards.

The Bill Dennis Prospector of the Year Award is presented to the person or persons who have made a significant mineral discovery, or offered some significant service to the PDAC or been involved in some important technological invention or innovation with respect to improving Canadian prospecting and/or exploration techniques. This year's award was presented to D. Grenville Thomas, in recognition of his outstanding prospecting achievements in the Northwest Territories over the past 30 years and, in particular, his role in organizing and managing the exploration program that led to Diavik Diamond Mines, the Thor Lake rare earth project, and the Sunrise Lake discovery.

For the past 34 years, Gren Thomas' prospecting activity has generated substantial economic benefits for this country, culminating in the development of what will be Canada's second diamond mine. His early recognition of and unswerving faith in the mineral potential of the Northwest Territories have resulted in substantial exploration activity which has brought major economic benefits to the region. His work has also contributed to the region's geological database.

In 1981, he founded Aber Resources to continue his gold exploration efforts and, subsequently, his exploration for diamonds. The first kimberlites were discovered on the Diavik property in 1992. These pipes are high grade and rank among the richest in the world with reserves of 37 million tonnes containing 133 million carats.

Gren Thomas demonstrates all of the qualities of the prospector-- geological expertise, foresight, perseverance, and curiosity. I am pleased to acknowledge in this House his success and the national recognition which he so richly deserves for his splendid contribution to the Northwest Territories and to Canada's mining industry.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

#### **Member's Statement on Absence From the House**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to let my constituents and the House know that tomorrow morning I will be heading to Calgary for Treaty 11 talks. The final agreement negotiations are occurring regarding the land claim for my constituents of North Slave.

Unfortunately, there seem to be continuous roadblocks, which are slowing down the negotiations. I will be joining the Treaty 11 Council tomorrow morning in Calgary to see if I can be of service as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

I will be back on Friday, and I will join the House and forward questions to the departments if necessary. Thank you.

-- Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

#### **Member's Statement on Need For a Northwest Territories Agriculture Policy**

**MR. DELOREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly on the industry of agriculture in the Northwest Territories. It seems Mr. Speaker that we, as a government, are reluctant to place any priority on this industry. Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, in its many different forms, has been a part of the Northwest Territories for over a century. History tells us there is an ever-increasing growth in the production of foodstuff in the Northwest Territories.

People in the industry believe a large variety of high quality foods can be produced here and this, Mr. Speaker, can have a major impact on the amount of food we import.

The Territorial Farmers' Association has been actively promoting agriculture in the North for many years and strongly believes their biggest stumbling block is the government's lack of interest and commitment to the industry. Specifically, the TFA has been trying to get this government to develop an agricultural policy that would help them become players in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995, a draft policy was presented to this government which was not adopted. In 1997, the TFA undertook an economic impact study on the Northwest Territories agricultural policy which was presented to the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development.

Mr. Speaker, lack of an adequate policy and government support serve to restrict agricultural development. The TFA is determined to get this industry going and I urge this government to acknowledge the importance of legislating a

policy to enhance the development of agriculture within the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

#### ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Return to Question 65-14(2): Ministerial Procedures Manual

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a response to a question asked by Mr. Dent on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000. It was a question asked on the Ministerial Procedures Manual.

The Ministerial Procedures Manual provides information on administrative matters to Cabinet Members. The manual provides information such as duty travel, use of non-government vehicles, et cetera. The manual was recently updated and copies were provided to the Ministers' offices.

I am pleased to advise that this government has provided copies of the manual to the Legislative Library so Ordinary Members and the general public can access the manual. I will also be tabling copies of the manual later this afternoon.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Krutko.

#### ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Pat Thomas of the NWTTA. It has been a while since I have recognized her, so I would like to welcome her today.

-- Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Lafferty.

#### ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Oral Question 100-14(2): Reinstatement of Sweat Equity Programs

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, the Honourable Roger Allen. In the past, there have been housing programs that have been successful. They no longer exist. These programs were somewhat successful in helping people to create homes who were willing to put equity into building them. For example, people cut and haul their own logs.

I would like to ask the Minister if he would look at bringing back some of these programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

##### Return to Question 100-14(2): Reinstatement of Sweat Equity Programs

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is aware, we have been working diligently with the communities and our fellow colleagues in addressing the critical issue of home ownership.

We have taken it a step further to try to define what is equitable in terms of home ownership. We are presently in the process of trying to revise some of the older programs the Member referred to. I feel we can accomplish that in the next six months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

##### Oral Question 101-14(2): Extended Health Benefit Reimbursement

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today, I outlined the concerns that were brought to my attention regarding the reimbursement of extended health benefit expenses. I indicated that this was not only a problem for the constituents of Yellowknife South, but for all residents of the North who are eligible for extended health benefit coverage.

However, it is apparent that this problem is specific to persons who have other insurance plans, and who do not have 100 percent payment coverage. I would like to follow up with the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on this matter.

Could the Minister advise this House if she is aware of the financial problem constituents with other insurance benefits face when purchasing prescription drugs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, the Honourable Mrs. Groenewegen.

##### Return to Question 101-14(2): Extended Health Benefit Reimbursement

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, I have had a similar concern raised to me by a constituent in a very similar circumstance where they have a chronic illness that requires expensive medication and prescriptions to be purchased each month. The Member is correct. When the extended health benefit covers 100 percent of the prescription costs, then this is direct-billed to the government. Where it is shared and there is co-payment from the constituent's insurance coverage, which may be through their employer, then the constituent is expected to pick up the 20 or 30 percent out of their own pocket and be reimbursed for that. The good news is that under the extended health benefits program, someone with a chronic illness can be reimbursed 100 percent.

As to why the 20 or 30 percent residual amount cannot be direct billed to the government, I am not sure of the reasons for that and I do know that there is a delay period whereby the constituent is out of pocket for this. I would certainly be willing to look at ways, if it is possible, for this to be addressed and if

not, if there would be ways of expediting reimbursement payments to constituents. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

**Supplementary to Question 101-14(2): Extended Health Benefit Reimbursement**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister has mentioned that this can be hundreds of dollars per month and that there is a delay, would the Minister commit to working with the Northwest Territories Pharmacy Association to look at how to best deal with this matter? This may include online billing. I am wondering if she will commit to work with the Northwest Territories Pharmacy Association. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Further Return to Question 101-14(2): Extended Health Benefit Reimbursement**

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this process for reimbursement is something that is laid out by policy of the Department of Health and Social Services. I think the first place I would have to take this to is the department to see if there is some alternative way of direct billing for this. Certainly, if such a change was agreed to, then we could undertake it. The secondary step would be to deal with the pharmacies with the change of practice and have it direct billed if it is possible to do it. I do not know what the reasons may be that would preclude that from happening. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to then thank the Minister for looking into this internally to see what the department could do. I think we have a serious problem here when our constituents have to be out of pocket for money we know they will be reimbursed for. I would like to thank the Minister very much for looking into this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. There was no question there. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Oral Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board. I would like the Minister to inform this House of the timelines for the completion of the review that the Public Utilities Board had underway, but was cancelled because of problems with the contract. When does he anticipate that the contract will be let? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

**Return to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the question yesterday, I had stated to the Member that hopefully we will be able to conclude the study by the end of June. That is the latest information I have for the Member. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Supplementary to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate whether there will be an opportunity for public involvement and consultation in this process, given that it affects the rates and delivery of power across the Northwest Territories and the regulation of that power? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

**Further Return to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, from what I understand, there is a process to allow the public to have input. To what degree, Mr. Speaker, I would not be able to answer that at the moment. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Supplementary to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take that as a partial notice. Could the Minister indicate whether or not he has had any discussions with the chair of the Public Utilities Board in regards to this review? Specifically, making sure that any kind of improvement or changes to the Public Utilities Board, the regulations and act reflects the energy strategy that the territorial government says they are working on. The two are directly linked. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

**Further Return to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From what I am aware of, there is a consultation process. I believe part of the board's mandate is to consider the input from various interest groups. That is the answer to the Member's question. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Final supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Supplementary to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will restate the question that was asked in regards to the work that has

been done at the Public Utilities Board. Has the Minister been in contact with Mr. Hill to ensure that whatever work was done to upgrade the Public Utilities Board and the regulations will fit and be congruent with whatever energy strategy is being put forward by the government? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

**Further Return to Question 102-14(2): Review of Public Utilities Board**

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have been in contact with the chairman and he advised me that there is ongoing work in this area. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**Oral Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Vince Steen. It is regarding a question I asked earlier and relates to the statement that I made. I had asked if they have a contingency fund in place, especially if they have difficulties down the road with maintaining roads.

The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is because I see, looking through the budgets, especially in my area, Highway No. 8, I see some \$500,000 was taken out of the original \$2.5 million that was designated for the next five years. I think the same thing applied on Highway No. 5.

Almost 50 percent of the budget for Transportation is being implemented on Highway No. 3, and yet we find ourselves having to deal with more in regards to the economic impacts that are facing us with oil and gas developments expanding in the Beaufort Delta, Fort Liard and in the Mackenzie Valley.

I would like to ask the Minister, when will he reinstate the amounts that were designated in the five-year capital plan? When will he distribute those funds, knowing that they were withdrawn. In the case of my highway, there was \$500,000 withdrawn. Will that money be put back into the budget? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Return to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am not sure when the government will be putting the funding back that we are deferring for capital. This applies not only to highways but it applies to other capital projects as well that have been deferred.

For how long, that will depend on our fiscal situation in the future. However, the department has made a point, and I am sure that the Legislative Assembly will agree with the department, that we can only defer capital expenditures for so long. At some point in time, we are going to have to address exactly how we are going to put the money back and how we

are going to get the capital works back up to where they should be. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Supplementary to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister can tell me exactly when he intends to stop the cuts that are presently taking place, especially on Highway No. 8 and Highway No. 5? When will we know that these cuts will no longer take place? I, for one, feel uncomfortable. It seems like all of the cuts are taking place in the ridings in the Mackenzie Delta in the last couple of years. Yet on Highway No. 3, no cuts have taken place in a number of years. When will the Minister balance out these cuts and ensure that no more cuts take place where the cuts have already happened, and start cutting where they have not yet happened? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Further Return to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department draws up capital based on where we identify the major traffic and the impact of development on the highway sections. Highway No. 3 was identified not only by this government but previous governments as a high priority for bringing that highway up to national standards.

The funding we have identified for this particular stretch of highway is reflective of the traffic volumes and the demand on the highway. My department is not planning and will not will be putting in place any cuts that will serve to make highways unsafe. We try to maintain a budget that we can address any specific problems that develop on highways.

One of the options we have is if we do not have sufficient funding in the budget for the year, we would then go for a supplementary appropriation.

Of course, all the funding is approved by the Legislative Assembly no matter what we do with it. Again, the department does not do this in isolation. It does it with full input from the Legislative Assembly through the budget process.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Supplementary to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfair, especially socially and economically. A lot of regions do not have the benefits that regions like Yellowknife have where you get the diamond industry and a lot of spin offs from the secondary industries that come with it. Yet, in the Mackenzie Delta where we depend on these contracts, I see a major cut.

Mr. Speaker, some \$7,689,000 of the Transportation budget goes into one highway, yet the total budget of the Transportation highway budget totals \$16 million. Almost half of that budget goes into one highway.

I would like to ask the Minister why is there not consideration given to the economic benefit that comes from this type of contract? When will he distribute it fairly so all people in the North get the fair share of this money distributed based on need, not just putting it all in one highway? We have some 2,000 kilometres of highway, yet we are only talking 300 kilometres here.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Members are reminded to make their preambles shorter and shorter as we get into supplementaries. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

#### **Further Return to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member brings up a very valid point. It is unfortunate that the department cannot distribute a budget based on spreading it evenly through the regions. Our budget is based on where the need is, based on the traffic volume. Where the major expenses are, of course, is reflective of the traffic volume.

Like I said, the department would have been very willing to work with the communities in trying to spread the dollars around reflective of what we have for that particular region.

I think a good example of that is what the Member brought up yesterday about the access road programs. The department is fully aware of how much people need economic development activity in the region, including highway construction or road construction of any nature. However, we do not base the budget on make-work programs; we base our budget on highway needs and the traffic volumes on those particular stretches of highway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

#### **Supplementary to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there were no cuts whatsoever on Highway No. 3; yet there were cuts on Highway No. 8 and Highway No. 5 to the tune of \$1 million.

I would like to ask the Minister again, will he, the next time he makes any cuts, consider cutting where half the budget is right now, which is Highway No. 3? So if any cuts take place in the future will he seriously consider cutting Highway No. 3?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

#### **Further Return to Question 103-14(2): Reinstatement of Highways Funding**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department would be glad to respond the Member's question and affirm that we do consider cuts every year on Highway No. 3. We consider cuts all over, but then we respond to the traffic volume. We definitely consider cuts to Highway

No. 3. It is just that we do not put in place any obvious cuts to Highway No. 3, but it is not just certain sections of the highway that were being cut in the department's budget.

We have been asked, along with every other department, to reduce our expenditures. We have done that and we have tried to spread those reductions all across our operations, highways, airports and ferries. It is not just highways. I hope that my response to the Member will be taken as that we do consider cuts to Highway No. 3.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

#### **Oral Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question this afternoon for the Minister of the Executive, the Honourable Mr. Kakfwi. Earlier this year the Department of the Executive issued a request for proposals in supplying counselling services to GNWT employees.

This contract is currently carried out by NWT Family Services, an NWT society. The group has been active in the NWT since 1979 and was recently awarded national accreditation. The request for proposals awarded the contract to another northern-based group for a three-year period commencing April 1, 2000.

One issue is the difference in costs, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that NWT Family Services met the criteria required but the successful bidder was 258 percent higher in cost, a total of half a million dollars more over the life of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that this government is facing fiscal restraint, would the Minister justify this considerable discrepancy? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Stephen Kakfwi.

#### **Return to Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true that there was a call for proposals earlier in the year. There was some criteria set to evaluate the proposals that were received.

A committee was set up to evaluate and recommend the best proposal. There was a difference in cost between the proposals. It is true that the proposal that was accepted does cost more. It was the view of the committee that, given the criteria and objectives set out, the Group of Three as it is called, best met the objectives of the program that was set out, recognizing the call was for a higher dollar amount. It was still felt, even after a review was done, that it was the right decision.

I should say I am not comfortable with talking specifics about the differences in proposals in public. I would prefer if there were some other means by which to be made accountable. It would seem to be unnecessarily critiquing or making negative comments about proposals that were received in good faith by this government. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

**Supplementary to Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer and I too, agree that getting into the details about specific competitive proposals is not in the interest of the House. My supplementary would lead into what the Minister suggested, a way of handling these kinds of discrepancies. In the RFP process, there seems to be something lacking that would allow a structured appeal process that would help build accountability and transparency which this government wants to seek.

My question is, will the Minister look into the RFP process and see if a structured appeal process can be built in? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier.

**Further Return to Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the Member that there are similar sentiments in the government, and we recognize that there are some concerns about the way we procure services and award contracts.

The Financial Management Board Secretariat has initiated a general accumulated review this past fall. The request for proposals, the business incentive policy and other policies, procedures and processes by which we seek procurement are currently being reviewed. So the Member's comments are timely and will be taken into account. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

**Supplementary to Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased the department will look into building a better process along with the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

Given the Northwest Territories Family Services is within days of losing this contract, and given that there is a recognition that the process needs improvement, will the Minister undertake to review the award of this contract, for the Northwest Territories Family Assistance Program and include the Northwest Territories Family Services in a further review of this particular RFP?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

**Further Return to Question 104-14(2): Contract for Family Counselling Services**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contract has been awarded. Legally, we have made a commitment to the group. We have done a review, although there was no obligation to do a review, and we feel the decision by the committee that made the initial recommendation was

done in compliance with the process and procedure that was set out.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister Kakfwi. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

**Oral Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question will be directed to the Premier of the Northwest Territories. It is based on Tabled Document 27-14(2), which is a transcription of an interview the Premier did with CBC. The interview was a reflection of his trip to Ottawa.

On a number of occasions they speak of the potential and what was accomplished in that trip. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kakfwi stated that one of the goals was to get the attention of Ottawa. At one point he stated, "I think that we did capture their attention".

Mr. Speaker, I believe we do get their attention, seeing as they receive 95 cents of every dollar that comes out of this ground in royalty resources. We would have their attention since we have diamond mines, oil and gas. Hopefully, we at least have their attention in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the area of concern is, are there going to be any differences made in the near future to the revenue coming from Ottawa to the Northwest Territories? Yesterday, I heard Mr. Handley say they will be sending someone up from the Minister of Finance's office to review our books. I think that is a step backwards.

Mr. Kakfwi states in the interview that there is some minor relief in sight. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Premier, in what instance might there be some minor relief? Can he elaborate on that in this forum so we know what we can expect as we review the interim appropriation? So we know when we are putting new resources out there, how far can we go? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Premier.

**Return to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not seen the tabled document or transcripts of the interview with CBC radio. So it probably stands to have some minor adjustments and corrections.

Having said that, it is my view that there is an opportunity to develop a good working relationship with Ottawa, with the Prime Minister's Office, with the Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, and with the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Bob Nault. There is interest. I think they realize the position we are in.

The aboriginal leadership has unanimously called for a construction of a pipeline they would like to own and manage themselves. This spells and articulates a profound change in the North, an opportunity that was only dreamt about only a few years ago. We are on the verge of making even more progress in the area of settling claims and self-government negotiations.

There is a signal from the aboriginal groups that they are prepared to discuss devolution and revenue sharing. The federal government has said categorically they want to move as quickly as we can. There is, at a very minimum, a possibility that with the completion of an economic development strategy the federal government had requested a couple of years ago, we could see some generic funding made available not only to the Northwest Territories but to the Yukon and Nunavut as well.

This is the only part of Canada that does not enjoy money flowing to it through an economic development agreement. This has been noticeably absent from the Northwest Territories and Yukon for a number of years now. There is always a lot of room for optimism. This has been a very hectic two months. We are two months and a week into our mandate as a new government, a new Premier and a new Cabinet. We have not had time to consider reductions that we have had in the departments, for which we are being set up to be soundly chastised for. I believe those things will come once we finalize priorities with the Caucus and with the aboriginal leadership in the course of this year.

Those types of things will be looked at. In the meantime, we are setting the stage for what I hope will be a very positive and productive working relationship with the federal government. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

#### **Supplementary to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Premier for that great length of detail to my question. Mr. Speaker, in the interview he was asked if the Prime Minister should come North. He spoke quite eloquently in saying the Prime Minister has fond memories of the Northwest Territories when he was a past Minister of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in his days in the Liberal government.

I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, that we are, in fact, going to only have fond memories of this if we do not stop the bleeding out of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Minister of Finance project a \$42 million deficit. This will not go down in subsequent years. Will the minor adjustments close that sort of gap? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Premier, Mr. Stephen Kakfwi.

#### **Further Return to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, we are a little over two months into our mandate. We have, I think, managed our time incredibly well. We have managed to set up the basis for a good work relationship with the federal government. We have set the stage for a very good and productive working relationship with the aboriginal leaders and, no doubt, we have tried to maintain a close working relationship with Members of the Caucus. We have not set priorities by ourselves. We have not gone about setting up how to reduce expenditures and that type of thing unilaterally. We have come here presenting an interim appropriation budget based on what we need because we have had no time to look

at a well thought out comprehensive approach to reducing expenditures.

I must say that the stage is set. We can work well together if Members wish. We can continue to do that. With respect to the work relationship with the federal government, the outlook is excellent. The relationship with the aboriginal peoples continues to improve and the potential is there. I would say to the Member have faith, remain optimistic, and compliment us on the things we do because I think we are doing well so far. It should produce results through the course of the four years we are here to serve you. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

#### **Supplementary to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will gladly pat the Premier and his Ministers on the back when we see the money. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have had some time to do some work and we support the action the government is taking by going to Ottawa and trying to secure more dollars. What we are trying to get from this is, has there been any amount that has been set out there that will narrow the gap we find ourselves in now with a \$42 million deficit? Do we have any possible numbers out there that would see this being drawn together instead of going further apart, so we do not hit our debt wall?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Premier, Mr. Stephen Kakfwi.

#### **Further Return to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping the Member would say that even if we all stayed poor together, he would still continue to support our valiant efforts to get out of our present predicament.

Mr. Speaker, there are indications that the federal government will be prepared to look at a draft economic strategy and provide some resources to support us on that. The devolution process, the cost to move the devolution agenda along has yet to be addressed. The cost for setting up an intergovernmental forum has yet to be addressed with the federal government. There have been some suggestions as to how that may be done. They are very general and by no means do we think anyone should be accountable for the initial remarks that have been made regarding that in our discussions with Mr. Martin and Mr. Nault.

We know that in the Atlantic region for instance, there have been specific dollars for oil and gas development, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$250 million, specifically set up for the governments in that area to get into oil and gas development. We know that the federal government is open to the idea of project specific dollars that could be made available to the North to realize some of these things.

I know that there is a basis set for what could be some very productive discussions in the next month or so. Once the session is over, we hope to set up meetings again to build on the initial contact and initial basis we have set for further

discussions. That is the extent to which we have done our work.

As the Member would know, last week when we were in Ottawa, it was at the height of a filibuster by the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois. In spite of that, we did have some meetings. It was done in spite of the fact that there was controversy on the eve of the Liberal convention about the leadership. In spite of that, the Prime Minister, Mr. Martin and Mr. Nault, when we met with them, gave us their undivided attention. They were relaxed, focused, and as I said, keenly interested in the views we shared with them. There is a commitment to meet and meet again shortly to build on the initial discussions we started. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Final supplementary, Mr. Roland.

#### **Supplementary to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the optimism is good, but I am concerned we have stretch limo optimism while we have a Volkswagen budget. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier inform us, or will he update this House as work continues so that we may know and reply to our constituents about some of these meetings and hopefully the success he will have? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Premier, Mr. Stephen Kakfwi.

#### **Further Return to Question 105-14(2): Federal Financing Prospects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course I would be prepared to share whatever it is that we achieve in the follow up meetings that we have with the federal government. I would be happy to find a means by which we can share whatever comes out of these meetings that we will set up in the following month with the federal Ministers, so that people can share the optimism and get a sense that some very good things can happen, and will happen and that it will be done in partnership with the aboriginal governments and federal government. Together we can make and hope for a much better future for all our people. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

#### **Oral Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister responsible for the WCB. Mr. Speaker, like the Members of the Executive, the Members of this side of the House have been working ceaselessly and tirelessly day in, day out for the last many months, becoming familiar and conversant with their many responsibilities, carrying the Cabinet, making sure they are on the right track, working around the clock trying to do the business of government. One of the issues that has come up out of our hard work and constant pursuit of good government is the issue of the WCB. I would like to address this question to the Minister responsible. I realize that the board appointments are going to be finished at the end of the month. Can the Minister indicate and update this House on what is happening with the board appointments for WCB? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, the Honourable Mr. Handley.

#### **Return to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's recognition of the hard work we are doing, getting up to speed on our business. There are several appointments that come up at the end of March. Two of them are from the west and I believe one is from Nunavut. It is my intention to refill the positions and before the end of March, I will make that decision. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

#### **Supplementary to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, obviously I was not quite clear. In addition to the work that they are doing, which Cabinet keeps telling us at every opportunity, the people over here are almost exhausted at the labours of Hercules we have undertaken since being elected in order to get this Assembly up and running.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister indicate whether he said reappoint or will he just appoint somebody? Is he planning to reappoint or put somebody new in there? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, the Honourable Mr. Handley.

#### **Further Return to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too recognize the hard work that is done by the Ordinary Members.

-- Applause

We all recognize each other. I did not say reappoint, I said that I will be delegating the positions before the end of March. Of the current positions, there are three that expire. Two of them are mine to fill. One is for the east to fill. They will be filled. I did not say reappointment at all. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

#### **Supplementary to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister clarify whether he intends to bring some new blood into the Workers' Compensation Board and hopefully widen the circle so there are as many appointments outside of Yellowknife as possible? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, the Honourable Mr. Handley.

#### **Further Return to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that I have to do more consultation with some people before I can make the final selection on appointments. There will be some new blood. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Supplementary to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister indicated that he has to do more consultation. Could the Minister indicate who he has to consult with other than the people he has already asked for nominations? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, the Honourable Mr. Handley.

**Further Return to Question 106-14(2): WCB Appointments**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still have some discussions with the people I am considering. I have discussions with the Federal Board of Labour who are giving me some advice. I have discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations also giving me advice. I want to have a board that will be able to carry out its functions very well, a board that will work well together. That will result in an ongoing, strong Workers' Compensation Board. So there are a number of consultations.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, I also want to consult with Cabinet before we make the final selections to ensure the appointments are given clearance at all levels. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**Oral Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation in regards to the comment that there have been cuts made to Highway No. 3.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the five-year capital plan and the only place I see any cuts regarding Highway No. 3 is this year where they were supposed to receive \$2.5 million, and they are only receiving \$1.8 million. If you look at the same number for Highway No. 3 in the five-year capital plan, they are supposed to be receiving \$5,889,000. In the budget, they are receiving \$6,218,000. As far as I can see, that is an increase.

The same thing applies to Highway No. 4. Highway No. 4 in the five-year capital plan, was supposed to receive \$2.5 million. They are receiving \$500,000. That is a \$2 million decrease. I would like to ask the Minister, can he show me exactly where the cuts have taken place on Highway No. 3?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Return to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did not say that Highway No. 3 had any cuts. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Supplementary to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I would like to know exactly when will this government go back to ensuring the five-year capital plan will be followed by this government?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Further Return to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the Member is aware that the five-year capital plan put forth by this government is proposed expenditure. The only real expenditures are the ones in the existing year and that are approved by this Assembly on an annual basis through the budget process. The others are just forecasted expenditures.

In some cases we have multi-year projects and again, even in multi-year projects, the budget expenditures for those particular years have to be approved by this Assembly. The departments use the five-year capital plans as a guidance as to what the expenditures will be in the future. The department has been doing this and working with the Assembly and the communities in establishing the five-year capital plans.

In particular reference to Highway No. 3, this is a multi-year project that has been going on for a long time. As I said to the Member earlier, we did considerations of cuts to all highway expenditures. We did consider Highway No. 3, but we have nothing to implement on Highway No. 3 because of the profit value, the fact that it is an ongoing multi-year project. We did not do any cuts to Highway No. 3, but we did consider it. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Supplementary to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we are robbing from the poor to give to the rich. The people that really do not need it have all of the money in their pockets while the poor people at the bottom of the line do not have any money. Looking at the numbers, Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear the majority of the cuts that have taken place, have taken place on roads where, in my mind, the upkeep will cost more in the long run.

For Highway No. 3, we are talking about 73 kilometres of road that has to be maintained. Yet we are putting half of the budget of this government into 73 kilometres. We have 2200 kilometres of highway out there, yet we are spending half the money of this department on a section of road that is 100 kilometres long where we have already poured \$8.6 million into it last year.

I would like to ask the Minister again. When will the Minister fairly distribute this money knowing we have to maintain 2200 kilometres of road and not just 100?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Further Return to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I will have to repeat myself to some degree. We do not do highway distribution of funds based on any politics. It is based on need. Again, the department only advises the government as to where the need is and where we should make the expenditures.

The final decision is up to this Assembly. If this Assembly indicates to the department that we are going to spend all of our money on Highway No. 8, then the department will do it. But this Assembly has to...

-- Applause

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly gives us direction. We just recommend as a department where to spend the money. It is not based on politics. It is based on need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Supplementary to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel the sympathy coming from the Minister and I want to take advantage of that by asking for \$60 million to conclude the construction of Highway No. 8, but I know that it is not realistic.

But since I am such a realistic person, all I am asking for is what is in the five-year capital plan, which was the \$2.5 million for the next four years? I want to ensure that money will be there to conclude the construction of Highway No. 8. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

**Further Return to Question 107-14(2): Reductions in Highway Spending**

**HON. VINCE STEEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker as I have said earlier, the department has indicated to Cabinet that we can only afford cuts for so long. We are going to have to start putting the money back, and start doing those improvements to the highway. We are not recommending any more cuts at this time. We are hoping that our financial situation will improve enough that we can do these jobs that were originally in the capital plan. We are hoping to be able to catch up, and I am sure I am not the only department.

I know that Municipal and Community Affairs is in the same situation, where they have deferred much-needed capital programs, the same with the schools. So my department is not alone. We are all putting forward a hope that the Premier will be successful in finding more funding for us. That is all I can say Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

**Oral Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with the theme of patting ourselves on the back, I would like first to congratulate the Premier for assigning Mr. Handley to the Diavik file when it seemed necessary, as Mr. Handley did such a fine job on that. My question relates to further projects coming down the pipe here. A few of us at PDAC saw some presentations on the next projects. For instance, one project that comes to mind is the Winspear project at Snap Lake. It looks like it is going to be required to divert very little water. It is going to be labour intensive and leave a very small footprint.

But I am wondering if the Premier can commit to taking a proactive approach to this project and others, and assign a Minister to these files before we run into problems?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi.

**Return to Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a good suggestion and it will be considered. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

**Supplementary to Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will you consider it, Mr. Premier?

-- Laughter

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Premier.

**Further Return to Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that Winspear has requested a meeting with our government. We will be arranging a meeting as soon as possible. Following that, there will be discussions amongst ourselves as Ministers. We have agreed as a Cabinet to share the work, to share the decision making and responsibility for things that befall us. Mostly good things, I hope.

It is an inclusive approach to the work we have taken. So no single Minister is solely responsible for departments. We try to share in the planning, strategizing and the energy and effort that has gone into trying to make good things happen all across the government.

It will be done and will be discussed very shortly. In the next few weeks, you will probably hear of it as we start into the month of April. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

**Supplementary to Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Premier, for the "when". I would like to address the "who". I would suggest that given Mr. Handley's experience with Diavik, recognizing various pitfalls that companies have to deal with in our regulatory process, Mr. Handley might be ideally suited for this. I wonder if the Premier can tell us if he will assign the file to Mr. Handley? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Premier.

**Further Return to Question 108-14(2): Proactive Approach to New Diamond Projects**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, we try to be inclusive, so we hear the Member's remarks as we discuss how and who will do the work that is facing us. Who will be involved in it will be taken into account, yes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Paul Delorey.

**Oral Question 109-14(2): Dealing with Northwest Territories Agriculture**

**MR. DELOREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know question period is getting short, so I will be quick on this. I would like a commitment from the Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, as to whether or not he could tell me, is there any money or specific plans to deal with the agricultural issue that I mentioned in my Member's statement, so that I could give some assurance to my constituents that the government is serious about looking at agriculture in this Session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, the Honourable Mr. Kakfwi.

**Return to Question 109-14(2): Dealing with Northwest Territories Agriculture**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been some discussion with the Territorial Farmers Association recently. There has been, as well, an expectation that the draft economic strategy should become available to us in the next two weeks. So it will be interesting to see what this advisory panel has to recommend, and what their initial comments might be regarding prospects of the future of agriculture in the Northwest Territories, whether it is commercially viable, on what basis that might be argued, or whether we are looking at agriculture from mostly a domestic type of approach. At this time, the Member knows there is no agriculture policy in this government. We are waiting for more discussions between the department and the association as well as whatever the economic advisory panel will provide to us in the form of their draft report, which we will share with the Members. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. The time for question period is over. However, the Member is allowed to conclude with his supplementaries, if he wishes. Item 7, written questions. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

**ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**Written Question 9-14(2): Payment of Extended Health Benefit Claims**

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Honourable Mrs. Groenewegen, Minister of Health and Social Services, further to my Member's statement and oral questions today, regarding the current payment of extended health benefits.

I am requesting your response in addressing the following questions:

1. Would it be possible for extended health benefit claims to be piggybacked on the current billing system used by your department?
2. What would be the cost implications of upgrading our current billing system to support an online billing system for prescription medications?
3. In the interim, is there any way in which an extended health benefit claim form can be processed for reimbursement in a more timely manner?

Thank you for your attention to the above questions on behalf of my constituents. I look forward to your timely response.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

**ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS**

**Bill 3: An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act**

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development has reviewed Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act, and wishes to report that Bill 3 is now ready for consideration in committee of the whole.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

**ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**

**Tabled Document 28-14(4): Ministerial Administrative Procedures Manual**

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents I wish to table today. The first document is entitled Ministerial Administrative Procedures Manual.

**Tabled Document 29-14(2): Business Credit Corporation 1999 Annual Report**

The second document I wish to table is entitled the Business Credit Corporation 1999 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Item 13, tabling of documents. The Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

**Tabled Document 30-14(2): Public Utilities Board 1999 Annual Report**

**HON. ROGER ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the Public Utilities Board 1999 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement; Tabled Document 14-14(2); Bill No. 6, Interim Appropriation Act; Committee Report 2-14(2); Committee Report 3-14(2); and Committee Report 4-14(2), with Mr. Krutko in the Chair.

**ITEM 19: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS**

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** I would like to call the committee to order. During the deliberations yesterday, we were dealing with Bill 6 and the Department of the Executive. I would like to ask the committee how they wish to proceed. Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would recommend that the committee consider to continue Bill 6, along with Committee Reports 2-14(2), 3-14(2), and 4-14(2), continuing with the Department of the Executive and then the Department of Health and Social Services.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Does the committee concur?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** We will begin with the Department of the Executive, which is under tab 6 of our binders. Before we do that, we will take a short break. Thank you.

-- Break

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Welcome back. We are dealing with Bill No. 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001. We are dealing with the Executive, under tab 6, page 4. What is the wish of the committee?

**Committee Motion 1-14(2): Deferral of Consideration of Executive Offices, Department of the Executive (Carried)**

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee consideration of the item Executive Offices under the Department of the Executive be deferred at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Dent, are you moving a motion?

**MR. DENT:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, that was a motion.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** The motion is being circulated. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those

opposed? The motion is carried. The Department of the Executive has been deferred.

-- Interjection

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** The suggestion is that we move on to Health and Social Services. At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services if she has any opening remarks. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have very brief opening remarks. Mr. Chairman, the interim appropriation before you represents funding required by the Department of Health and Social Services for the first four months of the coming fiscal year. Our interim cash requirements represent what the department needs to maintain current programs and services until we have prepared formal business plans for the 2000-2001 year. I look forward to presenting this Assembly with a complete business plan and the main estimates in the coming months. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Would the committee responsible for the bill like to make any comments? Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and her staff on March 17, 2000, to review the interim appropriation for the department. The committee made note of the following issues.

**Equitable Funding to Aboriginal Governments**

The committee was concerned with the yearly grant made to the Dene Nation under the population health activity in the amount of \$143,000. With the departure of several aboriginal groups from the Dene Nation, committee members wondered if the grant should be given to the individual aboriginal governments. The department has agreed to review the grant and provide the committee with information on the history and reasoning for the continuing of the grant and how the government might adapt the funding to address the issue of equitability.

**Digital Communication Network — Ardicom Ltd.**

The committee was very concerned that the Digital Communication Network was not meeting the needs of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The committee heard that the lack of bandwidth is impacting on the ability of the Department of Health and Social Services to implement its Telehealth program. This is apparently also a problem with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and impacts on their ability to deliver distance education programs.

Committee members believe that the further development of the Telehealth network is an important link in the department's goal to provide better and more cost-effective health care to Northerners.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has invested significant fiscal resources in the development of the Digital Communications Network. Committee members believe that if this investment has been for four-year old technology that can no longer meet the needs of the department, it may be time for the government to seek other options.

The committee strongly encourages the department to work in conjunction with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the Financial Management Board to resolve the outstanding bandwidth issues with Ardicom and the Digital Communication Network and looks forward to positive resolution of the issue.

#### **Forced Growth as Part of the Interim Appropriation**

It became apparent as the committee reviewed the departments within its envelope, that there were several different interpretations of what forced growth was. The committee heard that the department has submitted an estimate of \$5.1 million to FMB for forced growth to be included in the department's main estimates. The committee also heard that, unlike the other departments in the social envelope, a four-month portion of the \$5.1 million forced growth requirement was not factored in the interim appropriation.

The committee questions how it can be expected to offer valid criticism on the state of department finances when it is kept in isolation of important facts. In approving the interim appropriation, the committee will be essentially approving the department's budget for one-third of the year. Committee members believe that by not factoring in forced growth in the interim appropriation, possible belt-tightening exercises that should follow may be impossible to implement in the last two-thirds of the year.

Committee members were disappointed that all forced growth was not factored into the department's interim appropriation and that they were not informed of this omission from the outset of the review. It was only the questioning of the committee members that brought this matter to light. In the future the committee recommends that the department or the Financial Management Board provide notes that describe exceptions in the way the department presents its information.

#### **Nurse Practitioners**

Members were particularly interested in the development of a health care system that utilizes nurse practitioners, in conjunction with physicians, to treat patients in the Northwest Territories communities.

Committee members are well aware of the problems the boards and the department are having in attracting physicians to the North. Consequently, this doctor shortage has led to excessive waits for appointments at medical clinics and a resultant increased usage of emergency room services, particularly in Yellowknife.

Committee members believe if well-trained nurse practitioners provided front-line service and dealt with the minor complaints, that doctors would be able to concentrate on the patients that truly needed their attention.

There may be some resistance on the part of residents, used to dealing with doctors for every complaint, to a nurse practitioner based system. However, committee members believe that this is the best option that the department and the boards have in meeting the doctor shortage in the larger communities. After all, the community nurses have been providing quality health care to residents of our smaller communities for years and are the backbone of our rural health care system.

The committee strongly encourages all parties to seriously examine the role that nurse practitioners could play in the delivery of health care. The committee looks forward to reviewing an implementation plan for a Nurse Practitioner Program during the business plan.

#### **Early Childhood Education and Programs**

Committee members are very concerned that given the lack of money available for early childhood programming that there be a coordinated effort between the department, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the federal government and any aboriginal government delivering such programming. This coordination is essential if governments as a whole want to make progress in meeting the needs of our youngest residents and provide the children with the head start that they need to be successful in life.

It is the committee's hope that a proactive, cooperative approach could be developed between all levels of government involved in early childhood programming. The committee expects to review a coordinated effort on early childhood programming during the business plan review.

#### **Undedicated Capital Funds**

Committee members were very concerned that they were being asked to approve \$200,000 for new capital projects in the interim appropriation. Members were uncomfortable with not knowing the specifics of what and where the project was to be located. Committee members believe that giving approval, at a time when other capital projects are being deferred, was tantamount to the committee giving the department permission to operate a "slush fund". This "slush fund" would not be subject to the oversight the committee exercises over other capital projects.

The committee also noted that the department is proposing \$250,000 in carry-over funding in the interim appropriation for the possible renovation of the Territorial Treatment Centre in Yellowknife. In the minds of the committee members, the department's explanation of the variables needed to fall into place for this renovation to proceed meant little chance of a start within the four-month window covered by the interim appropriation. The explanation that one of the major variables involves decisions by a board outside the direct control of the government reinforced the committee's belief that the department's timeline for the renovation was overly optimistic. Committee members could not justify the inclusion of the renovation to the Territorial Treatment Centre in the interim appropriation.

In the future, the committee would like to see the specifics of major capital projects. It is believed that the department has had sufficient time to evaluate the condition of the infrastructure inherited from the federal government in the health transfer and that a plan to address the inadequacies should be in place.

Unless the committee can be convinced otherwise, the committee looks forward to being presented with a plan for new capital projects during the business plan review.

#### **Inuvik Hospital**

There was some concern on the part of committee members that the single largest capital project the government will be

involved with in the upcoming fiscal year was not mentioned in the interim appropriation or in the department's presentation to the committee.

The committee does understand that the Inuvik Hospital is scheduled as a P3 project and, as such, there are no funds committed in the interim appropriation. However, as a matter of public education, the committee would like to make the department's responses to Member's questions on the timelines for the project a matter of public record.

The request for proposals closes on April 28, 2000. There will be three to four weeks required for evaluation of the different proposals. Once the evaluation is completed, a recommendation will be made to the Financial Management Board. If the board accepts the recommendation, negotiations will be entered into with the successful proponent on the actual lease and development agreements. The Financial Management Board then gives these agreements. It is hoped that this process would only take until late May or early June and that actual construction can begin shortly thereafter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if she would like to bring in witnesses. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Would the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witnesses in please. At this time I would like to ask the Minister to introduce her witnesses for the record.

**HON. JANE GRONEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is the deputy minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Penny Ballantyne, and on my right is Mr. Warren St. Germaine, the director of finance for the department. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Welcome, witnesses. At this time I would like to ask if anyone has any general comments or questions for the Minister on the Department of Health and Social Services. Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some general comments on the interim appropriation as Health has brought it before us. It seems to me, that when we look at this department, what we are given appears to be a different treatment of this process than other departments have undertaken. It almost seems to be a double standard. We have seen departments come back to us and talk about their forced growth, and tell us that they recognize forced growth has to be taken into account in the interim appropriation. They have identified what they think it will be, and they have laid it out for us to have a look at.

This department has told us in briefings while they do not know what the forced growth will be, and that there will be some forced growth for that four-month period, it was not included when they made their interim projections. I find this somewhat shocking. I do not know why, if the other departments can come forward and toe the line, this department cannot. I recognize that it is a large budget, but I think it is critical, especially with, I am sure, how easy it is for costs to get out of hand and escalate quickly in this area.

Undedicated capital is another concern that I have. I think that

we have seen that the government overall has decided that it needed to defer \$10 million worth of capital projects that are needed, necessary and important. Yet this department has not deferred any capital, and even further to that, they are holding \$200,000 in this interim for new major projects. Now, they do not know what this new major project is going to be, but they assure us that when they do decide what, when and if it will be, it will be an important one.

While I am sure that is the case, I think it would comfort this committee to know exactly what that project might be, because as I have said, we have to sit here and swallow this idea that other important capital projects have been deferred. The Territorial Treatment Centre, \$250,000 in this interim, to reprofile this treatment centre for what may or may not become its future use. We do not know what is going to happen with this building. A lot of things here are hinging on what happens to the NAS, what happens to the building as far as the Housing Corporation is concerned. I think, as the committee mentioned, there are a lot of variables that have to fall into place here for us to actually get down the road to needing this money to reprofile this treatment centre.

I do not believe this is something that is going to happen in the next four months and I do not believe, as we are told, the justification that the expenditure must be urgently required in the interim period. I cannot imagine that the Minister will sit here and tell us that they are certain this is going to happen in these four months and that they need this money.

The other concern that I have with the department, and it is not just health, but the Digital Communication Network. Four years ago, when this was set up, I do not know if this was ill-conceived, or if it was not planned properly, but we are now finding out that there is not the bandwidth to do the kinds of things we need to do. I would urge the Minister to take this to the Premier and say, "Listen, we have to make a decision here. We either have to throw some real money at this thing, and buy some bandwidth and make this work, so that we can start to reduce costs in medical travel and start to reap some of the benefits of having the system up and running, or cut it off and get rid of it." I do not see that we have a lot of choice here. So, I would urge the Minister to take a hard look at this and fix this thing or get rid of it. Generally, those are my comments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Madam Minister. Would you respond to the comments.

**HON. JANE GRONEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the Member's concern about the apparent difference in the way that the Department of Health and Social Services reported the forced growth numbers, what I would like to say about that is for the first four months of the year, it is impossible for the department to operate without additional funding for forced growth components of our programs and services. He is right, there is a projected forced growth requirement that will be expended over the remaining nine months of the fiscal year.

I cannot speak to how this differs from the way other departments did it; however, I do feel that our department did comply with the parameters that were set out by the Financial Management Board in this regard. As for the undedicated capital, as members of the committee are aware, there are a number of aging facilities and infrastructures relating to health and social services, and there is being undertaken, as we

speaking, a functional review of these facilities to see which community and which facility may need renovation or replacement.

Usually, there is lead time and lead money required to plan for those activities. This is why this \$200,000 is in here and most certainly it will be used for planning and design. It just has not been decided yet which community and which facility will have the highest priority for those dollars. I guess whether or not it will be used in the four months of this interim appropriation, perhaps when I am finished Mr. St. Germaine can speak to that. I thought it was prudent planning on the part of the department to foresee the fact that there will be a capital replacement of a facility once we deal with the business plans and the main estimates.

The Territorial Treatment Centre renovation is very much a similar explanation. We have been on the edge, thinking we may have a solution to some alternative programming here, but there are some realities in terms of nailing that down, which has taken longer than anticipated. We continue to work on that.

The Digital Communications Network and how that relates to the department's ability to participate in Telehealth is a very complicated and technical explanation, and I am afraid that I would not be able to provide that to the Member. I do believe that the Digital Communications Network was put in place, as the Member indicated, four years ago with very good intentions. If it is not working, that definitely needs to be examined and looked at. I could not tell you all of the reasons why that is not performing the way it should at this point in time. With that, I will ask Mr. St. Germaine if he would respond on that fourth item, the Digital Communications Network. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. St. Germaine.

**MR. ST. GERMAINE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue we have around the Digital Communications Network revolves around bandwidth. Bandwidth is not equal in all communities. It is at different rates depending upon the equipment that NorthwestTel has in place. The bandwidth ranges from 64 kilobytes to over 1,000 kilobytes. It varies by community. Different applications require different bandwidth. For instance, our Telehealth application requires 384 kilobytes in order to work. Two thirds of the communities in the Territories do not have sufficient bandwidth for the Telehealth application to work. In the other communities that is not the case. For us, there is an issue to distribute Telehealth services across the entire Territory, given that there are technical limitations to how much electronic traffic the DCN will currently handle. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine. Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** I would like to respond if I could, and request some clarification. I believe the Minister said that it is her understanding that in these four months, they will not require any additional money for forced growth, so that is why it was not put in. My understanding from committee briefings was that they were told they did not have to put forced growth into the interim projections. Although it would factor in here, they had not been able to do it in time. It is not a question, I guess, but a point. There seems to be some discrepancy, but I am glad the

Minister has cleared this up.

As far as the functional review of capital projects, I am still concerned about what seems to be "just in case" planning and design money. It does not seem like this fits the category of an expenditure that is urgently required within the interim period. I do have some concerns. DCN has been addressed. It was mentioned that 384 kilobytes are needed for Telehealth to operate and work. I am wondering if it was known at the outset, when we started to pump money into this project, that this would be the case and there would be a downfall in this area as far as providing it to all of the communities. It seems that if we can only provide it to a few of the communities then it is not really doing what we need it to do.

The Minister mentioned that it was conceived with good intentions. That is fine, but as one of my colleagues mentioned here, some roads are paved with good intentions, and I would say that Highway No. 3 fits the bill there, Mr. Krutko, considering it is not paved. Just a comment. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GRONEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I cannot speak to the issue of Highway No. 3. The Member will have to bring that up with the Minister of Transportation.

Perhaps on the issues, to give you a bit more of a comprehensive explanation on the capital. I know that some of the facilities are aging. Some of them are in excess of 30 years old. As to the requirement for that, in the four-month period, I would ask Mr. St. Germaine if perhaps he can add to that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. St. Germaine.

**MR. ST. GERMAINE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is the intent of the department to identify the capital project in the main estimates and the business plan process, which is the normal case. Our view was that process would not allow for an approval of the project by the Legislative Assembly until approximately June, in which case, pending approval, we would want to start the design work on the project that will be put forth. Therefore we need it to have an interim appropriation of \$200,000 in order to commit to the design contracts that would be necessary. It is our intention to bring forth specific projects at the main estimates review process. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** General comments. Mr. Roland.

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there has been a lot of discussion in the area of health and social services in the Northwest Territories for many years. It was always hard to see if we were making headway in the area of improving the health standards for residents of the Northwest Territories. It was not until the recent report on the status of the health of the residents of the Northwest Territories, almost ten years prior, before we saw any statistics. It was good to see that report out, and see that, in fact, in the Northwest Territories, our health as individuals is improving.

But yet, there remain many hot topics out there that continue to plague this government and the department, demanding more resources to try and deal with the ills of our society, in a sense.

I refer specifically to the area of drug and alcohol funding. Mr. Chairman, it has been brought to my attention that concerns have been raised in my community, and it was raised at the Beaufort Delta Leaders' Conference in Inuvik recently, in the area of expenditures in the area of drugs and alcohol, and where they are going. I had questions posed to myself by a few people in my community, and I believe the town council has written a letter to the Minister about funding. There seems to be a concern out there that there are some new dollars going into the area of drugs and alcohol, whether it be in the programming side or the capital side.

The concern is that there has not been proper discussion and potential placement of those capital dollars. In my community, it has been a sore point since the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly when Delta House was closed down due to the funding shortfalls of this government. We hear that there is the potential of new dollars being spent on drug and alcohol facilities in the southern part of the Territory, where in the northern part there are no actual facilities for drug and alcohol programming. I would like to get some information from the Minister in this area. When are new dollars identified in this budget, because as I go through here, I cannot see any specific dollars being identified. I would like to know if there is somewhere in the budget where there is an O and M, where they are coming up with new dollars for new initiatives, whether it be in the O and M side or the capital side with drug and alcohol funding. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the interim appropriation, as I had indicated to the standing committee previously, does not include any new Cabinet or operations and maintenance dollars for drug and alcohol treatment. In fact, the interim appropriation is a prorated reflection of the expenditures which were programs and services that were ongoing in the last fiscal year.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Roland.

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister inform us with these numbers, what is the ongoing area for drug and alcohol that dollars are being applied to if it was identified in the previous year, were there any dollars being put toward any development or improvement of systems for drug and alcohol facilities throughout the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will refer it to Mr. St. Germaine. He has a specific reference to point out to the Member.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. St. Germaine.

**MR. ST. GERMAINE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The alcohol and drug operations and maintenance funding is accounted for under the community health programs activity. It is within that amount, which is part of the \$7.7 million amount. It is within that amount. There is no specific capital component in the interim appropriation for alcohol and drug programming.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine. Mr.

Roland.

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Within that figure, are there new expenditures on drug and alcohol for the upcoming number of months? As the Minister said, there are no new identified projects, but there are expenditures for ongoing projects from the previous year.

I am aware that there have been a number of shifts in the department when it comes to drug and alcohol programming and how they provide those programs to residents in the Northwest Territories. I am wondering if, within that figure, are there projects that were possibly identified in the previous year but are starting to have dollars applied to them during this interim. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to let Ms. Ballantyne respond to that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Member may be referring to the re-profiling of the money that was previously being directed to the Northern Addiction Treatment Centre, which represents almost \$1 million in contribution funding which was not spent over the last year.

That has not been allocated to any specific projects in next year's plan. It is awaiting the outcome of the alternative programming consultations that have been undertaken with a number of territorial NGOs, the Status of Women, the Native Women's Organization, the Dene Nation, and a number of aboriginal organizations looking at treatment options. That work is not yet concluded. Once it is, then dollars would be re-profiled to support those new programs. We expect to be able to identify those in the business planning process and in the main estimates. But at this point, that work is not concluded.

There are no commitments at this point for any new alcohol and drug projects, either capital or operations and maintenance.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Roland.

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister or her staff identify out of the \$7.7 million that is being requested for approval in community health programs, what portion of that is for drug and alcohol?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. St. Germaine is looking for that information now.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. St. Germaine.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry for the delay. The amount is approximately \$1.5 million.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you. Mr. Roland.

**MR. ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another situation which impacts the community and the region of Inuvik significantly is the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Hospital. I would like to thank the committee for making note of

it in their report. I would also like confirmation from the Minister so we can put the community and region at ease. As stated in the report, the RFP on that project closes April 28<sup>th</sup>. We hope to see some construction start this summer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the deadline for the submission of responses to the RFP has been extended from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 28<sup>th</sup>. If the cost comparison indicates this is the appropriate way to go, referring to the public-private partnership, it is expected that the selected developer will be notified by May 26<sup>th</sup>. The development agreement and lease signing date is now expected to be June 23<sup>rd</sup>. In terms of substantial completion, it is targeted for spring of the year 2001, with the project expected to be substantially complete in the spring of the year 2002. I hope that information is helpful to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** General comments. The Chair recognizes the Member for the Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is in line with the question posed by Mr. Roland from Inuvik. I have always felt this government depleted the area of alcohol and drug programming. Many of the social problems we see today are because of the restraints we have put in place and the cuts we have forced on the communities.

There were several initiatives taken. Mr. Roland touched on the Delta House. In my riding, there is the Tl'oondih Healing Centre. With the closure of many of these centres, we have seen the impact on the alcohol and drug programs in the communities. The minimal funds they receive today compared to what they used to receive is not sufficient.

I strongly feel this government has to do more. We can make a public statement that we like healthy people and healthy communities, but I think it is important that we as a government give them the tools to meet that goal.

In some cases, you are talking about addictions that have been there for many years, if not decades. The situation cannot resolve itself overnight, especially in areas like alcohol and drugs, and physical and mental abuse.

We are seeing that with all of the court cases that have come forward about hostels. I think this government has to take some responsibility for that. We were involved when the hostels were in place in many of our communities as part of the education system. Many of us, myself included, had to go away to Inuvik, Fort Smith, Fort Providence, Hay River or Yellowknife to acquire a high school diploma and move on to post-secondary education.

Communities are trying to deal with it, but they need the help of this government. Help does not mean you simply put a specialist in the region and the problem is going to go away. I think it is going to take a lot more than that. I think we have to deal with what was put in place regarding the Health and Social Services review on the recommendations that came forth in that report to this government. I think we have to put dollars in there to make the goals we are trying to sustain. This government, as far as I am concerned, is spending too much

money on the social dependency of people in the communities. Through no fault of their own, they are finding themselves in that predicament because of the lifestyles they live. In order to change anybody's lifestyle, you have to give them some options. You have to give them the tools to realize they can change their lives and also they can do it in a way that will help not only themselves, but their family and the community.

On that, I find it hard to believe that this government is not really making that a priority and putting the resources in place to do that. I think one area that this government can probably seriously look at is to work with those organizations that have made the efforts to develop their own priorities. The Tl'oondih Healing Society or the half-way house in Inuvik are two places where organizations are trying to deal with a lot of the problems.

With that, I would just like to ask the Minister, what have they done to seriously sit down with these institutions and organizations and groups to see how this government can assist them by making available to them resources so that they can deliver that program on behalf of this government, instead of this government always trying to be the means of doing everything for everybody else? Maybe we should allow somebody else to do it who has a hands-on approach to what they want to do and has already made the attempts to get there. I think that we have to look at the resources that we spend and consider the cost of these specialists that we have in our regions and downsizing and what not. We have to allow the professionals to handle it and I think that who can deal with the problems best are the communities, so I would like to see what the Minister is doing to work with these groups and to see where they go. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I wholeheartedly agree with the Member for Mackenzie Delta that addiction is a huge problem in the North and that is something that the department grapples with. When we talk about addictions and we talk about healing, I think it is important that we do work together with communities to develop approaches to bring the treatment and the services as close to the people as we can. A lot of the funding that flows from the department in this area and then subsequently goes out to different organizations does go through the health boards.

Certainly, I see the health boards as one level of government, if you will, that is closer to the communities and closer to the people where these kinds of priorities can be developed and then pursued. What we, as Members of this Assembly, as elected Members, have is a responsibility to keep these initiatives, keep these priorities in mind and do as much as we can to see relief, if you will, for the escalating problems. It seems, in some ways when you look at it, that we have not made progress as quickly as we would like to, in terms of treating these things. On the other hand, we need to develop programs and services that are as efficient and as effective as possible because this is an area where a tremendous amount of resources can be directed, but it will take everybody working together to get the most effective results.

I am just looking at the notes I made of the Member's comments here. I will close by saying that I do agree with the

Member. We do need to make sure there are sufficient tools available to people who do want to change their lives.

Certainly on the issue of funding, something that has been talked about and we will talk to the standing committee again in the future, is the whole issue of funding to non-government organizations which do work in the community. The amount of time that they spend securing their funding for ongoing years. If they are core funded on an annual basis sometimes an inordinate amount of energy goes into just ensuring that they have the resources to operate.

We could look at things like multi-year funding arrangements through the boards. That is just one small area we could possibly make things more efficient. The other is looking at communities where there may be some overlap or duplication of services being delivered. There may be an opportunity for consolidating certain aspects of their operations like administration, so that it provides an opportunity for more people who are actually working in the front line positions, as opposed to a number of organizations all having to employ people in administrative roles.

We are open, the department is open to suggestions of how we can improve things. Of course, cost is always a consideration. I agree with the Member that there is room for improvement. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another area that I would like to see us talk about is community wellness, but I do not see any money in this interim appropriation. I think that is one area where we have to give communities the ability and authority to take on some initiatives to do things. We have to give them adequate resources to do it. The resources that we give them now are not enough. I think we should do more in that area, especially looking at the programs that we see in our communities. We are talking about increasing the amount of money and education.

I think we cannot just deal with the classroom problems and leave it in the classroom. The problem also originates from within the community, at home and also with the lifestyle the people live in our small communities. People have to have the resources to realize that we have to deal with these problems in conjunction with each other. Not just say, "put a bunch of money over here, the problem is going to go away". I would like this department to seriously consider increasing the amount of money in the Community Wellness Program.

Also, allow the communities to take on more of those responsibilities. We seem to always be stuck in the process of reacting to problems, usually after they happen, such as suicide, a death in the community, someone being murdered or find a lot of young people being institutionalized. We should be able to deal with that problem before it gets to that stage.

We have to make sure that the communities have the resources, so that when they take these on, they know best because they are dealing with these problems day in and day out at the community level. Yet, people at the regional centre or even in Yellowknife, the only time they react to something is when they get the phone call.

In the communities you are dealing with these problems day in and day out and we have to allow the communities to identify and find solutions to their own problems and also give them resources to carry them out. I would like to ask the Minister, are they planning to increase that amount and when will we see money going into communities for community wellness? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think there are ways that we can create efficiencies so that the dollars that do go into communities now are used more efficiently. There are initiatives underway within the department to that end and I would like to ask Ms. Ballantyne if she would perhaps talk about how some of those collaborations may be developed. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member is right about the need for communities to have access to sufficient resources to deal with the problems and concerns at a local level.

To that end, one issue that we have been very actively pursuing in the department over the past year, has been working with the federal government to try to better coordinate the significant amount of funding that they flow to Northwest Territories communities through dozens of programs, so that federal monies can be combined with Government of the Northwest Territories monies to create one window of access for funding for community wellness dollars.

We have made quite a bit of progress in this initiative with our federal counterparts and we are talking to the territorial aboriginal organizations about collaborating with us. Several of these programs have an aboriginal aspect. They are dedicated funds solely for aboriginal people and we feel it is important that we bring in the aboriginal leadership into that decision-making process as well.

In a very quick way, just to say we have made quite a bit of progress over the last few months, we hope to conclude these discussions over the next six months. We feel we should be in a position to have this one window created, where we can pool all of this funding. Instead of communities having to apply to up to a dozen different programs to get prenatal funding from here and daycare money from here and alcohol and drug money from over there, they can put together an integrated approach to community wellness that suits their community and reflects their needs. They can apply to one funder who can then flow funds so that they do not have to do multiple proposals, audits, and then multiple sets of books.

The added value to this, I think, will be an opportunity for us at the territorial level to engage with the aboriginal leadership and with our federal counterparts around the evidence about health status so that we can really make sure that the dollars that we have available are directed where they will do the most good.

For example, to make sure that our approach to prenatal nutrition, hot lunch or breakfast programs in schools are run as efficiently in communities as possible, so that we can make sure that we get the maximum amount of dollars in a program

area and a minimum amount of dollars on the administration side.

We really hope that we will be able to provide our Minister with a good status report on this initiative in the months to come and then I am sure in turn she will be pleased to communicate that to you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. General comments, the chair recognizes the Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman I will keep my comments and questions brief if the Minister will agree to keep her replies as well, the same way. I have a number of questions, I will be brief on my comments. I know the Minister will follow suit.

Mr. Chairman, the broader issues and concerns that I have with Health and Social Services, I think, will be addressed during the business planning process, when the Minister tables her response to the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services.

I would just like to get some updates on some very specific issues. The first one would be, given the acknowledged shortcomings of the Digital Communications Network, could the Minister indicate the plans for Telehealth in the Territories and how she plans to hopefully expand the technology, given the restrictions and limitations of the digital network? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I believe the Member is correct in his position. We have heard this in the standing committees that the expansion of the Telehealth program has considerable cost savings that may be available to the department if we were able to access it more in communities.

Mr. Bell had asked, in a previous comment, whether or not I will be willing to take this up with the Premier on how we might better improve this infrastructure to serve the needs of the Department of Health. I will commit to do that in collaboration with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment who also stand to benefit considerably from this type of technology if it were sufficient and adequate.

I could not tell the Member now exactly why the facilities provided by, as I understand it, NorthwesTel, are not sufficient in bandwidth to deliver the kind of information that our department would need. I will commit to pursuing that and finding out what kinds of options would be open to us for improving and expanding that service. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Chairman, could the Minister elaborate then on, do they have a plan, a Telehealth strategy that may be predicated on available technical capability. Do they have a plan?

I know they have some Telehealth capabilities in some communities, I think it is Inuvik, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. If it were possible, how would they see expanding that service from

a health perspective, not a technological perspective? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will refer that question to Mr. St. Germaine.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Mr. St. Germaine.

**MR. ST. GERMAINE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is our intent to continue expanding the Telehealth service at a modest pace where the technology allows the applications to be used. We are hoping, in the upcoming fiscal year, to put the service in four to five additional communities. It will be where there is the bandwidth available to handle the service.

Telehealth service that we do provide, for the Member's information, is a scheduled service, so we pre-book our time. It is a little bit easier to manage in terms of scheduling bandwidth, so we are able to manage, to the extent possible with the bandwidth issues that are there. We will continue to increase the service and enhance it over time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine. Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was wondering as well if the Minister could give a quick update on the CWL review. For the record, it is not the Catholic Women's League, but it is the Child Welfare League review. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. He took the words right out of my mouth, I was going to say Catholic Women's League. The Child Welfare League, we are expecting the report from the results of their findings here in the Northwest Territories within the next couple of weeks. At that time I will be in a position to share the results with the Standing Committee on Social Programs. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to just briefly touch on the issue of the equitability of funding for aboriginal governments, specifically the item under population health for \$143,000.

Now that it has been raised as an issue, how does the department intend to address the issue, and do other aboriginal governments access similar amounts of money from different pots, possibly? If not, how would the Minister see dealing with this, while a small number, an issue that could have a great political sensitivity? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a bit of background. The department has maintained the contribution agreement in the amount of \$143,000 annually with the Dene Nation since the transfer of health services from the federal government in 1988.

Prior to the transfer, the Dene Nation received funding from Health Canada for their health program. The contribution agreement provides a framework for the department to work in partnership with the Dene Nation to influence the health and well-being of Dene people in the Northwest Territories.

The department and the Dene Nation set joint priorities on an annual basis and have quarterly meetings to share information and discuss progress on key priorities. This agreement is planned to be renewed in the upcoming fiscal year.

It would be difficult to break \$143,000 down into much smaller components and be able to actually have the kind of planning and dialogue that goes on with the Dene Nation at this time with smaller groups. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well I can appreciate the fiscal reality on this particular issue. The other reality is that the Dene Nation does not represent the Metis, Inuvialuit or, to the best of my knowledge, the Gwich'in, Sahtu, or the Dogribs as well.

Now that it is an issue, how does the department answer to the fact that it is only one group? What about the aboriginal governments, who have significant health concerns, that are not represented by the Dene Nation? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the discussion and the interaction that takes place with the Dene Nation is not exclusive to input and information exchange with aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories.

Certainly on the regional and community health boards, there are many aboriginal people and groups represented as well. We have people in various levels of aboriginal government who also sit on health boards who have an opportunity to have input either with the department or with the communities and the constituents that they represent, and this is a fairly comprehensive coordination and sharing of information that goes on with the department at any given time. This particular \$143,000 that is earmarked for the Dene Nation is not all-inclusive of the interaction with aboriginal people. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to, as my time runs out, just come back to this issue. I recognize that there is other involvement across the board, but from a budget perspective, it is very clearly identified the Dene Nation gets \$143,000 and that is good for them. My question is, now that it has become an issue, if the Inuvialuit and the Metis and the Gwich'in and the people from the Sahtu and the Dogribs come in and say, "We would like some more consideration because we have our own legitimate health concerns", what would be the response of the Minister? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the question posed by the Member is hypothetical and if we do hear from other claimant groups who have specific concerns and requests to the department for some form of interaction that is formalized, we will deal with those requests when they come in. At this point in time that has not been the case. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. The Chair recognizes the Member for Range Lake, Sandy Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By virtue of the fact that I do not belong to the Social Programs Committee as all Members here cannot belong to both Social Programs and Governance, this is my first chance to address my mind to some of these issues. I do not have a long general comment, but I do want to make a few observations and to ask some questions.

I want to start off by congratulating the department on one thing I noticed the department is doing and I hope it is the Government of the Northwest Territories that is doing it. It has to do with the anti-smoking ads on CBC TV that I have been noticing. They seem to come on right before Northbeat. I think it is very effective as it scares me when I am sitting there looking at them. I find them very relevant. I think if children saw them they would think they are really cool ads because they address how it is not cool to smoke. I hope that it works for the children and young people out there because, as we talked about in the strategy session, we have so many people smoking. It is costing us a lot, not just in money, but in the general health of our people.

I want to start off with that, but then I have to move on to alcohol and drug treatment programs, which I think we all agree is a huge problem. We are probably not spending as much money on it as we could and we do not have an adequate facility in Yellowknife or around this area. The Member for North Slave has been asking the Minister for that sort of treatment and I am hoping that the department could somehow address that. Could the Minister address this need for a treatment centre?

With that issue, I wonder if the Minister could tell me, where do people go for alcohol and drug treatment, given the inadequate treatment services in Yellowknife and this area? I think I will ask that question and then I will talk about other issues which have to do with Telehealth and recruitment and retention of doctors. I am trying to learn more about the state of alcohol and drug treatment programs in our Territory. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, first of all I would like to thank the Member for recognizing the work of the department on the anti-smoking campaign. I have also seen the ads and I think they are very good and quite a few of them feature young people who are recognizable. I think that our young people are a really good target audience because I think it is more difficult for people who have smoked for many years to stop smoking. Certainly if we can get the kids to not start, that will be quite an accomplishment. That is something that I would like to continue to expand on. I think that it is good to have young people, people recognizable around the North as role models, speaking out on this issue because it does cost the Department of Health

and Social Services a great amount of money which could be going someplace else if we did not have to spend it on the results of tobacco.

With respect to the alcohol and drug treatment issue, the Member asks, where do people go for treatment? Presently, there is the Nats'Ejee K'eh facility on the Hay River Dene Reserve. It is my understanding there is not an extensive waiting list of people to get in there, that they are handling the requirements quite well. Now, there are instances where people do go to southern institutions because they may require specialized treatment where they may have dual addictions and other complicating factors. So, I could not tell you exactly how many people are in treatment at any given time in southern facilities, but that opportunity is also available to Northerners if it is deemed necessary.

Part of the alternative programming initiative that has been undertaken is looking at how we can more effectively deal with the issue of alcohol and drug addiction. A number of non-government agencies and stakeholders have been meeting for some time now trying to address where the priorities should be in terms of treatment and a plan has been developed and we hope to soon be able to get started. I am just looking for my briefing note on this.

The boards and the department provided approval-in-principle for a women's territorial treatment program and a youth addictions program and, as you know, a lot of this is hinged on what was going to happen with the infrastructure that was potentially available depending on what happened with the Northern Addiction Services.

So, we hope to have resolved that situation as soon as possible and get these additional bids open. The facility at Dettah would turn into a youth treatment centre and there are potentially 20 beds there that would include some component of family treatment as well.

That is an area that we see as a priority as a department. There are quite a number of youth in southern institutions because there are only 16 beds at the present time available for youth in the Northwest Territories. So, we see that as an area where there is a gap at the present time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question about Telehealth. I had the opportunity to get a briefing on that at another forum and I found it very interesting. I think it is an idea with a lot of potential, but I have also had people come and tell me that in order for it to be successful and do the thing that it is meant to do, which is not to replace a lack of resources, but to deliver our health system with modern technology and so on. I just want to make sure that if we are going to go with that, that there are enough resources and that the people are properly trained and there is a technological infrastructure in place.

I believe Mr. St. Germaine mentioned that this was going to be expanded slowly on an as needed basis. I would like to know, what is the plan? How much are we allocating for that and how long are we going to take to implement it? I just want to know more about how this is being implemented and where it is at.

My second question concerns recruitment and retention of doctors. I know that the Minister made a statement on this earlier in the last session and I see that there has been an advertisement for a position of consultant or somebody who is to do the recruiting. I wonder if the Minister could just tell me a little bit more about where she is with this issue that was very important to our constituents.

My last point is, I have to agree with the committee report and committee finding that the Early Childhood Program is essential and I know that that is a priority for the department as well. Hopefully we will see something concrete on that soon. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with respect to Telehealth, as Mr. St. Germaine said previously, there are four or five communities expected to come on stream for Telehealth in the next fiscal year. As far as the resources that it may take to do this and provide training to people and get the programs up and running, perhaps Mr. St. Germaine could elaborate on that and then I will come back to the issue the Member raises in respect to recruitment and retention.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. St. Germaine.

**MR. ST. GERMAINE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We intend to include a budget item in our main estimates. It costs approximately \$60,000 to \$80,000 for the Telehealth equipment for each location. That is the video equipment plus the accessories that go with that. Along with it, there is a significant amount of training that has to go on so that the health care providers know how to use the technology and that is part and parcel of the project costs. So, you can appreciate there is also a time element involved with getting the equipment in place, installed, then training the staff so they are able to use it and then also getting the patients familiar with the equipment and the technology and comfortable with that process, as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. In response to the Member's comments on recruitment and retention, the recruitment and retention strategy actually has three components to it. One is to stabilize and enhance the current workforce. Another is to increase the competencies of the workforce that we have and also to develop a northern workforce. There have been quite a number of initiatives associated with those three components which are probably too long to read out, but it is quite impressive the progress that has been made in this area. I would be happy to provide the Member with a list of the various initiatives in the department to address those. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. The Chair recognizes the Member for Great Slave, Mr. Bill Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, Mr. Chairman, a few months ago I thought my hearing was really good and my eyesight was fine, but since then I find myself

wearing all these cheaters here and maybe it is because we are talking to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Something that is going to be coming down the pipe is the aging population and what the department is doing about that, however I will not concentrate on that right now.

I am a little more interested, Mr. Chairman, in a couple of remarks that Ms. Ballantyne had about what seems to be a fairly dramatic shift in the way we might be able to see funding going to non-government organizations by way of pooling federal and territorial and perhaps aboriginal resources as a way of getting more efficiency and streamlining funding.

By the way, I applaud that. I think it is great to see that finally happening, but I have a couple of questions. Does the Minister know if this is exclusive to the Health and Social Services area, or are other initiatives underway in other areas, perhaps in Education or Justice, which also have a number of NGOs going along with them?

Related to that, Mr. Chairman, could the Minister give some assurance of just how committed the federal government is to this? Are we really looking at something that could be a substantive change in the way funding mechanisms are handled, or are we looking at something that may be an experiment? Is it going to be short lived? Is it not going to have all that much political horsepower behind it? I will stop there, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I could not speak categorically for other departments, but I do believe that our department has been sharing the template, the format for how we have been working on this with other departments. Hopefully, there would be some progress in that area as well. It is important that the funding be organized in such a way that it will reduce the duplicate efforts if there are more efficient ways of doing things in the communities.

Then the Member asks, will this initiative bring substantive change to how NGOs and community organizations are funded? I am very impressed with the level of cooperation with all parties to date in how this initiative is going. I am going to ask Ms. Ballantyne to elaborate on that a bit, but I do think we will see a very substantive change as a result of the efforts of the department in this area.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think we have been cautiously optimistic about the progress that has been made. It has gone a little easier than we thought it would initially. We are not there yet, and I guess the proof is when we get a signed new funding agreement that actually does pull all the parties together formally. We initially thought it would take about two to three years to renegotiate the funding package and we are about a year ahead of where we thought we would be.

Again, you know, the proof will be at the end of the day when we actually have Ministers put pen to paper and sign off on a new arrangement. Health Canada has been extremely cooperative and their deputy has been very directive with his

staff in terms of telling them to get on with this and see that it happens. We have had very good cooperation and we are optimistic at this point and we will certainly be pleased to provide regular progress reports as this comes along. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is encouraging. I look forward to those progress reports and to the inclusion and the involvement of the NGOs that we have up here and hope they have some ownership in the plan and can help be part of that success. I would like to ask about the area of early childhood development. There may be some other terminology applied to this, Mr. Chairman, but taking from some briefings that the department has provided us, and there has been a very strong emphasis in those briefings for a shift toward more attention in the earliest years of our people.

Right from birth or even prenatal attention up to the age of five or six, the impression that I get is the habits and the lifestyles and the general health of the child is really going to be built in those years. My question relates to, again, I was not on the committee so I do not have the benefit of more detailed information, but can the Minister say in the budget and allocations that are put forward here, are we seeing a shift in the department's approach that would reflect the importance of early childhood development? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member mentions some of the presentations that have been made by the department, to date, to Caucus and to the standing committee and certainly I can speak for our department that early childhood development is a very key priority.

As we have shared with Members, the potential impact on the life and well-being of a child, of a person, can be so significantly impacted in those first six years. So I can speak for this department and I can speak for myself that it is a priority. The department is working cooperatively with the boards, other departments and jurisdictions and the federal government, as was previously mentioned, to coordinate and implement early childhood development programs for children, family and communities. I am sure that in my briefings with the department I know that this is an issue that is very near and dear to the deputy's heart as well, and perhaps she could add to that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member asked whether the department would be forwarding any specific initiatives with respect to early childhood development next year. I would have to say that any initiatives that we put forward in the business plan will be quite modest, because we did not get the expected federal funding for early childhood development announced in the last federal budget. There was a commitment in the last federal budget to develop a new national children's program by December 2000, collaboratively with the provinces and territories.

So we are very actively participating in that program development with our provincial and federal colleagues, but new funding for any early childhood initiative is not there at this point. So, anything we would do this year would need to come from internal resources. Obviously that would be a real challenge, to try to do anything significant this year. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That answers my question. Has the department been able and made any attempt at re-profiling shifting the balance, even of internal resources, to at least start to put some more emphasis in early childhood development?

I think the answer basically is no, not yet. I was very impressed with the evidence and the information that the department has provided on early childhood development as a way, at least through government, to really make a difference in the health and the future success of the population. So I would certainly encourage the department to continue to emphasize that. I think it is one of those long term things that if we are able to make those investments now, the returns will be many. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With 22 seconds to go I give you the floor.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. General comments. The Chair recognizes the Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the Minister, a couple of Members have mentioned the business plan. It seems to me we are having a lot of contracts that are down south. Just looking at the interim appropriation, there is about \$13.2 million. That is just some of the figures I picked up, and I was just wondering if they were ever thinking of repatriation into the Territories?

I did ask a question in the House on funding for additional services down south and I was given a number, but it did not say if it was an annual figure for the board or if it was for the Stanton Regional Health Board or if a whole bunch of boards are together. It could be more, the figure could be higher. I would just like to know if your business plans include bringing a lot of the services back to the North, keeping the money in the North and building facilities that people can access closer to home? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. I am going to refer that question to Ms. Ballantyne. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we are certainly always looking for opportunities to repatriate services to the North where it is cost-effective to do so. One area that we are looking at very actively right now is the repatriation of some of the services that are provided to children in the south. We currently have about 40 children in southern placements. If we are able to implement our alternative programming initiative, we would be able to repatriate some of those services. So, we are certainly looking at that.

One of the things we have experienced though, when we repatriate services to the North, is that generally the utilization increases. So, for example, now that we have a number of specialist physicians at Stanton and in Inuvik, the utilization of those services increases once they are here. So when we talk in terms of cost savings, there is not always a savings. It is sometimes actually an increase in the service. Yes, we will be, hopefully, able to identify specifically in the business plan opportunities for repatriation, but for the foreseeable future we certainly are going to continue to be dependent on services in the south, particularly in Alberta for some of the specialist services that we, probably given our small population, will not be able to provide north of 60. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Also, along the lines of treatment, I did mention in the House about centres for drug and alcohol addictions. It seems to me there are not enough of them in the Territories. I did ask for facilities for my region, which would benefit Yellowknife and the northern communities and regions. The last few days I have been listening on the radio to the Dogrib hour, and all they are talking about is healing and healing on the land. When we were talking about this under Justice, there were a lot of youth facilities, youth bush camps and there was not enough money for healing on the land when my constituents were trying to have some kind of a program put in place. The boards were told there were no funds for them. I am just wondering, in your business plan are you making accommodation for healing on the land programs?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do not think the business plans will identify new funding for drug and alcohol programs, however, with the money that is provided to community and regional health boards for community drug and alcohol treatment or services, there is latitude within that allocation if the community decided that they wanted to undertake a lands program.

I agree with the Member that certainly there is a lot of merit to youth bush camps and healing programs which do take place on the land.

If that became a priority of communities and they communicated that to their respective boards, I think we could see an increase in that type of programming.

You had referred to something to do with the Department of Justice. Again, I think that may come up when you review the Department of Justice as to where we are going to put our priorities in terms of spending money for treatment. As we know, the cost of incarcerating people is extremely high. I believe that is something that will be looked at when you visit the Department of Justice. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Just along the line of health. Mr. Miltenberger mentioned the Dene Nation receiving funds for health services. You said no one asked you for their share. I think I would like to ask for my share for the Dogrib people. If you can take my little

share and bring it back to my community, we can use it for healing on the land. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, what we could do is forward the Member's comments and concerns on to the Dene Nation. If there was a formal communication received from MLAs that they would like to see this funding redistributed for a number of groups, that \$143,000 could potentially be reprofiled and spread out. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. The Chair recognizes the Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I received a phone call a few weeks ago from a constituent who had been talking to her family doctor on a visit with her kids. She came away from the meeting with significant concerns about what was happening at the emergency department at Stanton Hospital. I know we have heard a lot about the doctor shortage. I wonder if there is anything in this interim appropriation that we can point to that the department is hoping will resolve the doctor shortage in the Territories?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there are initiatives underway that may be able to provide some relief to the physician shortage and people's ability to book appointments to see physicians. Primary health care is the first level of contact with the health care system where health services are mobilized and coordinated, promote health, prevent illness and care for common illnesses and manage ongoing health problems.

In November 1999, the department approached the Northwest Territories Medical Association and proposed entering into discussions with all key stakeholders to explore the development of a coordinated primary health care model for Yellowknife, Dettah and N'Dilo and other outlying community service by Yellowknife physicians.

The purpose of that was to see if there may be a way to expand on the use of nurse practitioners who have the same kind of credentials that community health nurses have in the communities where they are the primary contact for people in the communities and whether or not this model could be transferred to the larger centres. The nurse practitioners would act in minor cases. They could provide the service. When they could not, the patients would be referred to places such as doctor's clinics, or if necessary, the emergency facilities at Stanton Yellowknife Hospital.

So yes, the discussions have been ongoing with various stakeholders. This is an area that could relieve some of the pressure on physician services in Yellowknife at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Minister has said there have been discussions ongoing and the

department is hopeful we can move to a different model for primary health care. I think the Minister knows the committee was supportive of that approach.

But specifically, in the four months that are covered by this interim appropriation, can we expect to see any resolution to this? Are we six months or a year away from seeing this instituted here? What is the time frame under which we expect to see this?

The Minister also knows the committee suspected there would be some resistance to this. I would like to hear what efforts the department intends to take, probably in conjunction with health boards and here in Yellowknife with Yellowknife Health and Social Services, to address the public concern that may arise about the switch in the model?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. I am going to refer that question to Ms. Ballantyne. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the move towards a different kind of primary care model is going to happen in stages. We certainly are not going to get there in a few months.

The first and primary objective is to stabilize the physician population in Yellowknife because we have lost a significant number of family physicians over the last few years, to the point where services to the outlying communities which were serviced by Yellowknife physicians are also being affected. They are not getting their regular medical clinics either. So the first concern is to stabilize the physician population by providing an alternative payment method that would meet the concerns of physicians.

Currently, physicians in Yellowknife are paying very high overhead costs to the point where they are finding their practices unsustainable. They are having difficulty attracting new physicians to come and work in this environment. I certainly would not want to give the impression that we are going to be moving very quickly to a brave new world of primary care.

This is obviously going to take some time in terms of both moving the physicians to a new kind of payment model. That needs to be done on a voluntary basis. The tradition of physicians working on a fee-for-service basis is very strong in Canada. We need to preserve that choice for physicians locally who do not wish to come onto contract.

The negotiations are complex. They are sensitive. I think all parties would agree they are extremely challenging in terms of the number of issues we are trying to deal with. I would be very hesitant to put any kind of timeframe on a conclusion, given the dynamics that are at play. I will say the department is very determined to try to implement an alternative primary care model.

We sincerely believe that offering physicians an alternative payment will help to stabilize the method. Certainly the response we are getting from a majority of physicians locally is

that they are very interested in the alternative payment method and support it. I think the best we can do at this point is commit to keep the standing committee apprised of our progress and certainly to convey in our negotiations to physicians that Yellowknife MLAs are also hearing from their constituents that they want to see progress on this issue. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we all recognize this type of change will take some time. Is there anything that the department can say to deal with the fears that the public has right now that their health, particularly in emergency situations, may be at risk?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. I refer this question to Ms. Ballantyne. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you. Ms. Ballantyne.

**MS. BALLANTYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think in Yellowknife we have had a very enviable situation for many years, where we have been able to pick up the phone in the morning and get in to see a physician that day. That is not the reality in the rest of Canada.

We are now in a position where you may have to wait a few days or you may get an appointment the next week, but this is still within the realms of acceptable access. The Stanton emergency room, although it is busy, having spent some time there recently myself, they are very busy but they are able to cope. We are not hearing reports from Stanton that they are unable to cope with the emergency room load at this point. It is something we are monitoring very carefully. Right now, I certainly do not feel there is a crisis locally. I would not want to convey that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mrs. Ballantyne. Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure that is going to satisfy the people who have concerns about the service they are receiving at the emergency room. Particularly, this came about because a mother heard from her doctor that the doctor was not being very reassuring about the service level at the emergency ward.

I think this is something we need to move on very quickly. I would encourage the department to put their best efforts into resolving the physician situation, while still moving ahead with the changes.

Mr. Chairman, since I see I am running out of time, I am going to add another issue before my time is up. I am interested in finding out from the interim budget how much is allocated to placement for children in facilities in southern Canada? Just what intentions does the department have to try and repatriate services for those children to the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the first part of the question, the answer is contracts for southern placements are \$2,298,000. The second part of Mr. Dent's question was, what plans do we have for repatriation? As Ms. Ballantyne previously mentioned, our alternative programming initiative, which is in the works at this time, would increase the number of placements available for children from the current 16 beds that are available to 28. That could see a very significant percentage of the 40 that are referred to the south return to the North if that plan proceeds. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. The Chair recognizes the Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my question is in regards to the health insurance program, especially the non-insured health program that is specifically for aboriginal and first nations people.

In my riding, one thing you find is there is not really enough money to adequately provide services when you look at the cuts that have taken place. For eyeglasses, you are limited to one pair, I think, every two years. In dental care, there is a top I believe of \$400 per person.

I think that because of these cuts, it is affecting the health and well-being of these people because of the total bill for the whole procedure. I wonder what is this government doing to try to top that up so that you are not maxing out your health benefit program?

Could the Minister tell me what her department is doing to ensure people are not told, "Sorry, you have used up your limit. Come back next year, come back in two years"? Especially for people with glasses and dental care. That is the area where I hear the most concerns. Could the Minister tell me, what are they doing to top up that program so people get the care they really need? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member is right that some of the changes in the federal government programs and policies have impacted the non-insured health benefits program and have made the program more difficult to manage, both administratively and financially.

Discussions are ongoing, however, with Health Canada to resolve issues such as disputed claims. The Member mentions the dental services. With the change in the program with the federal government, it has made the processing of applications and approvals for work and payments, time consuming and cumbersome. What we can do as a department is continue to work with the federal government to raise these issues on behalf of northern constituents.

I do agree with the Member that recent changes have created significant issues for Northwest Territories residents. We look forward to the resolution of these problems but the discussions are ongoing at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the whole area of the supplementary health benefit program, is there a way we could combine the program so that we could allow people to access it? In some cases, where a lot of people need their eyes checked, they may find out that the prescription that they received may have to be changed. Because of the time frames that are in place, you have to wait a while before you can get your renewal or replacements.

I am wondering if there is a way that we could use the other health benefit program so that they would not have to wait that long. Most of the people, especially aboriginal and First Nations people, do not have the economic potential that other people have and they do not have the resources to afford to buy glasses over and above the ones that they are allocated. I hear complaints from people where they either break their glasses or lose their glasses and they try to go get another pair. It seems like it is the elderly. The older they get, the more fragile they are and they are the ones that usually get stuck not being able to replace their glasses once they break them.

I was wondering if the government could use the other programs that are in place to offset the monies that may be needed to replace the programs that are there so we could top it up with other dollars. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member's suggestion of using other dollars to top up programs that are traditionally funded by the federal government can be a dangerous route to take because the federal government has certain responsibilities under these programs. When the territorial government then gets involved in participating in supplementing these, what you actually do is remove the onus from the federal government to live up to the obligations that they have, and that can set a dangerous precedent. I think that it would be the direction in the department to continue to work with the federal government to ensure that they do live up to their obligations and provide adequate funding for these various programs. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you Madam Minister. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister tell me, what is she doing with her department and the aboriginal groups in the Territories to make the best use of this money? Because this is, a lot of times, the first use of expenditures by doctors and lawyers. They will use up those funds and then you find out at the end of the year that you have used up the \$5 million that is there for the non-insured health benefits.

That is why I have a concern, because I feel that this money is a fundamental right to aboriginal First Nations people, especially ones with treaty rights through the Indian Act. I, for one, feel the dental and eye care specialists try to ding you for as much as they can out of this money and then people that one day need it most have none.

I would like to know, has this government made an attempt to meet with the First Nations groups to say, "Is there a better way of dealing with this money", or are there any plans to meet with them to discuss how this money is being spent today? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, from time to time, people involved in these federal programs have been invited to come and meet with aboriginal people through various leadership meetings. Certainly if it is the wish of the Members, if we were looking at changing the way the program dollars can be spent, it is very clearly specified and if we were looking at a fundamental change to that, what we could do is arrange for representatives of Health Canada to come to the Northwest Territories again and meet with MLAs this time and talk about the way in which this funding is spent.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another issue on the Health Insurance Program is the out-of-territory cost, where we see that there is an increase in costs. Could you give me a breakdown of how much of this money is used for treatment programs in southern Canada, regardless of if it is alcohol and drug or basically child care or whatever. Could you give me a breakdown of what exactly the cost is on that \$7.5 million for using southern institutions?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the \$7.5 million the Member refers to is for acute care services and it is for hospital services. It does not have to do with drug and alcohol treatment in southern institutions. It is all spent with the capital health authority through the Alberta government. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister tell me how much money we are spending for people to see psychiatrists, especially people in corrections facilities? I was alarmed to hear that there are people within our jail facilities here, especially the Yellowknife Correctional Institute, that really need psychological help but they are not being referred anywhere because there is no money.

I would like to know exactly what this department is doing to ensure there is money available for people who need this help? I notice all of the money has been spent in southern Canada. I would like to know what they are doing to ensure there are funds there for people who are finding themselves incarcerated to be psychologically evaluated and also dealt with because of their illnesses.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are resident specialists that do practice here in Yellowknife that do have credentials as psychiatrists and psychologists and certainly there are psychiatrists that also come here to provide services as well, visiting psychiatrists.

As far as the services that are available to persons who are incarcerated, I believe that might be a question in the funding

forum better directed to the Department of Justice. That would fall under their responsibility. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I still have concerns about the new major projects identified in the interim. We have heard from Mr. St. Germaine that there is a functional review ongoing. When that functional review is completed, we will have a better idea as to which projects have been identified as priorities and which projects this funding might be used for.

The Minister indicated, initially at least, that she was not sure or certain that this money would be used in the next four months. I am wondering if the Minister could give us some indication or idea of when she expects this functional review will be completed and when we might find out where this money is to be spent. Specifically, which capital projects it will be allocated to.

I would like to specifically know, if it is possible that the functional review could be completed, say next week, and the Minister could come back to this House and give us, next week, a list of capital projects that this money was earmarked for. If this is not the case and the functional review will not be complete by next week, I would then like the Minister to explain to us why she thinks the Members would not move to have this item deleted from the interim.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Madam Minister.

**HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my understanding that the functional review is, in fact, complete. It is now just a matter of assessing the results of the information that was gathered. I could attempt to have that information available to the Members next week. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad to hear that we will have that information by next week and later at the appropriate time, I will present a motion that the budget for Health and Social Services be deferred until that time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. General comments. What is the wish of the committee? To proceed with the detail of the estimates? Mr. Bell.

**MR. BELL:** Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee consideration of Health and Social Services be deferred at this time. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey):** Mr. Bell, we will take a short recess, as we have to have a written copy of the motion.

-- Break

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** I would like to call the meeting back to order. Mr. Bell, could I get you to read your motion for the record please.

**Committee Motion 2-14(2): Deferral of Consideration of Department of Health and Social Services (Carried)**

**MR. BELL:** Mr. Chairman,

I MOVE that the committee consideration of the Department of Health and Social Services in the 2000-2001 interim appropriation be deferred at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order and is not debatable. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Mr. Dent.

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recommend we continue on by considering the interim estimates for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** We will ask if the Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development has any opening comments.

**HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development has prepared its interim appropriation for the first four months of the 2000-2001 fiscal year. The \$44 million requested in the appropriation represents approximately 60 percent of the departmental budget for last year.

Although many of the department's core business areas of capital and contracts are ones that must be expended at the beginning of the fiscal year, our forest management activity represents the most significant of these, with an allocation of \$21 million. The only new initiative that the department has put forward in these requests is for development planning for the Liard and Mackenzie Valleys for \$185,000. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my introductory remarks.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. The comments and remarks of the committee responsible for this department. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the deputy chairperson of the committee, I would like to report on the results of our review.

The committee met with the Minister and his staff on March 18, 2000, to review the proposed 2000-2001 interim appropriation for the department. The committee made note of the following issues.

**Economic Diversification**

With respect to the issue of economic diversification. Committee members were concerned some activities, especially grants and contributions for economic development, may not represent value for money. However, the committee recognized that sectors such as fisheries, hunting and trapping represent more than a return on government investment.

The department explained that it uses an economic framework, which establishes parameters for investment. Prior to amalgamation of the department into the current Department of

Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, the latter entity operated as an independent department. The former department, Economic Development, had a grants and contributions program that the now amalgamated Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development continues.

### Funding for Economic Development

With respect to the issue of funding for economic development. Committee members noted that over \$6 million in proposed funding during the interim period has been allocated for firefighting. The committee supports the department's efforts to ensure a minimal fire season. However, the committee noted that it is difficult to obtain funding for economic development initiatives.

The committee reiterates its support for increased economic development in the smaller communities. In many communities, public sector investment is essential to their well-being.

### Dual Ministerial Responsibilities

On the issue of dual Ministerial responsibilities. The committee was concerned that the Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is also the Premier. Committee members pointed out that the rationale for the addition of a Ministerial position to the current Cabinet was to ensure that there is an equal workload amongst the Ministers.

The Premier replied that certain sub-portfolios are delegated out from his portfolio to other Ministers. However, committee members were concerned a divisively managed portfolio may result in accountability and clarity problems.

### Funding for Capital Projects

With respect to funding for capital projects. The committee, in its review of the proposed 2000-2001 interim appropriation and the 2000-2001 five-year capital plan noted that some capital projects were the subject of funding discrepancies. See page 1-11, capital, departmental submissions, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, 2000-2001 interim appropriation.

The department, at the request of the committee, agreed to provide further detail concerning any funding discrepancies for its capital projects to the committee prior to the review of the proposed interim appropriation in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

### Sole-Source Contracts

The last issue was sole-source contracts. Due to time constraints, the committee did not have the opportunity to discuss sole-source contracts and may address this issue in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. That concludes the committee's finding of our review. Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he wants to call on any witnesses. Mr. Dent, do you have anything to add?

**MR. DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is not debatable. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. I will rise and report progress. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Krutko.

### ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001, Committee Reports 4-14(2) and 3-14(2), and would like to report progress with two motions adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Krutko, do you have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Thebacha seconds the motion. There is a motion on the floor. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

### ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):** Mr. Speaker, the meetings of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, this evening at 6:30 p.m.; at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight; at 10:30 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Social Programs; and at 11:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development.

Orders of the day for Thursday March 23, 2000;

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

## 17. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act

## 18. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement
- Tabled Document 14-14(2), Our Communities, Our Decisions: Let's Get on With It! Final Report of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services
- Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001
- Committee Report 2-14(2), Accountability and Oversight on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation
- Committee Report 3-14(2), Governance and Economic Development on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation
- Committee Report 4-14(2), Social Programs on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation

## 20. Report of Committee of the Whole

## 21. Third Reading of Bills

## 22. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 23, 2000 at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:00 p.m.