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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Tu Nedhe)

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Monday, February 11, 2008**

Members Present

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Hon. Jackson Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 6-16(2)
STAND-OFF IN NORMAN WELLS

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Early Friday morning, Norman Wells detachment members responded to the serious situation of a man with a gun. After 40 hours of emergency action, police were able to defuse a stand-off in a local residence and apprehend a young man before he could commit harm to others or himself.

This was a very serious situation that involved RCMP specialty teams from Yukon and Alberta, as well as our own "G" Division and all the hard-working members of the Norman Wells detachment.

There was excellent co-operation from all members to ensure safety of the public, the officers and the young man.

In order to ensure public safety, emergency personnel acted proactively to secure the area and provide information to residents. The residential area was evacuated while the police conducted negotiations with the individual.

As a precaution the local school kept children inside and asked parents to pick up their children at the school so they would not be walking home.

This was yet another reminder that serious threats to public safety can occur in any community. As elected officials we must continue to find ways to ensure the safety of our families, our homes, our streets and our communities.

I would like to extend my heartiest thanks to the brave men and women who risk their lives in the line of duty to deal with violence and dangerous situations in our communities.

The RCMP officers' training and dedication ensured the prompt and professional handling of a serious incident. I am proud of the work they do.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 7-16(2)
WASTE REDUCTION EXPANSION

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Recycling waste products is a way for all of us to help reduce the impact we have on the environment. It means we use fewer natural resources, use less energy to make new products, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save money.

Under the Waste Reduction and Recovery Act, government can develop programs to recover and recycle products and materials rather than put them into landfill.

In November 2005 we implemented the Northwest Territories' first Territorial-wide waste recovery program: the Beverage Container Program. This highly-successful program continues to enjoy a high level of public support throughout the Northwest Territories.

Last year we completed research on the recovery and recycling of other waste materials. A discussion paper on expanding the types of waste we recover and recycle was widely distributed this past January. The document contains background information and an analysis of seven waste types commonly generated in the Northwest Territories, including electronics, tires, lead acid batteries, fuel drums, plastic grocery bags, milk containers, paper and cardboard.

Mr. Speaker, it is unrealistic to think we can expand the program to recover all these waste products. However, these public consultations will help us determine residents' priority areas. Following our consultation we will prepare recommendations for

program expansion. I will have these recommendations completed by spring 2008.

As seen in the Beverage Container Program, waste reduction and recycling is very important to the people of the Northwest Territories. Expanding this program will not only help reduce the amount of material disposed of in local landfills but will also improve the quality of our environment. I encourage residents, communities, municipalities, industry and organizations to provide their input on expanding this program.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 8-16(2)
N.W.T. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
AND INVESTMENT CORPORATION
SUBSIDIARY IN ULUKHAKTOK

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this Assembly that the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation is establishing a new subsidiary in Ulukhaktok in partnership with the Ulukhaktok Artists' Association.

Ulukhaktok has a longstanding tradition of excellence in the creation of arts and crafts, particularly in the area of print-making. The new subsidiary will build on the community's existing skills by providing a facility for print-making, carving and the production of qiviut or muskox wool products and by marketing these items across Canada.

The BDIC is mandated to promote economic development and employment across the Northwest Territories, especially in the smaller communities. The subsidiary in Ulukhaktok will create two full-time positions and 60 part-time or seasonal positions in the community. For this community of 400 people, this represents a significant influx of employment.

When they met on January 31, 2008, to approve the establishment of this new subsidiary, the BDIC board of directors also appointed a board of five individuals to provide administrative leadership and guidance for the new subsidiary. They are Mr. Louie Nigiyok, from the Ulukhaktok Artist Association; Mr. Joseph Perry, also from the Ulukhaktok Artist Association; Mr. Merven Gruben, the BDIC board member from Tuktoyaktuk; Mr. Paul Komaromi, the BDIC board member from Inuvik; and Mr. Pawan Chugh, the Chief Executive Officer of the BDIC.

Mr. Speaker, as the Members of this 16th Legislative Assembly we have identified the goals and priorities that will guide our work over the next four years. One of our goals is "a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices." We have placed a priority on supporting sustainable local economic

sectors, such as arts and crafts, and on reducing disparities between communities and regions.

The new BDIC subsidiary in Ulukhaktok will make a significant contribution to a sustainable, diversified economy in that community and also in the Inuvik region.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the support that this initiative has received from the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and both the current and former Nunakput Members in this Assembly. It is their commitment, together with the work of staff at both the BDIC and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, that have allowed this project to become a reality.

Mr. Speaker: Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Krutko.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FLINT ENERGY RECRUITMENT OF SKILLED WORKERS

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to take an opportunity to thank Flint Energy of Calgary for taking on the initiative of going into Mackenzie Delta communities to consult individuals and take applications for employment in the oil and gas industry in Alberta. I also would like to thank the oil and gas industry for looking at the potential resources that we have — which are the people of the Northwest Territories, especially in the Mackenzie Delta — to look for job opportunities in the oil and gas industry.

The company also committed to pay for the transportation costs of the individuals that are being hired through the application process and will fly them to Alberta to work in the oil and gas industry. Yet our own industry in the Northwest Territories, specifically the mining industry, is paying some \$300 million in salaries to import people from southern Canada to work in the mining industries.

I think it's time that this government stuck up for the residents of the Northwest Territories and made sure that we've fulfilled those job opportunities with Northern residents before anyone else takes advantage of those job opportunities.

I think it's critical that this government looks up to other companies such as Flint Energy out of Calgary for taking the initiative to go into our isolated communities, take applications and find the residents from the Northwest Territories an opportunity to work in industry, especially oil and gas. But more importantly, I think the mining industry has to take note of what is happening in regard to recruiting people in the Northwest

Territories and elsewhere than simply in the North Slave.

At the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions on this matter in regard to what the Department of Education is doing to ensure that we have our residents employed in all segments of our economy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HYBRID VEHICLE REBATE

Mr. Abernethy: I recently received a list of concerns from a constituent on the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program with a specific focus on the rebates available for hybrid vehicles. In principle, the program delivered by the Energy Alliance on behalf of the G.N.W.T. is a really good program.

The primary intent of the program is to help residents of the N.W.T. reduce their energy costs; however, with any new program there are some hurdles that become obvious during its implementation. In the case of this program, one of the difficulties, in my opinion, is that it limits choice. For example, the program is limited to vehicles that can be purchased in the N.W.T. only. This means that any vehicle that meets the criteria for rebate but isn't supplied by a local dealer won't be covered.

Now, I understand the importance and value of buying North. For maintenance and servicing purposes, I personally would choose to buy a vehicle from a Northern vendor. This is not the same for everyone. Some people have preference based on brand. Some people would prefer to buy a Honda, a Nissan, a Volkswagen or even a Smart Car. If they did, they would be ineligible for the rebate.

To me, this seems to go against the primary intent of the rebate program, which is to help residents of the N.W.T. reduce their energy costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I believe the program should be reviewed so that the primary intent is met. This can be done by removing the restrictions on providing the rebate for Northern residents who choose to buy vehicles that are not available through local N.W.T. vendors: the Nissan, the Volkswagen, the Hondas and Smart cars. However, there is value in supporting local Northern business. To address this, the program could be modified to require that an eligible vehicle available through a Northern vendor must be purchased in the North in order for the purchaser to receive the rebate.

These changes would allow our residents the choice they desire and still encourage them to buy products which help them reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and reduce their energy costs. This is good for everyone.

At the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister Responsible for Environment and Natural Resources questions concerning the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CARIBOU MANAGEMENT AND HARVESTING PRACTICES

Mr. McLeod: During the life of the 15th Assembly there was much discussion in the House about the plight of the caribou throughout the N.W.T. We have pressing matters facing the 16th Assembly in the early stages, but I'd like to again bring attention to the plight of the caribou, because I believe that we're coming into a critical situation that needs our attention and needs some action taken quickly.

There had been much discussion regarding the caribou numbers and how we came to those numbers. Questions were asked of the government about how they came to these numbers and if traditional knowledge was used.

I've heard stories of hunting practices that continue to concern me. Too many caribou being killed, a lot of wasted meat — just the hind quarters being cut off — and shooting off roads and ice-roads and the highway. I do understand that caribou are a way of life to many residents of the N.W.T., and I'd never tell people not to hunt caribou. But I do ask them to show some wisdom and ensure that our grandchildren's generation enjoys a way of life with the caribou that we've been fortunate enough to live through.

Mr. Speaker, harvesting caribou is part of our traditional way of life. Hunting with high-powered snowmobiles, sport hunting, hunting with trucks and hunting off the highway is not a traditional way of life. Hunting with dog teams, with snowshoes, breaking trails — now, that's a traditional way of life. And I admit I have been just as guilty as the next guy, because I have hunted with snowmobiles; I've hunted off the highway. So I'm not pointing fingers at anybody.

Mr. Speaker, the caribou has sustained our people for generations. Now the caribou need our help, and we have to do what we can to ensure their survival so that our grandchildren can enjoy the way of life with the caribou that we've been blessed with. Let's not hunt the caribou into a critical situation or to extinction so that all we have left to share with our grandchildren are stories and memories about the once-mighty herds across the N.W.T.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of ENR at the appropriate time.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RETENTION OF
COMMUNITY RECREATION STAFF

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the importance of getting and retaining good, qualified recreation workers in our communities. As you know, recreation staff play an important role in the positive development of our youth, as well as contribute to overall community wellness with the delivery of effective sport, culture and recreation programming.

Mr. Speaker, many communities struggle to find and retain good, qualified recreation staff. Often they hire unqualified local individuals. Often these individuals, who have the passion and athletic skills, lack the theory and practical training needed to effect the delivery of programming to the youth. Some of the reason is pay. There is no secret that many of our community recreation staff earn far less than what they are worth — or, for that matter, often earn less than many other community staff positions. For example, in Fort Resolution the starting wage for a recreation worker is \$15 an hour, and in Lutselk'e a recreation worker makes \$18 an hour. That's about 30 per cent less than what other community workers make.

With the booming diamond industry to compete with as well as higher-paying jobs elsewhere, communities are constantly struggling to find and keep good, qualified recreation staff. We all know about the benefits of good sports and recreation programs. We are healthier individuals and healthier communities. We hear this from time to time in MACA's "Recreation and Sport in the N.W.T." report, and again in the "Northwest Territories Sport Direction 2000" and yet again in their "Partners in Action: Sports and Recreation Direction for the Nineties" — and any other reports since, Mr. Speaker. Are we doing all we can as a government to back up our words?

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; thank you, colleagues.

Are we doing all we can to support our communities? It's true the government has a number of recreation and youth programs available. What good are they if the communities cannot take advantage of them because they do not have qualified, properly trained recreation staff? Healthier individuals, healthier communities, are only possible if we have the right people working to deliver these programs.

Later on I will ask the Minister of MACA questions on this.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FULL-COST ACCOUNTING
FOR G.N.W.T. EXPENDITURES

Mr. Bromley: In my third day in this House I raised the issue of full-cost accounting: accounting that looks at all impacts and considers environmental consequences. The Premier, at that time, agreed to look closely at full-cost accounting — a quite reasonable response — but apparently has not yet implemented that. This allows costs to continue to accrue.

I have a constituent — a filmmaker, an artist — who through her work brings in considerable dollars and work opportunities to the Northwest Territories, as well as contributing to the unique Northern identity of the North, our jurisdiction and our people. She happens to be very environmentally aware, quite progressive, and has a can-do attitude. Similar to a Yellowknife city councilor, who is allowed to travel by bus to minimize his greenhouse gas emissions while on city business, this person wanted to use the support she had from G.N.W.T. to travel in the most responsible environmental way. Yet when she asked to use her support in that way, she was refused — apparently by ITI — the ability to travel by train, bus or however, rather than by air travel, in order to minimize her greenhouse gas emissions. She was willing, and stated so quite publicly, to pay any extra price, and that any extra time would be at her own expense, yet she was denied this opportunity.

The Minister indicated the most economical mode of transportation for travel was by air. But requiring travel by air ignores pollution, greenhouse gases — with the eventual climate change costs — and airport subsidies, and in fact is the most expensive form of travel that we can take. This is a poor state of affairs, and I'm hoping that full-cost accounting will become part of this government's approach in the immediate future.

The Minister also said this was a federal responsibility. This "Atlas Shrugged" business is quite crazy. We need to all take on responsibility for this issue. I would dearly love to see this government take a leadership role on this issue. We are paying the costs up front. Let's take a leadership role. Let's implement full-cost accounting and support our citizens in their attempts to deal with this issue.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WIND ENERGY
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Ms. Bisaro: Over the last several weeks, as the mercury slid to minus 40 or more, our homes and

businesses were gulping fuel to keep us warm and cozy, unfortunately to the detriment of our environment. The indications of climate change are all around us — we see them throughout the North — but there's hope. Alternative energy sources are available. We just have to accept and advance them.

The N.W.T. currently has such an opportunity. Last November the community of Tuktoyaktuk hosted the Remote Community Wind Energy Conference, and by all reports it was very successful and produced a number of excellent recommendations. It's time to put those recommendations into action.

The *G.N.W.T. Energy Plan* and *Greenhouse Gas Strategy* documents tabled in the House in April of 2007 both state that the G.N.W.T. is committed to selecting a community for wind energy demonstration projects in 2008 and also having an operating wind turbine by 2009.

Tuk has essentially established itself as the best location for this project. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been working with the community on this idea for some time. Let's declare Tuk the selected community and get on with it. If we're to have an operating wind turbine by next year, we must act now. Assuming that the project is successful, the right regulatory and policy framework to allow for production and selling of wind energy must also be put in place. That development, too, must be started now.

A demonstration project which shows positive results can lead to a number of other opportunities for the N.W.T.: federal support for cold-weather wind energy testing; a wind or an alternative energy training program offered through Aurora College, something that will benefit all three territories; an aboriginal-owned commercial alternative power producer; and the export of N.W.T. operations and maintenance expertise to service wind turbines at sites across the North.

This is a good-news story, Mr. Speaker. Economic development *and* saving the environment. It doesn't get much better than that. I urge the government to remember this story as the budget is developed. At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister of ENR.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INFRASTRUCTURE NEGOTIATIONS
WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Ramsay: I'd like to speak today about where the Northwest Territories is at on the federal government's agenda. I'm surprised this government seems to be taking, let's say, a more laid-back approach to devolution and resource revenue sharing, especially given our current financial situation and our desperate need for

increased revenue streams. Our Territory has never had such a great demand for investment in transportation, energy, education, housing and community infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame the last government could not get substantial infrastructure investment dollars into our Territory. As we're all well aware, they also made the decision to proceed with the Deh Cho Bridge project without any federal investment.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday our sister territory Nunavut signed a seven-year, \$242 million infrastructure deal with Ottawa. I'd like to congratulate Premier Okalik and his government on delivering for his territory much-needed infrastructure dollars.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the size of investment in Nunavut makes me wonder about what our Territory is doing in Ottawa and what our game plan is to try to secure some much-needed infrastructure money. The list of projects here in the Territory is a long one: the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the extension of Highway 4 to Gordon Lake and beyond, the city of Yellowknife bypass road, the access road to gravel source 177 near Tuktoyaktuk, just to mention a few. It's not too late for the federal government to come up with some money for the Deh Cho Bridge.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that Nunavut is not the cash cow for Ottawa that the Northwest Territories is and will continue to be for years to come. We need to have our infrastructure needs addressed. The last government failed to get much done. I wonder: will this government follow in its predecessor's tracks? I certainly hope they don't. We can't afford to wait, as opportunities will pass us by if we're not ready for them.

Mr. Speaker, we can't afford to have that laid-back attitude. We need to be more aggressive in our discussions and negotiations with the federal government. We need to, as Conservatives like to say, "demand better." Our residents here, and Members on this side of the House, are waiting for this government to deliver on substantial infrastructure dollars for our Territory. Mahsi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the weekend, while out and about in Yellowknife and in phone calls I have received in my office, I've heard from Northerners who seriously question if we need a \$160 million bridge over the Mackenzie River at Fort Providence. I know the government is worried about our liability if we don't proceed with the bridge. Obviously the government is not worried enough to have obtained a legal opinion they could

share with us, detailing the potential extent of that liability.

Mr. Speaker, I'm worried about our liability if we do proceed with the bridge. The cost-benefit analysis that was finally posted on the Transportation web site isn't really anything to brag about. I don't know who wrote it, but no wonder they didn't want to give us a copy of it, despite many requests. It doesn't represent a normal kind of due diligence and analysis that would precede a project of this magnitude. I'd be curious to know if that's the information they took to the lender when they tried to borrow the money to build the bridge. I'd be very surprised if that particular cost-benefit analysis would have been used in making a case to borrow that kind of money.

I'm at a loss to understand the lack of leadership in protecting our government's interests in managing this project. I have many questions about this project still, in spite of the assertion by someone in the newspaper that we've had "dozens of briefings."

What has the \$9 million been spent on to date that's been guaranteed by our government? The person who is defending this project in today's newspaper has been on the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation's payroll since the corporation's inception.

There are so many things asserted in there that I just don't understand. How could the previous shareholder pulling out of the project cause the project to collapse? That's one of the assertions that's made. There is no minimum required; there's no minimum for the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. All there is, is a maximum amount of equity. So how could another shareholder pulling out have possibly caused the bridge project to collapse?

The contractor stepped up the day before the deadline. It was in their interest to do so. If there was no minimum equity threshold, why was it in their interest to do so? It wasn't going to stop the project even if the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation had only put up \$2 million.

The article goes on to say that there's a couple of people just trying to mess it up. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have better things to do than try to mess up people's plans. I have a duty and an obligation as a Member of this Assembly to ask these kinds of questions. I'm sorry if they mess up someone's plans. Thank you.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PREVENTION OF HEAD INJURIES IN THE YOUNGER POPULATION

Mr. Menicoche: Today I'd like to speak about prevention of head injuries in our youth. I had the opportunity to be home for the weekend, and while I was walking around there, Mr. Speaker, I noticed

that we still have people ski-dooing around and pulling children around without proper head gear. My condolences, of course, go out to the family in Fort Smith at the beginning of this year with their child who had sustained a head injury in a similar event. And we're still doing that in our communities. I'd like to urge this government to start looking at prevention of head injuries in the schools and with our children and, indeed, the community as a whole.

It is standard practice now, when playing hockey, that you wear a helmet. It never used to be, but head injuries became prevalent in the NHL, so now it's standard practice to prevent head injuries. I don't know why that type of attention is not being given to snowmobiles.

So I'd like to urge, at this time, the public and families and parents to urge your children to wear protective head gear when they're out ski-dooing. And also I'd like to urge this government, Mr. Speaker, to indeed strive towards prevention of head injuries in our youth and children in our communities. Mahsi cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION PROCESS FOR FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Hawkins: In this heated economy many Northern employers face shortages of both skilled and semi-skilled workers. Allowing employers to fill their labour shortages through foreign employees, both on a temporary or permanent basis, is a win-win for our economy, and there is a role for the G.N.W.T. to play.

There are shortages in a variety of industries, and we lack the number of interested people to catch up. Eleven jurisdictions, including the Yukon, have a provincial nomination system that helps speed up the immigration process for skilled and semi-skilled workers who wish to become permanent residents of that jurisdiction. Of course, Citizenship and Immigration still have the final say, but these programs do cut the red tape and make it easier for these employers to help fill those labour shortages.

I believe the G.N.W.T. needs to take a look at setting up such a program. I'm also aware of the difficulty and expense the employers go through in the food and hospitality industry as they face trying to recruit staff. It is extremely difficult to find workers who are willing to work for the wages that they can provide. Some food service operators have had some success in hiring temporary foreign workers, but this process is expensive and very time consuming.

We need to help our employers meet these challenges, Mr. Speaker. The resulting tax revenue and increased grant from Canada that will result

from higher immigration levels could easily help with that expense involved.

Mr. Speaker, I can best describe the situation as a Scylla or Charybolis. If we do nothing, the six-headed monster will chew those hard-working small business people down, wear them out and cause them to give up. Or equally as bad, the whirlpool of bureaucracy will swallow them up in a frustration type way in a system that was designed to always help them. If we do nothing the ambition of small business will be sunk, and it is embarrassing for this government to watch that sailing ship sink without helping it.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STAND-OFF IN NORMAN WELLS

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, residents of the Sahtu were shocked to learn that on Friday, February 8, an armed stand-off was in progress in the town of Norman Wells. The incident disrupted school, business and many residents. Thankfully, the incident ended Saturday when the gunman surrendered to the police. I was in Norman Wells over the weekend and witnessed first-hand the professional approach taken by the RCMP and many others in defusing this potentially tragic situation.

I met with the released hostages and was alarmed at the trauma they had experienced during and after the ordeal. These brave citizens must be commended for keeping their nerves under very trying circumstances. Our thoughts and prayers go out to you and your families as you continue to work through this terrifying experience and attempt to get back to your normal routine.

Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank the Norman Wells detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for their handling of the situation. You are fortunate to have the services of Corporal Donna Rorison, Constable Scot Neuberry, Constable Mike Redmond and Auxiliary Constable Jeff Walker.

I'd also like to recognize the kind assistance of the "G" Division Emergency Response Team negotiators led by the Incident Commander Mike Payne. There were capably assisted by the "K" Division Emergency Response Team from Edmonton, and the "M" Division Response Team from Whitehorse.

In addition, the RCMP was supported by members from Inuvik and the "G" Division headquarters in Yellowknife. My constituents are grateful for your outstanding assistance provided by the dedicated men and women of the RCMP who work for us every day to keep our communities safe.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other individuals and agencies who assisted the RCMP in dealing with this alarming incident. Special thanks to Mayor

Peter Guther, staff of the town of Norman Wells, the Norman Wells Fire Department, Global Technical Services, Northwestel, managers of the Mackenzie Hotel, Heritage Hotel, Yamouri Hotel and the residents of Norman Wells. Your patience, understanding and cooperation were greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate this incident in Norman Wells ended peacefully. I ask Members to join me in thanking the RCMP and others for bringing this dangerous situation under control. Thank you for a job well done. We appreciate your efforts. Mahsi.

Applause.

Mr. Speaker: Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Beaulieu.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize some interpreters and elders that have come in from the riding. They are Terry Villeneuve and Bernadette Lockhart.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Sabet Biscaye, chairperson of the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Language Revitalization Board. Mahsi.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: I'd like to recognize Mrs. Villuence at the other end and also, in the gallery, Bernadette and also to Beth.

Mr. Speaker: If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Mr. Beaulieu.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2-16(2)
MOH ODEEN
PRINCIPAL OF THE DENINU
SCHOOL IN FORT RESOLUTION

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to acknowledge an educator in my riding, Moh Odeen, principal of the Deninu School in Fort Resolution. Recently Moh was recognized as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals.

South Slave Education Council Superintendent Curtis Brown said that "Principal Moh Odeen is an inspiration and role model to students, colleagues and community members...his unwavering dedication to education and to young people cannot help but make a difference...."

Originally from Guyana, Moh's perspective on education, in his own words, are "From the time they arrive in school, I want the students to dream of all the things they want to be so that they realize the world is theirs."

Please join me in acknowledging and congratulating a very dedicated and passionate educator, Principal Moh Odeen of Fort Resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Item 8, oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 37-16(2) FLINT ENERGY RECRUITMENT FOR SKILLED WORKERS

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment in regard to industry, trade and investment. In regard to my Member's statement, I mentioned a company out of Calgary that was recruiting individuals in the Mackenzie Delta and trying to find people to work in the oil and gas industry in Alberta, preferably Fort McMurray. Again, we also have other industries in the N.W.T. that seem to be lacking in that type of endeavour. So I'd like to ask the Minister: would he pass on a message to the N.W.T. Mining Association that they can try a similar arrangement by recruiting outside of the North Slave in the N.W.T.?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The diamond companies in the Slave Geologic Province have been leaders in hiring out northern employees in the N.W.T., particularly from the North Slave region. We were following very closely the announcement that Flint Energy had decided to also look at the N.W.T. in an attempt to hire skilled workers. Having worked with the diamond companies, the socio-economic agreements that the Northwest Territories has signed with them, it came up as a result of the environmental review process. Certainly, this is an area in which we are having discussions with the diamond companies, and we're hoping to be able to work something out in the near future.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, there are some \$300 million in wages leaving the Northwest Territories every year and going south in Canada. Yet for residents of the Northwest Territories to get a job, now they have to go to Alberta to find work because the companies in the Northwest Territories are not hiring Northwest Territories residents. I think that as a government we have a responsibility to ensure we take care of the interests of residents of the Northwest Territories first.

I'd like to ask the Minister again: would he make sure the N.W.T. Mining Association along with Diavik, BHP, and other companies make their best efforts to look outside the North Slave of the N.W.T.

and go to the Mackenzie Delta, to the Mackenzie Valley, and other places in the Northwest Territories to start recruiting other people from the Northwest Territories?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The three socio-economic agreements we have negotiated with the diamond companies require the hiring of employees from pick-up points at various centres in North Slave. The diamond companies have been quite successful in doing so. We are having discussions with them. We've expressed concern about arrangements whereby employees are being flown in directly from southern points, and we are having discussions with diamond companies to find the solution that would meet all of our different objectives.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, as a government I think we do have an obligation to the residents of the Northwest Territories I'd like to ask the Minister if he is willing to consider opening the socioeconomic agreement to expand it to include other regions of the Northwest Territories for employment in the mining industry.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The socio-economic agreements cannot be opened except by mutual consent, so we are looking at other avenues to increase the catchment area for the hiring of skilled N.W.T. employees.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I believe that during the 15th Assembly the Minister's predecessor opened up that agreement and allowed more people to be flown in from southern Canada, with no consideration for other people in the Northwest Territories. Since that was the position given to the companies in the 15th Assembly, I don't see why this government could not also ask for an addition to that agreement, like we already gave in the previous negotiations. I'd like to ask the Minister again: will he consider opening up that agreement to ensure that there are more Northwest Territories residents working in the mining industry?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, certainly one of our objectives is to increase the hiring of Northwest Territories employees in all sectors. We think that we can achieve the objective that the Members laid out without having to open up the socio-economic agreements. We will be working towards that very end.

QUESTION 38-16(2) MACKENZIE GAS PIPELINE PREPARATIONS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

On the news this morning there was more speculation about the Alaska pipeline and the

Mackenzie gas pipeline taking a major sideling to the proposals and thoughts that are out there now on serving North American markets through liquefied natural gas. It seems an alternative. When it looked like there was a possibility for the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline, we criticized this government heavily on the front of being prepared because we said when the diamonds were coming to the Northwest Territories, we didn't get out ahead of it. We weren't prepared.

So now, when the natural gas is coming, we encouraged our government to get involved right from the outset. Get people in positions; let's be prepared. The government, in response to those requests, did so. Now we have people working in almost all departments, working on pipeline readiness.

In fact, I'd like to know how we are going to address all that build-up of expertise, planning and personnel should the pipeline not proceed at this time. The Mackenzie Gas Project offices have already been closed. What is the signal to the government by this other information coming forward on alternatives to our pipeline?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The government has been working very hard to be prepared for the pipeline. We realize there is significant lead time to make sure that we have people trained up and businesses ready to take advantage of the opportunities that will come with a pipeline.

I should point out that the offices in Inuvik, Norman Wells and Fort Simpson have not been closed; they have been downsized. Imperial Oil has indicated that they are doing so to wait the writing of the Joint Review Panel report, and they remain committed to the project. The Liquid Natural Gas reports that you are referring to.... This was something that the proponents had pointed out several years ago. We were always aware that LNG was a real alternative to a pipeline and that the technology was developing to the point where there are several locations in Canada where LNG terminals had started to be constructed. So this is something that we are aware of, and we want to ensure that we can advance the pipeline as quickly as the regulatory system allows.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, the eventuality of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline is something that has been debated extensively all through this process. Will it go, or will it not go? When will it go? This has been a question that has been out there.

Given the ramping up of positions and people in preparation for the pipeline on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, do you have a contingency plan in place? Do you have an exit plan? Do you have something else these folks can do? Do you have other priorities they can turn

their attention to if the pipeline is postponed and deferred?

Hon. Bob McLeod: In the work that we are doing, with most of the positions for the government that would be affected, those skills are still transferrable. I would think that with the economy the way it is, there would probably be little difficulty in finding alternative employment for those affected employees. I think it would be more difficult for businesses that have ramped up in anticipation of the pipeline. Our expectation is still that the pipeline will go ahead, and we're continuing to work on that basis.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I have been a big proponent of the government being prepared for the pipeline and making sure that Northerners are prepared, that industry is prepared, that as a government we are prepared. What kind of timelines are we looking at? You said you were waiting for the completion of the report of the regulatory bodies. What kind of a time frame are we looking at now to have that kind of information in hand?

Although we wanted this kind of preparation in place, at the same time, if there is a significant delay or postponement of the pipeline, we have financial pressures on us right now. We don't want to be wasting money pursuing something that isn't going to be forthcoming in the time frame we expected.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the timelines that have been laid out indicate that the JRP report would be completed within four months after the hearings were completed. If you adhere to that, then you're looking at early spring of 2008. If there's any delay, it would push it back into the summertime, and as we all know, even for writing reports that would probably mean that it wouldn't be available until the fall. That would be problematic, because it would probably push back the go-no go decision which the company would have to make probably within a year after the report has been concluded.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I'd like to know when was the most recent communication the Minister has had with the APG and the producers group and the proponents of the pipeline. When was the most recent communication that he had with them that causes him to still feel optimistic, and what is that vehicle for ongoing communication with our government and the business components of the pipeline?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We've been in communication with a number of people, most recently with Mr. David Hudson, the ministerial envoy for Minister Prentice, who is the lead on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline for the federal government. We've also had discussions with Randy Broiles of Imperial Oil and

the APG members, so we continue to remain optimistic.

QUESTION 39-16(2)
IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS
FOR FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I believe quite firmly in the concept of lifelong learning, and I've been reading a lot of Greek mythology lately. I have to admit I did have a tongue-twister trying to describe this situation. In modern terms it's referred to as a rock and a hard place. But in my reading it was called the Scylla and the Charybolis, and it was about that six-headed monster versus the monster that sinks your ship through whirlpools. I thought that perfectly — perfectly, I have to stress — describes the struggle of small business, where the monster of the system chews you up and spits you out and the whirlpool sinks you in paperwork.

Mr. Speaker, I find the frustration of small business is not getting the help they need when they need to try to get foreign workers and help with the paperwork of permanent residents.

My question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment is: will he set up a program to help these small-business folks process that paperwork?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education does provide services and programs to assist with these immigrants in Canada. We do have various programs that we offer newcomers via Aurora College for English as a second language and also career counselling, job search assistance that the Member is asking for. And also the resume writing and job skills assistance. Those are just some of the areas that we are conducting at the department. I do believe that Industry and Tourism also provides various programs to assist businesses, but with our department we provide employment services programs that specifically highlight the individual's needs. Mahsi.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect the Minister's answer, but while I'm not going to say wrong, I don't agree with him. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about people trying to get here. I'm talking about small businesses that want skilled and semi-skilled workers here to help do specialized jobs that they can't get just walking out on the street and saying, "Here, I've got a job application. Please jump on board, and I'll pay you."

Mr. Speaker, we need talent. Sometimes we have to reach outside the N.W.T. That's what I'm describing. I'm saying there's a role for the Department of Education to play here.

Would the Minister of Education strike up a program that will help businesses so they can attract and fill out the paperwork needed to bring in

employees and possibly foreign workers to the Northwest Territories to fill those gaps created?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Our Department of Education, Culture and Employment is working closely with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the federal government department, specifically dealing with the immigration status here in the North. There is an increasing number of immigrants to Canada and also specifically to the Northwest Territories. We are doing what we can as a department with the federal funding that we are receiving through immigrant settlement and adaptation programs. That is the program that we are initiating and that we are working with other departments to deal with the issue at hand. So we are delivering programs to assist those immigrants that are here in the North and also throughout Canada. Mahsi.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, the system, I hate to say, doesn't exist to anyone out there on the street. The system must exist under some rock hidden in some broom closet or something, because I'll tell you, we've got small businesses out there that need help filling out the paperwork. That's what they need. They need someone to help them along with the process. They need someone to help them work with Citizenship Canada. They need that process. Not when they're here, because when they're here that's not the problem. They just want to get them here. So the problem is getting them to the Northwest Territories and helping them with their temporary residency and turning them into permanent residents. Which, by the way, we get grant money of almost \$20,000 a head for every one of these people. So it's in our best interest.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Education take into consideration what I've just said there and look at starting a program so that small business can tap into those skills to help them?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, again we do provide those programs and services to immigrants that are in the North. Also, with the business sector it does fall under Industry and Tourism, but with our department we are working with the program itself dealing with immigrants to the North. So we are doing our best with the programs that we have to assist those individuals from outside Canada that are immigrating to the North. There are various programs as highlighted, Mr. Speaker.

So we will continue to work with the federal government, within our Territorial departments, and improve and enhance our programs that we have currently in place. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am not going to say that I agree with the Minister, because I didn't agree with that at all.

Mr. Speaker, there is no system to help a small business like a restaurant hire a professional cook who cooks a very special style. There's no program out there that helps other small businesses bring in foreign workers so they can fill gaps for skilled and semi-skilled workers. He may have a system out there — who knows where — that helps them learn English. Yes, I know there are cases of that. I know that there are a few other things. But there's nothing to help them with that.

By the way, if we think small business has nothing to do but fill out paperwork, we've got to be crazy. They've got a business to run. So the fact is we need a program.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister please take the time and help me investigate this problem and solve this problem? Thank you.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the challenges that we're faced with, with the retailers here in the North. It's a challenge throughout the North, and also nationally. So we will continue to improve our services and programs. Mahsi.

QUESTION 40-16(2)
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE
G.N.W.T. DUTY TRAVEL

Mr. Bromley: My questions are for the Minister of ITI — Industry, Trade and Investment.

Northerners are certainly quite concerned, as are many Canadians, about the whole issue of climate change. They are aware that we need to do business a lot differently than we have been, and that it is not necessarily easy. They are willing to shoulder their responsibilities to provide leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I'm quite concerned about this policy of not allowing support to be spent in an environmentally responsible way. Will the Minister immediately review the so-called travel policy and make the change to allow environmentally responsible travel, at least when there's no additional costs?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I guess I just want to point out to the Member that's he's referring to one incident that happened some time ago. I think, as a government, we are definitely responsible for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Certainly, if it can be shown that the purchase of carbon offsets will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we would definitely find a way to put it into place. I guess a question is.... The practice of buying carbon offsets from travel agents. Does that really reduce the emission of greenhouse gases?

I had responded to the Member in response to a previous question. At that time he had indicated he would provide me with a list of travel agents he said

were able to do exactly that. We would have to satisfy ourselves that paying an extra \$20 on an airline ticket to provide for carbon offsets would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Once we were satisfied that was the case, then we would definitely bring forward a policy for the government to implement when making travel arrangements.

The Member also referenced my letter where I talked about the federal level. In a lot of our human resource practices, sometimes we look to see whether the federal government has done anything in that regard. We are definitely prepared to review that policy, and if it, in fact, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we would take forward a request.

Mr. Bromley: I think the Minister misinterpreted my question. The situation was not that my constituent wanted to purchase an offset — in fact she did that, having been forced to travel by air. In this case the constituent wanted to travel by a means that would produce a lot fewer carbon emissions, because there is always the little bit of uncertainty with purchasing offsets. She wanted to travel by land at no additional cost to this government. She was not allowed to do it. She had to travel by air. We were forcing this person to be irresponsible in an environmental sense.

Let me expand on the question, here. I'm concerned that if this interpretation has been given to individuals, the same interpretation will be given to business, which is a big part of ITI's responsibilities. I'd like to see this concern extended. I use this as a bit of a platform. Will this department review all of their policies with regard to identifying and encouraging opportunities for businesses, as well as individuals, to behave in more environmentally responsible ways at every opportunity when receiving support from this department?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I didn't think I had misinterpreted, but with regard to the specific policy that he's referring to — I guess it's a travel policy — our objective is to make sure that the most economical mode of transportation is used. I'm prepared to review that policy.

With regard to further extending the reach of the government when it makes funding available, I'd be prepared to work with my colleague in implementing the Greenhouse Gas Strategy for the government.

Mr. Bromley: I certainly agree with the most economical travel. This government has to be responsible economically, financially. Of course to do that we need full-cost accounting. Obviously air travel is, when it's fully accounted for, one of the most expensive ways of travelling that's possible in this world today. You need to account for the subsidies we give to the airports and so on.

Basically, we'll let you do the necessary research and departmental self-education to engage in a full-cost accounting review in order to minimize our net costs and improve the health of our land and our people through a very aware full-cost accounting approach.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Yes, I'll do the necessary research, and I'll make sure that whatever we follow is consistent with the accounting treatments that are provided for by the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: No supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the Minister for that response.

QUESTION 41-16(2)
INFRASTRUCTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier. It gets back to my Member's statement from earlier, where I was talking about the Nunavut government signing a \$242 million dollar deal over the next seven years with the federal government for infrastructure development in the Nunavut Territory. It got me wondering. I know the Building Canada fund. We've had much discussion here in the House about, well, I guess, what the definition of a list is. I have my own definition; cabinet seems to have their definition of what a list is.

I'd like to ask the Premier what plans his government has to secure a long-term infrastructure funding deal with Ottawa.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the federal government on a very similar plan to what the Nunavut government has just announced. It's a combination of the Building Canada Fund and the municipal gas tax rebate that's going to communities. We've been negotiating, and we'll be signing an agreement in the very near future as well.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier what resources are currently being deployed to secure this investment deal with the federal government. Is it the Department of Transportation, or is it the Department of Executive, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, in this government we've given the lead to Municipal and Community Affairs and Transportation to work jointly on this initiative as the Building Canada Fund has those aspects to it.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request a timeline for when the Premier might have the two

departments come back to Members of this House with information pertaining to a deal with Ottawa.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, this agreement that has to be worked out has two levels of negotiations that need to be done. One is a framework agreement; following that a funding agreement. In the very near future they'll be able to sign the framework agreement, and we'll have an idea following that on the funding arrangement that will flow from that agreement.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the funding is contingent on project-specific details. I just wanted to make that clear.

I'd like to ask the Premier: is the federal government looking for project specifics on funding, or is it just blanket funding for a period of time?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the process that we've been involved with to date... Initially they were looking for us to look at a number of projects that could be attached to this agreement. We've had further discussions preparative to signing a framework agreement. We've been saying it's fairly difficult to highlight project-specific funding when the agreement still includes the federal government having a say in what the final outcome will be on any project.

QUESTION 42-16(2)
RETENTION OF COMMUNITY
RECREATION STAFF

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, today I talked about the importance of hiring qualified, properly trained recreation staff in our communities and the struggles many of our communities are experiencing with this. My questions today are directed toward the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Geographically the North is unique in many factors, and these factors include the cost of living in each community. Taking this into account, can the Minister commit to taking the lead in developing standardized pay scales and job descriptions for recreation professionals?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Member's statement regarding the challenges facing communities in hiring trained recreational workers and paying them a salary that is comparable across the board is something we've recognized for some time. The N.W.T. Sports and Recreation Council has recognized it. We've had some early discussions on it. They have been quite concerned about the level of investment that goes into the bigger events, such as our Winter Games, Canada Games, and want to have discussions about what the challenges are in the community and the possibility of redirecting finances. So my answer to the Member is: we will be entering those

discussions, and I would be glad to share that information with the Member.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, if the community is able to hire qualified, properly trained recreation professionals, that usually means the individual will be hired from outside the community, in many cases from the south. Because of this, sometimes problems can arise because of cultural differences between the new employee and a community and its residents. It would be ideal to hire local individuals who work with recreation professionals and the community. Would the Minister commit to developing standardized job descriptions and pay scales for these local recreation positions?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Over the years we have really made the attempt to enhance our investments in our communities to deal with some of the real challenging areas. Recreation, of course, has been one area that we needed to see improvements in. We've increased the O&M funding to all our communities across the Territories, and in some cases that has been fairly significant. However, the investments are at the community council level — sometimes recreation doesn't come out on the top, and other priorities overcome it in terms of investment.

We have certainly tried to expand our School of Community Government programs to be able to take in training for recreation workers and people at the community level. Nunavut Arctic College, of course, has a Recreation Leaders Program. We're still in the position where we need investment from the community. We need to be able provide support. We need to be able to take a look at the whole issue of recreation leaders, recreation workers in the communities. As I indicated earlier, I'd be willing to look at that.

Mr. Beaulieu: At one time the Department of Municipal Affairs provided a wage subsidy to these communities for recreation programmers and facilities maintainers. But with the new funding formula for financing communities, this was done away with. Mr. Speaker, attracting and retaining good, qualified recreation staff continues to be a constant challenge for our communities.

Would the Minister commit to once again providing a wage subsidy to allow communities to have competitive wage and benefit packages for recreation professionals in communities?

Hon. Michael McLeod: I guess I should first point out that recreation workers work for the community governments and not for our government directly. We, in turn, have, through the new deal program, really tried to enhance the government funding in the communities. We also have a community recreation contribution program which all communities can apply to. We, as a government,

spend roughly \$5 million in the area of sports and recreation. The N.W.T. Sport and Recreation Council spends close to the same, around \$4.5 million. We have increased our money through the youth centres, the youth contribution. So there is quite a lot of support. We are moving forward to providing money for the Territorial sports organizations.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to make a commitment here in light of all of the reviews we are doing and be able to comfortably say that we will directly increase the support through recreation board programs.

QUESTION 43-16(2)
CARIBOU MANAGEMENT AND
HARVESTING PRACTICE

Mr. McLeod: There was a dispute regarding the numbers of the caribou count in the 15th Assembly. I would like to pose my question to the Minister of ENR today. I would like to ask him if there was a second count using local input and local knowledge, and what was the outcome of the count?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, back in 2005, as the Member indicated, there was work done, and we were asked to redo it, just to confirm it. We made sure that we used local people. We worked with various co-management boards, and they in effect confirmed that there has been, in all the herds that had been surveyed, right from Cape Bathurst to the Bluenose, west and east in Bathurst, significant decline. We have done a small amount of work with the Beverly and Dolphin caribou, and initial concerns are there as well. It is anticipated that there will be Porcupine as well that have not been surveyed for about four years or so. This will also be down at least 20 per cent.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. I would like to ask him, based on the dwindling numbers, how much longer can the caribou last?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex issue, where there are a number of key factors, including things like the changing climate, resource development, predation, increased insects, hunting. We are very concerned, as the Member is. We are going to continue to invest the funds to do the monitoring.

I'd like to point out that we are the only jurisdiction in, I believe, North America that is doing the amount of work that has been done on caribou, to try to come to a better understanding of what is happening. Clearly the signals are there. We have to pay attention and adjust the things that we can control, which are going to be access to the caribou when hunting, the type of resource development and habitat fragmentation.

So the trends and projections are that things are not looking good. We are committed to monitoring them and working with the co-management boards to make the right decisions to ensure that we don't let this slide continue.

Mr. McLeod: I'd like to ask the Minister if there have been discussions with the Yukon government as to jointly doing the Porcupine caribou herds, and when can we expect that?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There have been ongoing discussions with the Yukon. They've tried to do the surveys during the summers. The last three years have been unsuccessful due to a number of circumstances, be it forest fires or inclement weather. The pressure is on them again this year to do the work. They know it has to be done. We sit on that board, and we are very concerned that we do get an up-to-date census.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister again for that. Last year, I believe, there was a caribou summit held up in Inuvik, and there was a lot of discussion on the demise of the caribou and actions that could be taken to help the caribou herds. People, I think now, are looking for some action. We realize that there is a decline, and now we are looking for some action.

I'd like to ask the Minister if the department has had discussions with the aboriginal governments on the declining numbers, and do they share our concerns with the numbers?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The work that's been done in terms of the caribou numbers has been done in full partnership and co-operation with the aboriginal governments and the various co-management boards that exist all the way up north, with Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Sahtu, now with the Tlicho. We have consulted as well in the North Slave.

It's very critical, and we have an obligation and an absolute necessity to make sure we consult with the aboriginal governments, and through the co-management boards, we've done that.

The various co-management boards have reviewed the data that's come in to them and made recommendations that have been acted on in terms of restriction of the hunt and other recommendations they've made to try to preserve the herds.

QUESTION 44-16(2)
HYBRID VEHICLE REBATE

Mr. Abernethy: My questions today are directed to the Minister Responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

As discussed in my Member's statement, I was talking about the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program, with specific reference to the rebate available for hybrid vehicles.

In my opinion, the intent is good. The intent of the program is to help residents reduce their energy costs and, at the same time, reduce greenhouse gases. Unfortunately, it's a new program, and there are some limitations. It does limit our residents' choices. In order to get the rebate, they have to buy a vehicle that's available through a Northern vendor. This eliminates a lot of very efficient vehicles that fall within the intent.

I'd like the Minister to commit to reviewing this program and removing the limitations placed in the program on individual choice.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: We, as well, consider this to be a good program and with a laudable intent. I am aware of the concern raised by the Member. There has been some correspondence over the lack of choice.

I have indicated, and I'll commit in this House, that I will be prepared to review this particular program — it's been running now for a year or so — as well as to talk about this with committee in terms of whatever other amendments may be deemed necessary, looking back, now that we've had some time to see how effective this program and others are.

QUESTION 45-16(2)
ACCESS TO N.W.T.
HEALTH CARE CARDS

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like to follow up on a Member's statement I made last week on the health care card imbalance issue, where there are more health care cards in our system than there are people in the N.W.T. With the pressures to reduce costs, this area should be seriously examined.

I was very pleased, though, during my research, to hear that the Department of Health and Social Services and the Minister's office were aware of this issue. I'm really interested to know what steps are being taken, to date, to address this situation.

Mahsi.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I thank the Member for the question. We are taking steps, both on a long-term and short-term basis.

In the longer term, we will be sending out renewal forms for health care cards in 2009. We're looking at options in detail about what extra measures we could put in place to verify the residency of health care card holders, and what kind of documents we could ask for that, and to meet all the technical requirements in doing so.

We will be looking at possibly asking for tax files as well as asking for physical residential addresses in cases where the address is written down as PO box numbers.

In the short term, the department is already auditing files to look at the patterns of claims being made, where the services are being done and where the products are being bought. If many of those are happening outside of the jurisdiction for any length of time, they are being re-looked at, to verify the residency.

There are many other things being considered to make sure that we take measures to balance those numbers.

We understand that there will always be that discrepancy, but we just want to make sure that those are for the right reasons.

Mr. Menicoche: Of course, there are long-term and short-term residents here. It has always been felt that some received health cards because they had lived here for six months, got employment, and now reside somewhere else but still work in the mines. I don't know if the Minister's office is able to reconcile that difference if they actually live here, like you said.

For the most part, some of it will be easy. Some living in my communities, like in Nahanni Butte and Jean Marie, are life-long residents. I think it would be easier to assess those. But determining the people that are not living here and if there are such people utilizing our much-needed resources for our Northern people.... That is the issue. How is the Minister going to continue to address that in the short term once again? Mahsi.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Absolutely, I don't think any of us want to be paying for health care benefits for other than those who are residents here.

We do have a large transient population. We get about 150 applications a week for health care cards. So we are building in a process to make sure that we do monthly audits. There are audits being done of all these files on a daily basis and a monthly basis to look at any kind of pattern of out-of-jurisdiction claims, whether of services or medication for extended periods of time. Whether there's inactive/activity on file for any length of time, we want to make sure that those residents are still living in the North.

Many of those transient populations use PO box numbers as their address, and this is why we want to put the physical address as being required information. Also, we're looking at the possibility of requiring tax files to prove their residency in our 2009 renewal process. So that's precisely the reason why we're looking at these options.

Mr. Menicoche: Is there an existing system right now, Mr. Speaker, wherein the department can track those people that actually are non-resident, or is there a way to determine how many people that are using our existing cards are not from here?

Hon. Sandy Lee: All the cards, the people who are registered with health cards, are assumed to be residents of the North unless they are proven otherwise. I could advise the House that we get reports from Blue Cross on a regular basis for all out-of-town claims where the services are purchased from outside. We do look at inactive and irregular files to make sure that those claims are from people who live here. We do understand that there is a possibility that among those 5,000 claims we have, there is a possibility. So we're strengthening our check and balance systems to make sure that all those who have a health care card currently are active and residents of the N.W.T.

Mr. Menicoche: Just for the record, I think my research said there were 46,000 health care cards and 42,000 residents. Perhaps the Minister can clarify that if she's got the numbers in front of her.

Hon. Sandy Lee: As of October 2007 there were 41,425 residents, according to the latest census. As of February 6, 2008, we have 45,991 health care cards. I can advise you that in the last health care renewal in 2005, we did receive 5,000 health care cards returned, because when the health care cards go out there is a specific instruction that says it cannot be forwarded outside of the jurisdiction. Many of them are cancelled. We expect that we probably will have that this time around, but in the short term, we're making sure that all claims are from residents and that they in fact live in the Northwest Territories.

QUESTION 46-16(2)
WIND ENERGY DEMONSTRATION
PROJECT

Ms. Bisaro: In my statement I talked about the Remote Community Wind Energy Conference, which was held in December of this past year. Actually, I believe it was November; I'll correct myself. The conference report was expected in January of '08, and it's now February.

So my question is to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. I wondered when we could expect to receive a report on the conference proceedings.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Before the end of this fiscal year.

Ms. Bisaro: That was before the end of this fiscal year, so I guess that will be the 31st of March. Okay, thank you.

When can we expect to see a community identified for the wind energy demo project that was a recommendation from the conference? It also was a recommendation in two reports from 2007.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There is work underway as we speak. There have been wind monitors put out to do wind mapping to check the patterns of the wind across the North, there is a Wind Energy Committee, and as well, Minister McLeod is the chair of the energy coordinating committee.

For the government, in this issue of responding to the recommendations that came out of the Wind Conference in Tuktoyaktuk, one of the things on our agenda.... NTPC has the RFP ready to go, to move on this subsequent to the discussion that we are going to be having here in the next week or so with the energy coordinating committee. So there is a lot of work underway.

I would just like to point out that we need to do the base work, because one of the recommendations out of the conference is the observation from other jurisdictions that if you just do a one-off project all by itself, it's doomed to failure. We have to do the right work with the wind mapping — make sure the infrastructure is in place to support it and make sure that the utility, the community governments, the Territorial government and individuals buy into this. So that's part of our challenge. We are moving on this, as I just indicated.

Ms. Bisaro: I'd like to follow up and ask the Minister when he expects there will be some sort of advancement of the development of the regulatory and policy framework that is required in regard to selling and producing wind energy.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: At this point the best answer I could give would be: in the fullness of time and in due course.

Laughter.

There is preliminary work that has to be done in terms of just determining where we would do the pilot project, the kind of other work such as the net to chargeback power. We have to work with NTPC to hook it up so it's compatible with diesel. There's a lot of actual logistical work before we have the systems in place, but that's one of the pieces, and the Member is very accurate in pointing out that we need all these pieces in place to proceed over the long term.

Ms. Bisaro: "Fullness of time" is a little difficult to define, but I will accept the Minister's answer.

Just to clarify, will the work start on the development of the regulatory and policy framework? As well, will we be able to see an

operating wind turbine somewhere in some community in the N.W.T. in 2009?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: What I will commit to is that through the energy coordinating committee we would be prepared to work with and report back to committee on the work that we're going to do and the plans that we're going to lay out to try to advance this initiative in a way that is going to allow full engagement at the community level, as well as with other governments, like the federal government. They need to buy into this process and hopefully put in some resources and lay out some of the steps we would have to take in terms of the infrastructure as well as whatever other legal requirements may be there to do this properly.

QUESTION 47-16(2)
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

Mrs. Groenewegen: My questions are for the Premier, to do with Deh Cho Bridge. I must have missed the dozens of briefings that were provided....

Interjection

Mrs. Groenewegen: Check the attendance record? I think I was there.

Thirty-five years is a long time. There was a cost-benefit analysis done. There are projections. It's a business case based on volumes of traffic that will go over the bridge that will pay a commercial toll, which will in turn help the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation make the payments on the construction of the bridge.

I would like to know if the G.N.W.T. is going to guarantee the bridge construction loan.

Hon. Floyd Roland: I haven't been a party to any discussions on guaranteeing a loan beyond the \$9 million guarantee we have in place. There is, however, a commitment, as the Members know, that above and beyond the operational money that goes into the ferry and ice crossing, the government did commit another \$2 million a year so the tolls could remain acceptable and within the limits established in the Act.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier assure us that our contribution to the Deh Cho Bridge project is capped at \$2 million per year? And I understand it is indexed. How are we going to set the money that is going to go into the bridge project that is related to the ferry operations and the creation, construction and maintenance of the ice bridge? We've got dollar values on those now. Are those going to be subject to increase, as well, as time goes ahead? Is there anything on this that's capped? Are the tolls for the commercial tonnage capped? Is our contribution capped? Is the other

contribution that's laid out capped at anything, or is this just going to turn into a free-for-all?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the framework that is in place for the Deh Cho Bridge Project allows for indexing, as the Member has stated, whether it's the \$2 million figure that is out there, the fixed-price contract that's established out there right now — that's with the Bridge Corporation and the contractor that will be going ahead with the construction of that bridge.... As for any changes, that would have to occur as highlighted. The changes that would have to be approved would have to be approved in this House, once the bridge is in place and transportation starts flowing across it.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that any changes to this government's contribution would have to be approved by the House, because the \$2 million we are putting in was never approved by this House. Let the record show we never approved the \$2 million a year indexed over 35 years. So I don't know what it means when the Premier says it would have to be approved by the House. What does that mean?

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the Premier: who is paying the \$10 million fully funded contingency for the Deh Cho Bridge?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the contingency is part of the overall construction contract, and that would be through the loan the Bridge Corporation would be getting.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I'd like to ask the Premier: would the bridge project have collapsed if the bridge contractor from New Brunswick had not stepped up the day before the deadline with an additional \$2 million equity? Would the bridge project have collapsed without that?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Your question is hypothetical. I will allow the Minister to answer.

Hon. Floyd Roland: As the Member highlighted in her Member's statement, the concession agreement talked about a maximum of \$5 million equity. The Bridge Corporation could have come in lower than that, and we could have, in fact, as a government, looked at it if they had a dollar value. Of course, that would severely affect their rate of return. But there was a maximum — not a minimum — set, as the Member stated.

QUESTION 48-16(2)
CONSOLIDATION OF
YELLOWKNIFE MEDICAL CLINICS

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, there has been a plan on the books for a number of years to consolidate the clinics in Yellowknife to create a downtown

consolidated clinic. There has been a business case made to do this, basically on the principles that we can take our existing staff and our doctors and we can put them all together and provide more services for less money. So what seems to be the problem? There is money in the budget. Where is this plan today?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, the Member is well aware that we will be reviewing our interim appropriation in due course. I believe it is on the agenda. I would not be able to speak about what is in the detail of that.

I would be happy to talk to the Members about some benefits of consolidation of clinics in Yellowknife. It's a project that has been going on for a very long time. It's an idea I support. I look forward to having more discussions on that in due course, in the fullness of time.

Mr. Speaker: The time for question period has expired. I will allow supplementary questions. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage the Minister, in this case, to talk about it now. What better place than this Assembly?

In a time where efficiency is.... We have a dire need to create efficiencies within our system. If we can prove the fact — which has been done already — to create a system that gives us more efficiencies, better service for less dollars, what's the problem here?

Mr. Speaker, where is this plan in the process? There has been capital money already directed toward this project. What's happening to date?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I totally agree with what the Member has to say about the benefits of this program. I don't think I agree with the Member that the money spent will necessarily be less, because the programming of this is looking at the long term. That's a benefit to be gained by consolidating the clinics, which will be absorbed by extra programming and extra hours that the medical and health care professionals in Yellowknife want to provide.

It's a project that is a priority for the department. It's a priority of mine, and it's something that I look forward to working on with the Members through the business planning process.

The Member knows I cannot comment on the capital money elements of that, because that's up for debate in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear here, because we're getting these sort of semantic answers. Is the project in or out for this capital budget?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, as I stated, it's not something I can comment on right now. He will see the budget when it gets debated in this House in the next day or two.

Mr. Hawkins: With a whole bunch of leases coming up, the time is now to act. With us having to find this money through our financial exercise of reductions, this is the time to act.

Mr. Speaker, what is this Minister doing to make sure that this consolidated clinic becomes a reality in this coming budget and a reality in this session of this Assembly?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't know if the Member was there, but I voted for that project in the budget last year. That was in the budget last year. It is not true that all the leases are coming due this year or in the immediate future. It's a phased expiration of the lease. I am aware of that, and I'm working toward consolidating the clinic in time for those leases coming up. We will have further debate on that, I'm sure, as we are able to review the interim appropriation in coming days — this week and next.

Mr. Speaker: Item 9, written questions, Mr. Hawkins.

Written Questions

QUESTION 6-16(2) FOREIGN WORKER EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Hawkins: I have a number of written questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. They are as follows:

- 1) What is the foreign worker assistance program designed to help small business owners fill skilled employment vacancies called?
- 2) What is the budget for this program?
- 3) When was this program instituted?
- 4) How often has this foreign worker program been used, both successfully and unsuccessfully?
- 5) What is the average processing time with these applications?
- 6) How many businesses have been assisted by this program?
- 7) Provide a breakdown of the communities that have businesses accessing this program.
- 8) What public information campaign was used to advertise this program to employers?
- 9) Who is the point of contact to access this service in Yellowknife?

10) Do we offer financial assistance in processing applications?

11) Will you provide me a copy of this program's establishment policy, assuming there is one?

Mr. Speaker: Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents, Hon. Bob McLeod.

Tabling of Documents

Hon. Bob McLeod: I wish to table the following document, entitled *Grants and Contributions Programs Results Report 2006-2007*, February 2008.

Document 10-16(2) *Grants and Contributions Programs Results Report 2006-2007*, February 2008, tabled.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I wish to table the following two documents entitled *Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2006-2007*, and *Help Decide What New Waste Products to Recycle Across the N.W.T.: A G.N.W.T. Discussion Paper*, December 2007.

Document 11-16(2) *Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2006-2007*, tabled.

Document 12-16(2) *Help Decide What New Waste Products to Recycle Across the N.W.T.: A G.N.W.T. Discussion Paper*, tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Item 15, notices of motions. Item 16, notices of motions for the first reading of bills. Item 17, motions, Ms. Bisaro.

Motions

MOTION 1-16(2) REVIEW OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT MOTION CARRIED

Ms. Bisaro: I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha:

WHEREAS the Official Languages Act of the N.W.T. recognizes Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tlicho as the official languages of the N.W.T.;

AND WHEREAS the Official Languages Act first came into force in 1984, with major amendments in 1990 and 2003;

AND WHEREAS the amendments made in 2003 by the 14th Legislative Assembly, as a result of the comprehensive review of the Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act changed

the rules of the Minister Responsible for Official Languages and the Languages Commissioner, and established the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board;

AND WHEREAS the Official Languages Act requires the Legislative Assembly or a committee of the Legislative Assembly designated or established by it to review the provisions and operation of the Official Languages Act at the next session following December 31, 2007;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Hon. Member for Thebacha, that the 16th Legislative Assembly refers the review of the provisions and operation of the Official Languages Act required by section 35 of that act to the Standing Committee on Government Operations;

AND FURTHER, that the terms of reference for the review of the provisions and operation of the Official Languages Act by the Standing Committee on Government Operations be established as follows:

- 1) The Standing Committee on Government Operations, undertaking the review of the Official Languages Act, shall examine:
- 2) The administration and implementation of the act, including regulations, policies and procedures established by the G.N.W.T.
- 3) The achievements of the objectives stated in the preamble of the act
- 4) The effectiveness of the provisions of the act, and in particular, the extent to which they are contributing to the objectives stated in the preamble
- 5) The roles and responsibilities of the Minister, the Official Languages Board, the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board, and the Languages Commissioner, and the extent to which those roles and responsibilities have been fulfilled and are contributing to the objectives stated in the preamble.
- 6) The Standing Committee on Government Operations shall have access to such persons, papers and records as necessary for the conduct of this review.
- 7) The Minister, Languages Commissioner, Official Languages Board, and Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board shall provide all reasonable assistance to the Standing Committee on Government Operations as required by the act.
- 8) The Standing Committee on Government Operations shall be provided through appropriations of the Legislative Assembly with adequate funds to carry out its responsibilities.

9) The Standing Committee on Government Operations shall be provided by the Legislative Assembly of the N.W.T. with the necessary administrative and professional support to carry out its terms of reference and assigned responsibilities as they relate to this review.

10) The Standing Committee on Government Operations may make recommendations for amendments to the act that it considers desirable through a final report.

11) The Standing Committee on Government Operations shall table a report, which may be an interim report, during the life of the second session and a final report no later than February 2009.

12) Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills, Hon. Jackson Lafferty.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 3 AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Range Lake, that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill replaces the definition of "week" in the Employment Standards Act. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 3 has had second reading.

Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time and referred to a standing committee.

Mr. Speaker: Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Minister's Statement 1-16(2), with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I call the Committee of the Whole to order.

We have Minister's Statement 1-16(2), Sessional Statement. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen?

Mrs. Groenewegen: We would like to deal with the Premier's sessional statement in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Is the committee agreed?

Some honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We'll take a short recess and come back and deal with the sessional statement.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The Committee of the Whole is now in order. Sessional statement.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 1-16(2)
SESSIONAL STATEMENT

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to ask the Premier if he'll be introducing any witnesses

Hon. Floyd Roland: No, Mr. Chairman, I'll deal with it from here.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): General comments. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Chairman, there were many, many things that I liked in the sessional statement, and you know when I say that, there's more to follow. I thought a number of things did actually reflect some of our early discussions on our priorities and vision. It was when we got to "maximizing opportunities," and even there I was doing well. I was totally with the Premier until we reached the statement of blind support that says we can do all this with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. As a biologist in the old days, we always used to look for the one solution, too. And you know what? We never found it. It's a complex world out there.

I'm particularly concerned with some of the costs associated with this. The first point I want to bring up.... I've worked on this issue outside this House, as well, as a non-government person. I'm familiar with the file, so to speak. This blind option, this open-door policy without some very rigorous oversight, is something I don't want to see us subscribing to. One of the major conditions I would want to see here is a carbon-neutral project. The days of having a project of this size, without it being carbon-neutral, are gone. Let's take the leadership role.

Even before that, there is a lot of discussion to be had. There is some fundamental disregard for our current experience with the diamond industry, some lack of understanding, and I'd like to address that a little bit.

First of all, putting all our eggs in one basket, in the Mackenzie Valley basket, and inviting into our living room the most profitable corporation in the world — ironically, proven as the culprit actively responsible for delaying action on climate change, and one with many other human rights abuses and blemishes —

doesn't sit well with me, particularly with a "Come on in and do it to us again" sort of policy.

A profligately rich, multinational corporation that comes to the table demanding subsidies beyond what we already provide, which are major — let's have some critical thinking here.

We know that this will only accelerate our migrant workers problem and will pipeline resources directly out of the North even faster, as opposed to capturing them here. Our health care cards will go up, and so on, with many costs associated with that. Then, of course, there are the externalized environmental costs that need to be brought in as part of the equation.

Let's look at our current experience with mega-development in the North so far: again, a rapid doubling, and even tripling, of our greenhouse gas emissions.

People say to me on the street, "The 10 per cent of the iceberg that's above the waterline is doing super-well, but the 90 per cent below...." Although they are reporting increased dollars from diamonds and from residential schools, the real situation is that our social problems are escalating. The number of deaths associated with that, the number of addictions, family breakups and so on, is on the rise.

It's clearly not helping people across the board, and I don't see this government really rigorously ensuring that the across-the-board benefit will come along with this.

Mr. Chairman, there is another way forward. This 16th Assembly identified quite clearly that our priority is economic diversification. This does not mean going after one basket yet again.

We want food providers, boat builders, artists, renewable energy technicians, doctors, plumbers, lawyers, electricians, accountants, inventors and so on who support our local economies, not something that will end up raising our local costs so that local people will not be able to afford homes and taxes in their own communities.

I'd like to see us put conditions in place that ensure full and true benefits, should we go for things like this, and I don't see that that's been done. We certainly need to demand that it only go forward under carbon-neutral conditions.

I'm going to focus just on this one point, and if I can, Mr. Chairman, I'll wrap it up quickly.

I'd like to turn to page 4 of the Sessional Statement and have us read that in a way that considers the environment as a backpack. In many ways, the work we are doing now is like our elders planning for a hunting trip. We have to pack wisely for the

journey. We can load down our packs with everything we would want to have with us. Just think about the environment here. We can load down the environment with everything we want to do, in terms of economic development, but the result would be — and in this case, the result is already — a load that's too heavy to haul. Our environmental systems are breaking down before our very eyes. That weighs us down and slows down our journey.

Choosing what not to take is difficult. I grant that these are difficult economic challenges we face, but I'm looking for innovation. I'm looking for things that really support our local economies and challenge our people instead of having them line up and be automatons and, you know, Exxon's force once again, like it's happened throughout the world to little avail for local economies.

Choosing what not to take is difficult and may involve some compromises and hardships. I grant that. But in the end it allows us to make the journey and reach our destination. I am totally convinced we can do this in a much better way. It's going to take some innovation. It's going to take some realization that doing the same thing harder is not going to work.

That's all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Premier Roland, would you like to respond?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Chairman, I could save my comments 'til Members have had a chance to speak to this, and then I can wrap up at the end — if that's okay with the Members.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Are we agreed?

Some honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): General comments.
Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to comment on the sessional statement. Some of what I've got to say today I certainly will be saying more this week and as we go towards the end of session. I think some of it needs to be done as a Members' Statement or something to that effect or spoken about on the floor here in a formal setting. But I'm going to talk about a few things.

I wanted to start with devolution and resource revenue sharing. And I know the Premier mentions it, actually mentions a Devolution Agreement in his Sessional Statement, but there's no mention of resource revenue sharing. In the four bullets that he talks about focusing on with the federal government, I think that's a mistake. I think resource royalty sharing, revenue sharing, is something we can't lose sight of because, in these

tough economic times or tough financial times — economically, things are good, but financially, things are rough — we need to go after whatever revenue streams we can. I've said this before; I'll say it again today: I think we have to look at getting control of what we can.

In the past, Transportation and Health were devolved from the federal government. I think we need to focus our efforts on areas of our operation that could get us the most benefit, that we could derive the most results from. To me, oil and gas is one area we should absolutely focus on here in the next four years and try to get control of that. If we don't do that, we'll just keep spinning our tires like the last government did and the government before that and the government before that and the government before that with, you know, not much progress being made. So I think those are certainly some things that we would key on with the federal government.

And the other interesting thing too. When the Premier talks about discussions with the Prime Minister and with Ottawa, he doesn't mention infrastructure. I mentioned that in my statement today in the questions I had for the Premier, the fact that Nunavut has signed a \$242 million deal.

I think the Government of the Northwest Territories.... With the infrastructure deficit facing the Territory and the demands that are out there, that has to be front and centre. In any negotiations with Ottawa, any discussions Ministers are having with Ottawa, we need to make sure that we're at the table, that we're going to get the investment dollars from Ottawa accruing to residents here in the Northwest Territories and in the communities, whose demands are being placed upon us. So we need to do that.

The other thing I wanted to touch on and talk about is communication. I know that in the Sessional Statement, the Premier talks about, you know, laying out the approach that's developed by cabinet and had input from caucus. That's not entirely true, Mr. Chairman. You know, we all went through this strategic planning exercise together. And Members on this side of the House did not — did not — have an opportunity to, you know, say yea or nay to a \$135 million budget reduction exercise over two years. That just didn't include us.

As well, the Premier talks about these committees of cabinet that are going to look at the reinvestment of dollars over the next few years. That doesn't include Regular Members. There's no inclusion of Regular Members in those committees. To me, Mr. Chairman, if we are going to move forward together, if we are going to work together, the sooner that can happen and the more opportunities that that can happen, the better off we'll all be. And the more the Members on this side of the House

will be able to buy in to what it is that cabinet is trying to achieve.

Again, I think you'll hear more about that from me. I do agree with the overall mindset that the government has in going forward, in trying to.... Because I've said it all along: our growth is not sustainable. Our spending isn't sustainable. And we can't continue on the path that we've been on. Corrections have to be made, and I wish the government well in the reduction exercise and in trying to find out where it is in our organization that we can achieve some reductions.

I often thought that the best approach would be to go out and do the analysis first and the zero-based review, if you wanted to do a couple of departments or three departments a year — go out and do that work, and come back with exactly what you would be reducing. Because in the current scenario, we're not really sure what's being put on the table. It's left up to departments. And again, we don't have that level of detail on what departments were asked to get. We don't know what they've got yet. So there's still a lot of work to be done there, Mr. Chairman.

I do look forward to seeing that and to working with the government to achieve the end result: that is, to try to refocus government, to try to get it to operate more efficiently and effectively. I think we can achieve that. Like I said earlier, I think the communication has to be at a level where the Regular Members feel the buy-in and feel some sense of satisfaction that they are being consulted, that they are being included in the government's plans. To date I just don't know if that's happened, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I do want to say to the Premier that his Sessional Statement will be a basis for where we go from here. I do look forward to working with the Premier and cabinet on trying to make the changes that are necessary to ensure the functional operation of the government going forward.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): General comments, Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to sort of identify one thing that I thought I was missing. I agree with pretty much everything that Bob and Dave have been saying. I thought the statement was good.

But to me, in listening to it and reading through it again, the one thing that was missing to me was reference and/or conversation around the voluntary sector. You've heard me talking about it before; you'll hear me talking about it again. The voluntary sector, in my opinion, is clearly one area where we can add a significant amount of value to the residents of the Northwest Territories. It was discussed during our strategic planning session. It is part of our strategic plan. But there was limited

reference to it in the sessional statement and the value that it can add to the health and wellness of communities.

Overall I liked what he had to say. I agree with much of it. I do agree with Mr. Bromley's points as well as Mr. Ramsay's points, but I did feel that there could have been a lot more talk, or at least some talk — you know, a little bit more substance — around the support to the voluntary sector.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make a few comments on the Sessional Statement by the Premier. We talk about building our future. One of the issues that I have is the NGOs again. I would like to see them get some multi-year funding and seriously look at having regional treatment centers where there's some after-care — help for those that are coming back from getting help, trying to beat their addictions.

We talk about housing programs and people that are eligible for them. I hear from constituents that they are both working, they're both starting to make good money, they're in public housing, yet they don't qualify for some of the programs. These are the people that these programs were designed for — to get them out of public housing, to get them to stand on their own two feet — and that's something we have to have a look at.

We talk about reducing the cost of living. I've spoken to it the other day when I spoke about the power rates continuing to go up. It's affecting the services in Inuvik. I hear of a recreational complex where they are turning the heat down because it's getting too expensive to heat. You've got kids skating around in a cold rink, and one reason that.... The complex was designed for them to enjoy those kinds of facilities without having to worry about dressing for the cold.

We talk about reducing the cost of living, and something we seriously have to have a look at is monitoring how they want to continue to increase their rates. I have my opinions on why I think they do it sometimes. If a "levelized" rate will help reduce the cost to some of the folks in the northern part of the Territories, then it's something that we may have to look at.

We talk about managing this land. I spoke to it today, on the caribou. I'm concerned with what I've been hearing on the condition of our caribou herds. I would like to see that followed up on, and any recommendations that came out of the Caribou Summit in Inuvik, I'd like to see them acted on. This is going to have to be something that, as the Northwest Territories, we're going to have to do together. Otherwise, I think we'll be faced with the day — and I think that day will come — where caribou are like the buffalo on the plains, where they're almost nonexistent. That's cheating our

grandchildren and their children out of something we've been able to enjoy.

We talk about maximizing opportunities. The Mackenzie Valley pipeline, in my opinion, will be done right; it will be monitored right. There's no possible way that the Government of the Northwest Territories, the aboriginal governments and anybody else that is going to monitor this — the development — are going to let them just come in here and just rake over our land. I don't think that's going to happen. I think we've learned our lessons from the past, and I think this one will be done with a lot of scrutiny.

I've seen it firsthand, where there is some work going on down the coast, and they have environmental monitors that "don't take nothin' from nobody." Everybody has to follow the rules. I could tell you a couple of stories about some of the stuff that goes on there, but they do monitor well.

There are going to be economic opportunities for all residents. I don't think it will just be a few residents who will benefit from the business opportunities that come with a pipeline, although I did say the other day that because of the fuel situation in Inuvik and their attitude over the whole thing, it's almost starting to change the way I'm thinking about the whole Mackenzie Valley pipeline. I hope that attitude they bring to the pipeline, if it ever goes through and they start doing the work.... There has to be a change of attitude there.

This fuel situation in Inuvik, I think, is a good case for the attitude that Esso has been showing. They need to address that we're not just up here for anybody's pleasure. We have to live and work here, and we will continue to make sure our Territory is well looked after.

Another thing is bringing workers up from the south. I understand there are some cases where they need to do it. The problem I have is we have a lot of people up in Beaufort-Delta who have worked in industry for a while that I feel are quite skilled. That skill is not being utilized in the mines, and that is something I find quite troubling. When you talk about the mines — and I've heard it said before — it's "your" mines. And then we talk about the gas and the pipeline, and all of a sudden it's "ours", "our" gas, "our" pipeline.

We have to have the attitude that those are our mines too. Just because we're living a couple thousand kilometres away doesn't mean we shouldn't be able to benefit from some of the work that goes on up there.

Talking about refocusing all aspects of the government, I believe this exercise that we're going through now is going to be a good opportunity for us to stand back and have a good look at the programs and the money that's being spent. I look

at a document for contracts \$5,000 and over. I see the amount of dollars paid out, and it just blows me away. I see our public servants.... And we have a lot of good ones out there, especially in the front lines in the regions — good, hard-working people. They take all their direction from Yellowknife.

A lot of departments, in my opinion, are top-heavy, and they're giving direction to the people in the regions. And these are hard working people. There are a lot of knowledgeable people within the government who could do a lot of this work that we continually contract out. I don't want to see them become nothing more than contract administrators. I think they have the knowledge and capability to do a lot of this work. I have confidence in them, and I think it's time we utilized them a lot more instead of coming up with an idea, and "let's go do a study and put it out to tender and do another study." We're studied to death up here.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, we talk about resource revenue sharing. The key word is sharing. We share; they don't. They take. There's a difference, and as long as we allow them to do it, then they will. We have to get the leadership of the Northwest Territories on the same page and dealing with this issue, because we're playing right into Ottawa's hands by always disagreeing with each other. They just continue to take, take, take, take. They give back in transfer payments, but we're not a welfare state. They give transfer payments, I believe, to each province, so there's no reason we shouldn't get ours. They believe that gives them the right to come and help themselves to anything we have up here. I found it quite interesting reading an article: "Ottawa Inviting Bids for Exploration Rights in the Beaufort-Delta." *Ottawa* inviting bids.

These are issues that we have to look at. I think as the Northwest Territories, we've matured enough as a government. We're 40 years old now. We should be mature at 40. I think we're mature enough to make a lot of these decisions ourselves. I think it's time Ottawa realized that. I think it's time the government and the aboriginal governments across the Northwest Territories realized that. As long as we continue to disagree, we're never going to get anywhere. That's the truth.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to say a few words on the Sessional Statement.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Ms. Bisaro, Member for Frame Lake.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have this opportunity to address the Premier's sessional address. Like Mr. Bromley, there was much in here I appreciated and agreed with, but I do have a few comments. One can't speak without having some comments, of course.

One of the statements with which I particularly appreciated was the Premier's statement that:

"We want to build a unified, strong and independent territory. A territory that is the master of its own destiny. A territory recognized across Canada as a unique and contributing member of Canada's federation."

I totally agree with that. I would hope that's where this Assembly is going to go.

Another statement that struck me was about seniors and supporting those who volunteer. I don't quite agree with my colleague Mr. Abernethy. There is a statement about volunteers.

Interjection.

Ms. Bisaro: Yeah, one only.

In terms of looking after seniors, I would hope that this reference is particularly geared toward the Territorial Dementia Centre, which is sadly lacking and needed.

In terms of supporting volunteers, one of the reasons I was glad to see it in there is because I am one who is able to take part in both of these: a senior and a volunteer. I'm glad to see them both there, side by side. With volunteers, I sincerely hope that this is referencing, as somebody mentioned earlier, non-government organizations, which are, after all, very much volunteers in the work they do. They provide programs and services on behalf of the Territorial government and do it almost as volunteers. Many of them are run by volunteer boards; they may hire staff, but basically it's volunteers that run the organizations.

One of the things that wasn't mentioned for me in Building Our Future, and I think it should be, is aftercare treatment for addictions and other afflictions. We have many of our residents who are treated for an addiction, who maybe go to a treatment centre. They are cleaned up, but then they are basically let loose on our streets and told to survive on their own. I really feel strongly that we need to put in place a program that deals with addictions aftercare.

I was really glad to see the Premier is emphasizing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I think that one of the best ways we can reduce the cost of living for the communities that are off a highway system is to provide them with that.

One of the things that again we must do is not rely on the G.N.W.T. or on the Territorial government only to provide the funding for a highway. My understanding is that it's the federal government that is responsible for building new highways. The federal government has been noticeably absent in providing funding for highways over the last while. I certainly hope the Premier, in his discussions with

the Prime Minister and with the federal government, will emphasize that we need money for new highways. And we don't need a pittance; we need a great deal of money, particularly to get the Mackenzie Highway going.

I'm hopeful that in this four-year term, if nothing else, we will at least have started on this project, that we will have broken ground somewhere between here and Norman Wells — beyond, north. That would make me very happy. We could have a grand party if we do that.

I noticed a number of statements about new developments. They concerned me a bit. I believe strongly that we need to have new developments in order to diversify ourselves economically, but I am little bit concerned, as is Mr. Bromley, about the fact that there seems to be an emphasis by the Premier on the pipeline, that it's going to be the be-all and the save-all. So I was a little bit conflicted with the fact that we're talking about new developments, but there's no discussion about the environment and protecting the environment relative to the new developments. Actually, there is one, but it's not enough for me.

I found there was a lack of emphasis on prevention throughout the statement. I feel there needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention in terms of the environment and the changes to the environment. I didn't see that in there. And I think there needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention in our infrastructure, in particular. I just think that much of the statement is forward looking, but we also have to go back a bit and think about preventing some of the things that are occurring at this point.

One of the things I feel we need to do, and it comes under "Refocusing Government Priorities." None of the statement really talks about money. The Premier covered that in his statement the next day. But one of the things I think we need to do — and it goes to prevention, as well — is that we need to spend money to save money. This goes to our strategic investments, hopefully, which are coming forward. In order to reap rewards, for instance, in energy savings, we need to spend some money. We need to invest in, say, putting in low-wattage light bulbs, and that will save us money down the road. That sort of thing I don't really see in the statement.

In terms of money in general, it's not addressed, but I have to state that it is absolutely critical for me that we live within our means. We need to budget a specified amount of dollars. We need to then tell our departments and our staff, "These are the dollars you have to work with," and they cannot spend more than what they've been allocated.

I'm finding, through this budget process, that it's a bit of foreign animal to me. I'm having great

difficulty understanding why we establish a budget amount, but four times during the year the departments come back and say, "Well, that's not really the amount we want to spend; we want to spend some more."

Most people in this world don't operate their own household budget that way. You know you have \$100 a week to spend. When the \$100 cash is gone out of your pocket, you don't go back and get more. You do without.

We don't seem to budget that way. I would strongly encourage that we consider establishing a budget with a bottom-line dollar amount and we stick to that. If you're going to over that budget amount — well, you just don't. You just don't spend anymore, and you're going to have to figure out to survive for the rest of the year.

To sum up, I was glad to see the focus points that the Premier wants to deal with in terms of the federal government. I think if there's an opportunity to push resource revenue sharing as well as the four that are laid out here, that would be a good thing. But if we simply emphasize the four points that are here and don't try to do everything, I think that's also a good thing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I look forward to the Premier's comments later on.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Going down the list here, I next have Mr. Jacobson next.

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Going over the Sessional Statement from Premier Roland, for myself, I'm in favour of the Mackenzie gas pipelines. I know everybody says it's a boom-and-bust cycle, but for myself and the people of Nunakput and the Beaufort-Delta, we rely on the oil and gas industry, as the south relies on the diamond mines.

The position I'm coming from is in regard to more jobs for the people. Tuk becoming a deep-sea port is possible — as many as 300 jobs almost year-round for a community of 1,000 people who are affected by the high cost of living, housing issues. Give our people in the Beaufort-Delta a chance to come on stream like Yellowknife has done, and give us the opportunity to go forward with the deep-sea port.

There are so many issues. That's just a comment I had. And reducing the cost of living for elders. Managing our land. Permafrost is melting. My community of Tuk is reduced to the point of being washed away in any west wind we have now. That's a real concern to me and has to be looked at again.

My access road — an access road to gravel, but a back door for my community in the hamlet of Tuk, for safety and to get all the necessities. I always say to any of the people I talk to, "If you give me my access road, you're not going to be hearing too much from me." Help us, and we'll help you on a go-forward basis.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Continuing with the response to the Premier's sessional statement, I'd like to call on Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: I listened to and read the Sessional Statement by the Premier from Wednesday. I have a few comments on it.

I think during the last government there was a lot of effort put into negotiations across the Territory. There was a lot of effort in housing, whether it be the social housing kind or the housing of professionals for market housing. A lot of time was spent on resource development, non-renewable resources and renewable resource development.

I'd like to see our attention shift just slightly, not because all of those things aren't important, but because this government has to have a vision into the future. If we continue just to spend our billion-some odd dollars and continue on in the way we are continuing on, I think ultimately we will face failing infrastructure and failing programs, and we'll be suffering the problem of hitting the debt wall.

The way I view this statement and all of the other discussions that we've had... The way out of our problems, in my opinion, is to prepare the youth. I find that educating and training our youth, and having youth ready to.... I'm having a little difficulty explaining exactly what I'm trying to say. I guess in layman's terms, I'm trying to say that if we heal the youth of our Territory, then I think we will heal the entire Territory. The youth is our next generation of people who will be running the Territory. It would be good to have well-educated and healthy youth. In our objectives, our priorities — the priorities of this Assembly — we have to ensure that we have well-educated and healthy people. That's what we're trying to achieve. If we focus in on our youth, I feel that will go a long way to solving a lot of issues of dependence on government.

With the way budgets are split up now, I don't know the exact percentage, but a high percentage of the budget from this Territorial government is being spent on social programs — income support and housing being two that probably should be and can be reduced. A lot of that reduction will occur with training, educating and assisting the youth in preparing for the future so there will not be generations and generations of people in the social envelope, so to speak.

The very important item for me in my riding is the cost of living. A reduction in the cost of living can

address some of the issues the people are facing today. When I go back and talk about educating and training and preparing our youth and making sure that the youth have all the things necessary to be well-educated, healthy people, that is something I think this government is going to do for its own future. But currently we do have a real issue of a high cost of living in some of the communities. My communities are affected by that as well.

I think the government is going in this direction, but a reminder that we have to have programs that work for people, not programs that are hamstrung by policies and procedures and that theoretically look like they would be a nice application to help the people of the North. Then once it comes down to the practical application of the programs, many of the programs become hamstrung by policies and procedures, as I indicated just a minute ago.

Infrastructure is important. Right now there is always the fear that this government will hit the debt wall, so we don't want to approve a whole whack of infrastructure that is going to make us do that. I feel that there should be a realignment of the infrastructure priorities by the government. I looked at the 20-year needs assessment, and it's important to note it is a needs assessment based on certain criteria and not necessarily what's needed on the ground in the various communities.

It's an opportunity to re-profile our infrastructure with the priorities of this Assembly in mind, and maybe the priorities of this Assembly used as a filter when we're spending infrastructure dollars and when we're spending O&M dollars, period. But definitely in the focus on improving infrastructure that we have in the Government of the Northwest Territories, we should use our priorities as a filter.

There is always that looming \$500-million debt-wall limit. As earlier indicated by one of my colleagues, maybe something could be done with the federal surplus, to move some of the federal surplus and have the federal government take responsibility for new infrastructure so that it won't be a cost to the G.N.W.T.

I feel that responsible, renewable resource development — whether it be non-renewable or renewable resource development — is something that's important for the economy and for the economy in the Tu Nedhe riding as well.

In conjunction with that and dealing with all of the youth priorities that I would like to see this government put in place, I think that environmental monitoring and training is an area that would fit well with the youth of my riding in the area of the diamond industry and the uranium industry.

If there is more development in those areas.... I'm not indicating that there would be, but if there is, then it would be important that the youth of my

riding be trained in the environmental monitoring, assessment or review areas so that the people of the Tu Nedhe riding are taking care of their own land, so to speak.

And I guess, finally, I feel that the government needs to look at the issue of keeping all of our elders in the community for as long as possible, with the understanding that there are costs associated with the way the elders are being kept. Once they go to a point where they do need assistance to continue on existing, then that assistance should be provided in their own hometown.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Time is coming close here.

Mr. Beaulieu: So I guess that's about it. I guess, again, I'd like to say that my main points continue to be youth, cost of living and making sure that they have programs that fit the people. Thank you.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Chair, in regard to the Sessional Statement, I believe there's a lot of good direction that's in there. But I think it's also how you interpret the direction to ensure that we're all on the same wavelength.

I think it's important that we, as government, realize that where we're at today, we went through the same process in the 13th Assembly. And I think from having gone through that time frame, being here today 12 years later, we haven't really got down to making any tough decisions yet.

I think it's important to realize that we are going to have to make some tough decisions. There are going to be situations for people who'll not like the decisions we make, but we do have to make those decisions. I think it's important that whatever decisions we make, we make the right decisions.

I have to admit here today that in the 13th Assembly we did not make the right decisions. I think because of that, some 12 years later, we're still paying for those decisions. The one that jumps right out at us is the sale of staff housing throughout the Northwest Territories, and especially in small communities where we're having problems recruiting people because we don't have housing for our staff.

I think it's important also to realize that as governments have grown over the years, we have a very young population in the Northwest Territories. Almost 30 per cent of our population is under the age of 40. So that makes up a large number of our residents who are looking for work, who probably concluded school, have gone off to university, come back and are looking for jobs.

I think we can talk about healthy and well-educated people. But at the end of the day, if we do not have

the opportunities, jobs and the ability of these individuals to raise their families, to basically pay for themselves, carry themselves, and maintain a lifestyle that's comfortable and not that they can't be able to live in the North, stay in the North, and make the North their home, it's all for naught.

I think there are have- and have-not communities. As I've stated in many of my statements, we do have poverty in the Northwest Territories. It's the reality of living in small communities where the jobs are limited, the opportunities are limited. But again, we have to find ways to stimulate those communities through the efforts of this government.

I think where we should start is the resources we have around our communities by way of the potential that we have in our forestry industry, our renewable resource industry and also our non-renewable resource industries. More importantly, we have a lot of traditional communities that we can market as traditional communities to other people in Canada and the rest around the world by way of eco-tourism.

Also in regard to many wood products, the thing that really gets me is that we're spending \$30 million dollars a year trying to maintain a forestry resource, and the majority of that money is spent on fighting fires. Now, I think we have to be realistic here. If we're not going to use it, we're going to lose it. We cannot continue to spend the amount of money that we spend on fire repression. We've got to spend more money in regard to developing that forest product into a product that we can sell either to the Housing Corporation, to other southern vendors or to Northern industry. Use these wood products that are produced in the Northwest Territories.

I think also that it is important to realize that we do have to bite the bullet on devolution. I was the negotiator with the Gwich'in tribal council in 1995 on devolution. We were talking at that time about 51 per cent of the federal resources. We were talking about funding programs and services out of those dollars. And at that time the busiest industries that we had were Norman Wells, the Beaufort Sea, and oil and gas. That wasn't even including the diamond resources that we have.

I heard a lot of people say that we should negotiate devolution for the sake of negotiating devolution. I think the last offer we got from the federal government — from Mr. Harper, who was up here a year ago — was pathetic. They offered us \$20 million a year out of resource revenue sharing, wanting us to take over all the federal responsibilities for \$20 million, and yet, right now, they're taking in over \$200 million in royalties. That is the state of the federal offer, and I think it's so pathetic that we should laugh it all the way to the bank.

It's important to realize that we have to take advantage of the other tax responsibilities that we have control over. I know I've talked about the resource tax, mineral tax, whatever tax you want to call it. We as the Government of the Northwest Territories have those tax abilities right now. We don't have to negotiate with Ottawa. It's important that we seriously look at that.

My questions earlier today were about trying to find jobs for people in the North, in part of the Northwest Territories, in the mining industry. We can't get the jobs, so let's get the tax resources. You can keep the jobs; we'll take your taxes. We've got a choice. Sooner or later we have to have some tough love here and get on with making some tough decisions and making the industry realize that if they continue to make the profits that they're making and it's not remaining in the Northwest Territories, or if it's all flowing to Ottawa, we've got to do something quickly.

In regard to other infrastructure challenges that we're facing, there have been a lot of discussions around the Deh Cho Bridge. I, for one, support the concept of a P3 idea for bridges, highways and infrastructure that we need built in the Northwest Territories. We as government cannot continue to afford these mega-projects by way of the fiscal problems we're running into.

The only alternative we have is looking at how we can finance programs, and deliver this infrastructure, over 20 years, 30 years or whatnot, because we cannot pull \$165 out of the budget right now. We can do it over 30 years or 20 years.

The same thing applies to the proposal that's been thrown out in regard to the Mackenzie Highway project and also connecting our communities. We have to find a way to connect our communities by way of infrastructure, connecting communities such as Tuktoyaktuk, Aklavik and other communities up and down the Mackenzie Valley where, right now, the only way in and out is either by flying or using the winter road connections that we have. We do, at some point, have to make that decision.

We as government have to look at how we can generate other revenues, such as hydro. Look at the possibility of mini-hydro for communities where hydro is at a very high cost. Communities that have the technology now, in regard to mini-hydro projects that are taking place elsewhere around the world.

Also, as government, we have the responsibility to take a fiscal look at what it's costing us to maintain and operate communities. Someone touched on the idea of looking at a levelized rate system. The system we have in place is not economically viable; it's not sustainable. At the end of the day, we as government will not be able to afford electrical power to communities if the major users of power

pull off our grid system — Northern stores, co-ops, hotels — and they basically go on their own system. We as the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, and the Government of the Northwest Territories, will be pickled.

We as a government have a responsibility to ensure that that we don't find ourselves in that situation. I believe we are going that way because of the new technology that's out there in regard to generating power. It's a lot cheaper now to basically put your own generators in place, by way of micro-turbines and whatnot, than it was years ago. A lot of these companies that I mentioned are now selling fuel products by way of diesel fuel, gas and whatnot. All it takes is pulling a generator up to the back of the store, plugging it in, and they're off our system. The reality is we're either going to face it or end up paying more to maintain small communities on a system that can't afford to maintain the system right now.

Again, it's important that we seriously take a close look at that, and also look at alternative ways of generating power.

In regard to the Mackenzie pipeline I have to agree about the subsidizing of big industry. Exxon Mobil, which made \$40 billion, does not need the Government of the Northwest Territories to subsidize a pipeline. If anything we should re-visit that decision and make it clear to them that we will change that decision by way of what the real cost is going to be and the benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories for whatever resources and revenues that we can charge to this pipeline.

So with that, Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like to comment on the Sessional Statement in general. It says a lot about us, Mr. Chair, about facing the cutbacks and doing some reinvestments. We here at the Legislature are faced with these tough decisions. We're going to work through them the best we can. But back home in the communities, the people are still kind of confused. They're thinking of the \$135 million cut today, so they're scared for their jobs, basically.

I don't think our government has done a good job of communicating. I know they're doing the best they can. A lot the decisions for where we are today are fast-moving. They're day-to-day decisions that have to be made. We have to take the time and bring our forces up to speed. There are a lot of things on the table, and they're thinking their jobs will have to be cut. Oh, man, it's hard to do that, but some of it will have to be done, and in programming as well.

Government has heard from this side of the House, as well. It's something I've been sharing with my constituents. To do across-the-board cuts is not going to work. If you take 10 per cent off five programs, then you have five ineffective programs.

It's far better to assess one of them, take that out and have four good programs that will better serve the people as opposed to five that don't work.

I'm telling the people that we're taking the time. Our budget process this particular year is being drawn out. We're accepting these. Nothing's cast in stone yet. For the most part, they kind of agree with me, but at the same time they're still seeing some changes internally at the regional level. They're thinking, "Oh, my God." I'm telling them that it's a moving target. We're working with government and we're moving along.

Government has to be there, too, and inform our employees of the savings as we go along. It makes for good management once we let everybody know which way we're going. And include all departments in targeted reductions. We want to be involved, and I believe employees want to be involved. They're the ones who are front-line workers. They work with the programs and know which ones need bolstering and which ones do not make sense anymore. There are lots of programs out there that are very old; they're archaic, I would say. Maybe the purpose doesn't serve their ends anymore, especially in this new technological age and new way of doing things, Mr. Chair.

There are some other things that are going on. One of the biggest things that affects my riding is the whole housing issue. I've had discussions with the Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation on several occasions. Housing is moving away from helping the people. People just don't understand that. They don't know what's going on. Every time they go to the Housing department to ask for assistance, they say, "Sorry, we can't help you. You don't meet this guideline or that criterion." In the end, our people aren't being served adequately or served at all.

To me it looks like there's a very small window. If you don't make a certain income threshold and the income that you make exceeds the guidelines, that window is very small wherein you can fit to make the guidelines so you can be approved.

The other thing, too, is a lot of our people are in arrears. They just can't seem to catch up. There again, the Housing Corporation is out of it, but I believe it still has some duty because they are the ones that caused all these arrears. They were more flexible. When the Housing Corporation was running it, it was more flexible. People still wanted the Housing Corporation to run it. In fact, in one of my first Member's statements, I spoke about housing and how it should be reverted to the Housing Corporation, only because it seemed to be working then.

We've changed the program over to the EC&E. It's must be working a bit there, but I don't believe it's

fully working. Just last week I was telling Mr. Speaker how, for one lousy thousand dollars, they had a woman and all her family thrown out of a house. It was boarded up, and she wasn't able to get in there to get her children's clothing. Has government drifted so far that we stopped helping people? For \$1,000, our government could have easily overlooked that. The court costs easily exceed the \$1,000. So what are the parameters? What are the limits?

We're talking about helping our people, how proud we are of our land and our resources and opportunities here. But at the same time we're throwing out whole families for a lousy thousand-dollar bill. That just doesn't sit right with me at all. That's something I believe we should be addressing as well. It says nothing about that in here. But when it says "helping people" — and that's what I think it is — it's like, "Okay, you owe \$1,000. Let's work your way around it." Let's keep them in there, because it's going to cost a heck of a lot more than \$1,000 to find a new place for the people. In fact, they are split up right now, and that's something else I have been dealing with.

Another thing I've been giving a lot of thought to is that we talk a lot about resource revenue sharing and devolution and I believe it still should be a focus of this government. The Premier says it is, but in Ottawa he said it's not; there's no appetite there. At the same time, we're the government; we're making decisions. But why are we listening to someone else? Because the feds aren't listening to us doesn't mean that we're not in control. We are in control of our government. People collect here to make decisions, and if the decision is to pursue resource revenue sharing or at least to object, to control, as much of the resource revenues that are leaving our land, I think we should be doing that too. We should be working toward it, not stopping all our efforts. Maybe Ottawa doesn't want to deal with us, but we should continue with the effort.

Much has been said, as well, over the years about setting up the heritage fund idea. I think I shared that with the Premier as well. At least that stops the bleeding; that stops the flow getting out of here. We set up a heritage fund; we then put the money into the heritage fund. It will sit there and grow until we in the North can get along and play in our sandbox. The federal government has often said that they're not going to provide any resource revenue or devolution until we get a consensus here in the North. Because we are an evolving, growing political jurisdiction, many aboriginal aspirations and regional independence is happening, and it's kind of tough.

At the same time I believe we can take the lead. I believe that our government can sell a heritage fund idea. The whole goal is, of course, to stop the flow of our resource revenues out of the North and

at least put it in a trust fund where it can grow. There are several examples of that, and I think the best one will be Alaska, where they have a growing fund. They, the government, are able to access some of it — I think it's 10 per cent a year they can access — but the rest just goes in there, and you need a majority vote to access those funds. I think if we pursue that, it will be a long way from just saying: "The government doesn't want to deal with us. We're not going to do anything right now."

I urge this government, once again, to look at these options and pursue it. I'm sure that this side of the House will give you full support, whatever viable option is there for you to do.

I would just end there, Mr. Chair. I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak with regard to the sessional paper and to my views of the N.W.T. Thank you.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Next on my list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a response to the Premier's Sessional Statement, which encompasses a broad variety of topics. So I guess people have been pretty much talking about anything that's a priority to them.

Of course, right now, to me a priority is the issue of our fiscal situation: fiscal responsibility, how we as a government spend our money, how we engage in a consensus government — all Members of this House — in decisions that are made and dialogue that takes place that leads to those decisions.

The Premier is the Finance Minister. The Premier has laid out his vision of a government that's fiscally responsible and lives within its means and does not have expenditures which exceed the money that we have. That is, I guess, a trademark that we have learned to expect and appreciate about our Finance Minister/Premier from our previous experiences in the government.

So I guess when we look at the aspirations of the 16th Assembly and the things that we would like to see focused attention to in our Territory, it is reasonable to expect that we would also have to take a look at areas where there may be opportunities for strategic reductions as well. I don't think we can just call them strategic reinvestments; we need to look at strategic reductions. I'm sure Members have spoken about that exercise. I'm very glad to be a part of discussions about this, because I think we do have to be extremely sensitive. We don't want to be making reductions where those reductions will ultimately hurt the agenda that we're trying to advance as Members of this Legislative Assembly.

One of the areas that we have not had as much money in, in recent years, is of course, in the area

of capital — budgets for capital replacements, new infrastructure. There has been more demand than there has been money for capital projects, which brings me to the issue of the Deh Cho Bridge. I'm interested today to hear the Premier's responses to some of the questions that were posed about the Deh Cho Bridge.

If you look at the total cost of \$160 million, for sure some of that capital investment will be offset by the tolls that will be collected on the commercial traffic that will cross that bridge. That's a good thing. Well, it doesn't hurt me — I don't live in Yellowknife, so it's not something I'll be necessarily contributing to. However, as a resident of the Northwest Territories, it is appearing like I will be contributing to the cost of the Deh Cho Bridge in a much more significant way than had ever been anticipated, I believe, in previous governments when the concept of the bridge came up.

So if you add up the \$2 million contribution, the price of the ice-road, the price of the ferry operations, the price of the toll administration, now we're up to about \$4.5 million. And there is, as the Premier shared today, no cap on that combination of items being indexed over the next 35 years. So I would say we're entering into this pretty much with a blank cheque, and we really don't know what it's going to cost.

If some other proposals for getting goods to areas such as the diamond mines ever materialized, which they could, the volume of traffic on the highway and utilizing the bridge could be significantly reduced, which could leave the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation in a difficult position in terms of making their payments on this investment in our infrastructure.

The debt will be in their name, at which time I have to project that the government will have to step up and assume and take over the responsibility for that debt financing on that project, since it is a piece of infrastructure which is normally owned by a government. Given our limited ability to borrow and carry debt, our legislative limit of \$500 million, it's difficult for us to finance projects of this magnitude. So I suppose the government of the day saw this Public/Private Partnership as an alternative to the government actually going out and borrowing money or undertaking a project similar to the business case and the plan and the model that's now being implemented with a private partner.

I guess when you consider that amount of government involvement which may come to pass, it then begs the question: with all the competing interest for capital, is there something else that could have been a worthy project that people in the Northwest Territories could support more than this — something more urgent, something with more

benefit, something with more ability to employ people?

You know, one of the dreams that has been out there for decades has been the idea of extending the all-weather road down the Mackenzie Valley. That is something that could have brought employment and economy to many regions of the Northwest Territories. Who's to say that the Deh Cho Bridge was a higher priority? When we started off with a \$60 million piece of infrastructure, it made sense. When it went to \$160 million, I think it begged a debate and a question and a dialogue or consultation all over again to see if that is what we wanted to spend our limited capital money on.

I guess, Mr. Chairman, you could quote me today as predicting that this government will be substantively involved in this project in the next 35 years to come. I think the involvement in this project is going to impact on our ability as a government to procure and advance other capital projects. I think this is a project that is going to consume a great deal of this government's money over the next years. As such, it should have been something that was more thoroughly thought out.

I guess it just should have been approached through a more transparent and accountable process. I think we came to be the sponsors of this capital project through means that were not in keeping with good principles of consensus government and public government. When a piece of legislation is passed that contemplates a \$60 million self-financing project and goes to \$160 million with not another opportunity to reaffirm the support for that — just pushing, pushing, pushing almost to point of bullying to get this thing going — it really raises a lot of flags and a lot of questions.

I for one, as Mr. Krutko says, am going to be very involved in ensuring that proper checks and balances are put in place that will never allow something like this to happen again. In fact, if there is a way yet to stop it through involving the Auditor General, through the review of the concession agreement that is taking place right now, as we speak.... Time is running out, but I will employ every opportunity available to bring attention to the inconsistencies, the discrepancies and the very inappropriate way in which this project came to be on our books.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I have no other people on my list, here, so I would like to turn it over to the Premier for any responses.

Mr. Premier.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Chairman, before I move any responses, I'd like to quote a proverb. "When the prudent man sees danger, he takes refuge; the

simple man carries on and suffers for it." This is something I was reminded of not too long ago. These are wise words to live by.

I've heard from Members of the Assembly speaking about what we may have holding for us in the future. It is something that the Sessional Statement was built on: trying to come up with the balance between the needs of the people of the Territory, the vision of the Members of the 16th Legislative Assembly, and what we have for resources. We try to implement as many of those as we can and come up with a balance that touches on some of the more critical areas that we heard Members talk about during the planning stages, the early days in the life of this government. How would we do that?

I will quickly go through what we have heard from Members about some of their concerns. As well, I'd like to thank Members for their comments on the plan, putting this together and the need for some change in the way we see business being done in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Chairman, comments on maximizing opportunities and placing our eggs in one basket is a concern to us. We have seen that too many times in the past. We need to diversify. That is why, in the Sessional Statement, I spoke to the fact that we need to encourage a meeting of the minds, in a sense, of the small entrepreneurs' spirit in our smaller communities with those who can make it happen in the Northwest Territories, either through our traditional banking systems or what we offer through our government programs.

Definitely we will have changes as we go forward. The discussion of full costing has come up in this Assembly. Also a carbon neutral stance. It is different language for sure, which we haven't heard in this Assembly too often. It is starting to be heard. It is being said by more and more people in the Territories: we need to take care of the land we live in. We hear some of our elders say, "The land has nurtured us to where we are, and we must now nurture it back to health." We must look at the way we do business and how we do business. I think that is important for us as we proceed and look at all opportunities that come before us.

Mr. Chairman, we heard a number of Members talking about devolution and resource revenue sharing. I think that is a good point. As I've heard from one of the Members, as a result of my meeting with the Prime Minister, my stance had changed. It became known that I was prepared to part with devolution and resource revenue sharing. I need to set the record straight. In my meeting with the Prime Minister, he was supportive of continuing to see devolution and resource revenue sharing proceed.

But shortly after the election, I met with the regional aboriginal leadership here in the Northwest Territories. I met with them to see if there was growing or continued support from the stance of the last government about devolution and resource revenue sharing. I also shared with them the future as it would be if we did not change the way we did business and continued to spend as we had in the past without increasing our revenue sources, and said that would not be affordable. With limited resources, should we continue to put as much effort as we have in the past into this basket and not see results produced?

I think there is still a lot of opportunity there, and we can come up with a solution, a deal, for the Northwest Territories. We have to get a deal that is best for us and that will leave a lasting legacy and benefit for the people of the Territories.

I heard a Member earlier talk about a heritage fund. Mr. Chairman, if we continue at the pace we are and we manage to get a deal and the money started flowing tomorrow, that money would be swallowed up by the existing system. We wouldn't have a penny to put into a heritage fund. That is how fast we are spending money in the Government of the Northwest Territories. We have to have a serious look at that. I think there is opportunity to do that when we look at over a billion dollars that we spend on O&M dollars. And then another over a hundred-million dollars on our capital infrastructure; \$1.2 billion dollars for just under 42,000 people in the Northwest Territories.

We have to ask ourselves: are we getting the best value for those investments? Where we're not, we have to try to re-focus and re-prioritize where we get the best results. A lot of good ideas have come through this, whether it's investing in our seniors' programs, investing in our volunteer organizations. We've heard about investing in our alcohol and drug-treatment programs, aftercare for addictions. These are all important and things we should really invest in. But at the pace we're spending, we won't be able to invest another dime in making it better.

We've heard about the increased growth in the social envelope. At the present pace, we would continue to do that. I think that goes to another form of devolution. When you look at the transfers of the past, Health and Social Services, right now, draws down a large amount of resources. That would go back to the days it was signed.

For example, right now, the department of DIAND caps spending on aboriginal health care at 2 per cent. Right now we're carrying over five years' worth of unpaid bills in that area. We're getting close to \$100 million.

We cannot afford another deal like that in the Northwest Territories. At that pace we might as well

hand it back to the department of DIAND and say, "Run the Northwest Territories," because they would try to do it now. I don't think that's what the people of the Northwest Territories want.

We're going to have to make the decisions. When this statement talks about the future and what we can do for the future of the Northwest Territories, I really believe we can get back control, we can get the necessary resources, and we can make a difference in the lives of our children in the Northwest Territories. But that won't be done unless we get our existing situation under control.

If we hand this over to the future generation now, and spending is at the rate we are without making the changes, it's like mortgaging our children's future on a sub-prime mortgage. We know what that means. That means collapse. That is something I don't think any of us, when we ran, were looking forward to doing.

As for a comment earlier, I heard Mr. Ramsay talk about a plan. We put a plan together in the early days of this government, but the \$135 million is a mandatory target. At some point, Mr. Chairman, as we sat down in the Assembly, we talked about the vision and goals of the Assembly. We put some priorities down on the table. I believe you've tasked the cabinet, myself — the Premier and Finance minister — my cabinet colleagues, with coming back with a plan that would start to fit those priorities. We have to realize that to invest in those priorities; we've got to come up with some dollars. When we talk about devolution, I believe there's that opportunity there, but it has to be at the right place at the right time and make a difference for us as we proceed.

Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. You can tell I get a little excited about some of this when I talk about the future of what we have in the Northwest Territories.

We also have to recognize the past work of many people across the North. Look at the difference of land claims and self-governance that are in place. At one time all those decisions were made in Ottawa. As a result of land claims, we have co-management boards; we have joint boards with federal and Territorial government and aboriginal people; we have the Mackenzie Environmental Impact Review Board. Decision-making has been brought to the North. That can make a difference that brings people from the Territories to those tables.

At one time I recall making a Member's statement in this House — many years ago, probably close to the 13th Assembly. At one time, Mr. Chairman, we were the haulers of water and the cutters of wood. Now, if you look across the Territories, aboriginal businesses are parked front and centre, in front of what can happen in the Northwest Territories. We

stand to benefit from any development we have. We must be looking toward how we can continue to strengthen our position.

I must remind Members that when we do.... Going back to the devolution resource revenue sharing, according to the federal public accounts, in 2006-2007, the total amount of resource revenue that went into the federal pocket — outside of Norman Wells, because they've always said that's not resource revenues.... We always counted them in, but they said they were outside. If you actually go down the public accounts, the total amount for the Northwest Territories is about \$34 million.

Take 50 per cent of that, because that's what they base equalization on — 50 per cent in, 50 per cent out. We lose 50 per cent through transfer payments; we get \$17 million. Is that the deal we want to sign off on?

I don't think that's a good deal, Mr. Chairman. We have to put our business case in front of them. We have to work on projects of nationalist interest. The Mackenzie Valley Highway, I believe, can meet the targets of Arctic sovereignty in the North. So I think there are opportunities. We can put forward a business case that can make real partnerships happen with the federal government, ourselves and our aboriginal partners, as well as industry in the Northwest Territories.

We need to continue building on the solid foundation this process will provide. That's what I would say, Mr. Chairman: through this process we are talking about the future. Not the future four years from now when an election will come. We're talking about a future ten, 20, 30 years down the road. That's what our future should be. We shouldn't be talking about a future tied to an election date. We should be talking about a future that our children will have in the Northwest Territories, that our grandchildren will have in the Northwest Territories. That's what this exercise is about. I hope, Members, as we work together to continue to build this foundation, that's the vision we would have: down the path where we will end up, and of the opportunities that are before us.

No doubt there will be challenges, but those challenges can work. I would agree with Members about the opportunities that are before us, but it will come to a balance. The right balance is what we're going to need. That's what I would come back to Members with, Mr. Chairman: if we do this right and come up with the right balance, we will be able to look back and say, "We've made a positive difference in the lives of those people we represent." Thank you.

Applause.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Premier.

At this time we don't have any other speakers on the list. What is the wish of committee?

Mr. Krutko: I move we report progress.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Minister's Statement 1-16(2), Sessional Statement, and would like to report. I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have a seconder for the motion? The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, Orders of the Day, Mr. Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Programs at the rise of the House in Committee Room A.

Orders of the Day

Orders of the Day for Tuesday, February 12, 2008:

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Returns to Oral Questions
- 5) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

- 6) Acknowledgements
- 7) Oral Questions
- 8) Written Questions
- 9) Returns to Written Questions
- 10) Replies to Opening Address
- 11) Petitions
- 12) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1: Interim Appropriation Act, 2008-2009
 - Bill 2: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2007-2008
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - MS 1-16(2): Sessional Statement
- 21) Report of Committee of the Whole
- 22) Third Reading of Bills
- 23) Orders of the Day

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Accordingly this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 12 at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

