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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Wednesday, June 4, 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 1:33 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the Day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 51-16(2)
TELE-CARE HEALTH LINE
4TH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 18, 2008, marks the four-year anniversary of the Tele-Care Health Line service. This 24-7 telephone service provides family health and support information to the residents of the NWT through the Tele-Care Health Line call centre.

The volume of calls through this service has steadily increased in four years, from 4,019 in 2004–2005 to 5,923 in 2007–2008. A total of 20,374 calls have been received since the service first began. As a result, we can statistically assume that 5,417 individuals have participated in self-care activities that may have reduced the pressure on our health centres and emergency departments.

The service name is undergoing change — from Tele-Care to Tele-Care Health Line to, eventually, Health Line. The service is also undergoing changes. A new smoking-cessation line will be the third enhancement to the service beginning this September, following the addition of sexually transmitted infection and poison control information added last year.

An addictions line has also been included in the resource database at the call centre. Callers can be transferred to a community counselling program. Residential school survivors can call the Tele-Care Health Line, and they will be referred to a wellness worker on the addictions line.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the people on the Tele-Care Health Line advisory committee for their hard work in contributing to the promotion and marketing of the Tele-Care Health Line service.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister Mr. Bob McLeod, Chair of Managing This Land Strategic Initiative Committee.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 52-16(2)
UPDATE ON ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH
MANAGING THIS LAND INITIATIVE

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today as the lead Minister to provide an update on actions associated with the Managing This Land Strategic Initiative.

The Managing This Land initiative is one of five strategic initiatives that form the backbone of our government's plan to advance the priorities of the 16th Assembly and advance us toward our vision and goals. The actions planned under this initiative are: continue to develop governance, protect territorial water, work to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, improve environmental monitoring efforts, and environmental stewardship.

To effectively manage the land, a top priority must be to gain responsibility for the management of land and resources in the Northwest Territories through a devolution agreement with the federal government. We all agree that Northerners should be making decisions about northern resources.

While significant progress has been made on an agreement-in-principle, the structure of the current offer for devolution has a number of issues that we need to resolve before it can be finalized. For example, the resource-sharing component of the agreement has to provide capacity to address the impacts of resource development; capacity to make necessary investments in infrastructure, geosciences and research to facilitate further development; and it has to provide adequate financial resources to carry out the devolved responsibilities both now and in the future. The agreement cannot be structured to provide a disincentive for further development by limiting our

ability to benefit from the development of NWT resources.

The action to continue to advance governance also focuses on our government's commitment to finalize and implement land, resource and self-government agreements. Completing these agreements is an important part of our priorities and is a major component in achieving our goal of a strong and independent North built on partnerships.

A major activity within this initiative is the development of a government land-use framework during 2008–09. There is considerable development activity and conservation initiatives currently taking place in the Northwest Territories, and decisions made today will shape the NWT economy and society for generations to come.

The land-use framework will serve as a guidance document to facilitate consistency in decision making by the GNWT in land-management activities. The framework will identify overall territorial land interests, specific territorial interests in key processes and mechanisms related to land management, and provide strategic direction with respect to advancing and asserting those interests. It will be critical to work with our partners in land management as we define our territorial land interests and clarify our roles and priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the land-use framework will need to align with the NWT water strategy that is a central component of the action to protect territorial water. Protecting our water is a significant priority for the 16th Legislative Assembly. Pressures on the quantity and quality of water resources both within our territory and in surrounding jurisdictions continue to increase, and as a result, the NWT must play a greater leadership role with regard to water-management issues and influencing future management actions.

The development of the water strategy will help identify the actions that need to be taken to properly manage the water resources of the territory and will provide guidance for negotiations on transboundary water-management issues. In addition to this work we are making investments in 2008–09 to improve and upgrade community water-supply systems and provide additional training and support for water treatment-plant operators.

This government is also making significant investments as part of our action to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. The planned joint committee on climate change will play an important role in advising on our activities in this area in support of this Assembly's priorities. Alternative energy projects such as wind energy, mini-hydro developments and further use of wood pellets and solar energy are all being advanced.

While also in support of our cost-of-living initiative, there are further activities being pursued by this government to support energy efficiency and conservation. The Ministers' Energy Coordinating Committee supports the implementation of energy-related actions by the government and is an important component of this initiative's actions.

An important component to mitigating the impacts of climate change is research to better understand and assess the effects of climate change on NWT transportation systems and community infrastructure. This research will help us to protect existing infrastructure assets, maintain transportation service levels and direct infrastructure needs into the future.

It has been said that if you don't measure, you cannot manage. The action on improving environmental monitoring will support efforts to monitor the impacts of development on our environment and wildlife. Support for ecoregion mapping will provide a foundation to identify areas for protection and will help guide economic resource activities while ensuring minimal impacts to forest and wildlife resources.

The Western NWT Biophysical Study helps ensure availability of baseline data necessary to assess, mitigate and monitor the environmental impacts of proposed developments and focuses on wildlife, wildlife habitat, forests and air quality.

Investments are also being made to support caribou studies and provide further support to our caribou-management strategy as part of the environmental stewardship action. Further work in this area will include expansion of the waste-recovery program, and consultations have already started on other products that should be included in this successful recycling program. Our plans for this action also include completing and implementing the Species at Risk Act, and work will be undertaken to develop a Wildlife act.

Finally, as lead Minister for the Managing This Land initiative, I recognize the complexity and challenges in the area of land management and the environment. We believe the balancing required for the actions in this initiative are critical as we work together to achieve our long-term vision and goals.

I would also like to thank my Cabinet colleagues who are members of the Managing This Land committee: the Hon. Floyd Roland, Premier; the Hon. Michael Miltenberger; and the Hon. Michael McLeod. I look forward to our ongoing work with this important initiative.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LAW BURSARY PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week during the review of the Main Estimates for the Department of Justice we discussed the government's plan to eliminate the law bursary program for aboriginal students.

Mr. Speaker, the department's reasoning for the reductions centred on the reality that very few of the students who had received the bursary returned to the North to work after completing law school and that the department would not be able to guarantee articling positions and summer employment opportunities.

I'm aware that the Standing Committee on Social Programs accepted at face value and reluctantly supported the department in phasing out the law bursaries for aboriginal students. Since then, Mr. Speaker, I've been contacted by one of the recipients of the bursary, who raised some interesting issues with me that indicate there may be more to the story than the department has indicated. My constituent pointed out to me that upon receiving the bursary, he was promised communication with the Department of Justice as to summer employment and articling opportunities. As he put it: "I went eight months without hearing from them. They just tossed money at me. I do not know if they are even looking for lawyers in the NWT government. On the other hand, I know that the Saskatchewan, Yukon, Nunavut, Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta governments are looking for lawyers, because they advertise on my school's web site."

So it appears, Mr. Speaker, that one reason the program was unsuccessful in encouraging bursary recipients to article and practise law with the GNWT was the apparent total lack of effort in keeping lines of communication open with their bursary students.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also concerned with the lack of effort put forward by the Government of the Northwest Territories to recruit law graduates to the North. If other small jurisdictions like Nunavut and the Yukon can make this effort, and obviously have available articling and employment opportunities available to law school graduates, I have to wonder why we don't.

There are many examples of programs in government that have failed because a department's priority has changed, and this may have been what happened with the law bursary program for aboriginal students. It is apparent that the department may have, through its own inattention, contributed to the lack of law bursary

recipients returning to the North. Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a shame, and I will have further questions for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time today. I am particularly concerned about my constituent, who is an aboriginal law bursary recipient now just in his second year. By pulling this out, what other opportunities will he have to continue in law and graduate and come back to work in his home territory?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIMINATION OF BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like today to speak to yesterday's statement from Minister McLeod, Chair of the Ministerial Subcommittee on Infrastructure. While I agree with the Minister that we face significant challenges in the GNWT capital planning and delivery process, I was dismayed to hear the Minister state that, and I quote, "Some of the more important changes we'll be implementing are..." What struck me when I heard those words was the finality of the statement. The Minister is advising the House and the public that changes will happen, that the decisions have been made and the GNWT is moving forward, full steam ahead.

For me, it's not a matter of the substance of the changes. Changes are needed, and at first glance the proposals are good ones. I'm saddened by a public announcement from the government, yet again, about actions of which Regular Members are not fully aware. As I've stated before, maybe my naïveté is showing, but I'd hoped that the subcommittee would have advised Regular Members of the changes they were about to announce before the announcement.

The Minister will respond, correctly, that Members were advised of the intentions of the Ministerial Subcommittee on Infrastructure in April of this year. We were, Mr. Speaker, but I for one didn't perceive the changes mentioned in that briefing as a done deal. In fact, one slide from the briefing states, and I quote, "Consider suspending the BIP." I presumed, obviously wrongly, that Regular Members would have an opportunity to comment on the final proposals before they were set in stone and announced. As well, the letter from the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning to Minister McLeod following his presentation stated, quote, "Please advise us of the next steps to be taken and when we can expect a follow-up discussion." There was no reply to that request that I'm aware of.

Mr. McLeod said yesterday that the Business Incentive Policy will be eliminated, new options developed and implementation plans set, and then Regular Members will be advised as to how the

plan will be put in place. Where in this scenario is the opportunity for us to comment on the proposed options and implementation? That's assuming that we even agree on the options.

This side of the House represents many diverse communities, and we have excellent, wide-ranging ideas and suggestions in regard to the removal of BIP. I know with certainty there's no agreement over here with the ministerial subcommittee's statement that BIP should be cancelled altogether. I spoke in a global sense about communication disorders last week, Mr. Speaker, but maybe we have a communication problem here in the 16th Assembly. Did the Minister expect a response from Regular Members to his briefing?

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Ms. Bisaro: Did the Minister expect a response from Regular Members to his briefing? Did the Members not hear the request for a response if there was one? Why do we seem to have such difficulty understanding each other? Where is the notice from the Minister that was requested in our letter?

Yesterday's announcement to me is, unfortunately, another example of the high-handed attitude of this Cabinet. They seem to have little regard for the input of Regular Members, as evidenced by their actions.

All I want is a chance to hear, and comment on, what the government is going to do, before my constituents do.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIMINATION OF BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak to the statement made by the Minister of ITI yesterday, and it's more in line with the Business Incentive Policy that has been established since 1984.

A lot has happened since then in the Northwest Territories and in North America. More apparent is the North American Free Trade Agreement — better known as NAFTA — which was negotiated between Canada and the United States in regard to free trade. Also, as part of that agreement there were exemptions allowed for jurisdictions in Canada that would have been grandfathered — programs we've established in the Northwest Territories by way of the Business Incentive Policy,

the negotiating contracting policies, sole-source contracting policies and other policies this government has implemented to benefit northern businesses and also the residents of the Northwest Territories. We have to realize that by making these changes we may lose more than we gain by losing that exemption, which, again, I feel is very valuable.

Since then we have negotiated land-claim agreements with First Nations government, in which they have negotiated a section called the Economic Measures section, which clearly identifies that those negotiations took place under the emphasis of these economic policies this government had in place when those negotiations were happening.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this government has an obligation to negotiate with those aboriginal organizations and make them aware of any economic development programs and services they offer. If they're going to alter any of those programs, they have to consult with those affected aboriginal organizations that have those agreements in their land claims.

I know there's an opportunity here to revisit and refocus and look again at our policies and make sure they are working, and where they're working and where they're not. These policies may have helped a lot of businesses in the larger centres, but we're struggling in our communities with the small business construction companies that are struggling to compete against the contractors in the larger regional centres. We have to look at that item.

With that, I will have questions for Minister on this matter later.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about municipal services and infrastructure needs in smaller communities like Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e.

Those of us in the larger centres enjoy many municipal conveniences that we take for granted. In smaller communities, like Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e, municipal services are limited. For example, in larger centres paved roads and concrete sidewalks make it easier to get around. In many small communities there is no pavement, no sidewalks. What there is, is mud and dust. With dust there come health concerns, especially for the elders. This is a real concern, because in smaller communities many elders move about daily.

In larger centres residents have a real sense of security with the presence of RCMP. On the other hand, in many small communities coverage is a concern. A local detachment is almost always overburdened with calls. In larger centres the RCMP can respond within minutes. However, in communities like Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution calls made after hours are rerouted to Yellowknife to the Yellowknife detachment, and this contributes directly to a delay in response. The RCMP in small communities is doing the best they can, but with limited resources they are handcuffed.

Residents in larger centres enjoy the luxury of long showers or doing laundry two or three times a week. In smaller communities this is not a luxury but, rather, a restriction, especially for larger households. Water is trucked in once or twice a day and has to be rationed as well as checked daily to see if there's enough. The same goes for sewage disposal. If the tank is full, the water pump is disengaged, and there is no longer water available.

We all know the benefits of physical activity and keeping in shape. In larger communities residents have a variety of sport and recreation facilities to choose from. In smaller communities this is not so. Many communities do not have an arena, do not have a swimming pool or even an outdoor basketball court. Many youth and residents don't get a chance to participate in sports or join in positive activities if they happen to live in small communities.

I'll have questions for the Minister of MACA during questions. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT WEEK AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish everyone a happy Canadian Environment Week.

June 1 to June 7 is Canadian Environment Week. Here in Yellowknife it coincides with National Wildlife Week. There are a variety of events being held around the city to promote sustainable environmental decision making and to celebrate wildlife.

Today is National Clean Air Day. It marks the middle of Canadian Environment Week. I'm sure a lot of us walked to work today. The home-grown organization Ecology North's Transportation Issues Committee invites you to promote clean air and healthy, active transportation options with a one-hour bicycle tour of the diamond capital's crown jewel: the beautiful Frame Lake Trail. To participate, please meet at the Yellowknife 1 Education District office parking lot, on the corner of

Franklin and 53rd, at 5:15 p.m. The group will cycle to the Co-op and back, checking out the trees and birds and, also, trouble spots along the way. The Ecology North Youth Club will be participating in the bike ride and would love to have you join them.

National Wildlife Week this year focuses on pollinators. Environment and Natural Resources is hosting school group activities and displays at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Displays are open to the public from 3:30 to 5 p.m. daily. Check it out and learn about the crucial role of pollinators in our daily lives.

Let's celebrate Environment Week by taking some positive action to appreciate and protect our natural environment.

As part of the continuing series of workshops on local food production and composting held by Ecology North, there also will be an evening workshop on how to build your own backyard composter. This free workshop will be held at the Ecology North office, next to the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, on Thursday, June 12, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Looking at the bigger picture, on Monday the Quebec and Ontario Cabinets held an historic joint meeting to discuss a cap and trade system for regulating greenhouse gas emissions. Incredibly, the federal Environment Minister publicly opposed these provinces that are setting their own agenda. Clearly, provincial and territorial jurisdictions must be leaders on this issue and show the progressive response our public is demanding.

Mr. Speaker, the need to understand the environment and to respectfully ensure its well-being must become an integral part of all our activities — from the education of our youth through the delivery of health services and transportation infrastructure.

To all the people of the Northwest Territories: Happy Canadian Environment Week. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIMINATION OF BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about the government's intentions in regard to the Business Incentive Policy, and I thank Ms. Bisaro for her statement earlier today.

Since its inception there have been numerous debates, motions and discussions surrounding the Business Incentive Policy in this House. I listened to Minister Michael McLeod's statement yesterday,

where he suggested that the government's intention is to scrap the BIP from GNWT contracts.

This is something the government cannot simply cut. This action would have far-reaching impact on all of our communities. I am surprised — well, then again, maybe not that surprised — that Cabinet would reference it in a Minister's statement before having had a full discussion with Regular Members.

It is nice that the government proposes to advise us on the revised approach and its implementation. However, at that stage of the game what meaningful input could we really have into the process? I get a really uneasy feeling that it will be much like other government initiatives, where Regular Members will continue to be just an afterthought in the government's overall plans.

If the government does follow through on scrapping the BIP, have they given any consideration as to what will happen to existing businesses and their future in our communities? I can't help but think that given the hot economy in Western Canada and the lower operating costs, businesses would simply relocate to Alberta. Instead of having an office or a warehouse here in the Northwest Territories employing 20 people, they might just need one employee with a phone number and a BlackBerry.

If anything, Mr. Speaker, we need to improve and enhance the BIP. We need to ensure that truly 100-per-cent-northern-owned businesses are able to have an advantage, and let's be realistic. It does cost more to do business here. The money we do spend stays here in the North, and we protect the 100-per-cent-northern-owned businesses that we do have.

As a government we have to do more monitoring and take the guesswork out of who is northern and who isn't. I don't want to see us lose more companies, people and economic opportunities to the south. We have to protect our own. If we don't, who will?

I certainly look forward to asking questions of the Minister of ITI at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REDUCTION OF COURT WORKERS IN NUNAKPUT

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've made it clear that I do not support the cuts in the Justice programs in my home community of Tuktoyaktuk.

Mr. Speaker, I know what happens in my community. I know the amount of work the court worker does for the people of Tuktoyaktuk every day. Unlike the bureaucrats in the courthouse, I

don't need the government report that tracks the number of applications received and processed to tell me what goes on at the community level. I'm sure it's easy when they establish a person's worth to the Justice system by the number of transactions they're involved in.

Access to justice and the legal aid programs for those people of Tuk should be right and not looked at as statistics to justify reducing programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, the Tuk Justice Committee has a difficult time hiring permanent employees because of the low wages they're able to offer using available funding for the Community Justice committees from the Department of Justice. Without dedicated staff it's virtually impossible for a Community Justice committee to properly prepare, administrate and report on any local justice initiative they apply the contribution funding for. Mind you, that doesn't matter anyway, Mr. Speaker, because the department cut most of the contribution funding.

If we allow these cuts to proceed, I can tell you how justice will be administered in Tuktoyaktuk and in Nunakput. The court party will come into the communities and the court worker will be travelling with the court party. The court worker will take legal aid applications for the next time court comes into town. There will be an increase in the number of no-shows, because there's no one to remind them to appear. Courts will be forced to make circuits into Tuk, meaning that more gas and more electricity will be wasted keeping the plane warm on the tarmac so they can get back to Inuvik to watch the latest episode of *Lost*.

If anything, Mr. Speaker, we should be increasing the amount of money spent on local justice and legal aid in the smaller communities. Sadly, this government has chosen the opposite approach in order to satisfy the financial bottom line.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Jacobson: A real government would be more concerned about the real bottom line: the health and the well-being of northern residents.

Later today I'll have questions for the Minister of Justice about this.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF
SIR JOHN FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the week of August 1 to 3 École Sir John Franklin High School will be hosting a homecoming in celebration of 50 years of service to Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories.

Sir John Franklin High School and Akaitcho Hall opened and settled into their annual routines in 1958 and quickly became an important part of our life in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories.

In 1962–63 both needed to be expanded in order to accommodate unexpected demand. After Yellowknife was declared the capital of the NWT in 1967, another major expansion was required in order to address the increase in the number of students. In 1981 the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre and its 300 seats took over the original gymnasium. In 1982 the school began welcoming international students under the AFS banner and has been hosting eight students every year since then. In 1994 Akaitcho Hall officially closed as more schools were constructed in smaller communities throughout the North. In 1999, after 40 years, the school went through a major renovation, which incorporated modern technology and made it a state-of-the-art education facility.

Plans are well underway for a weekend celebration. It's an opportunity to reminisce and catch up with everyone and anyone who has had a connection with Sir John Franklin High School since 1958, including teachers, staff and students — including a number of MLAs who have gone through this Assembly, both current and previous — and friends. Technically, this isn't a reunion of graduates but, rather, a celebration of education, and everyone is welcome.

The celebration will kick off with a meet-and-greet on Friday, August 1, 2008, starting at 7 p.m. It will be followed by musical presentations by current and past alumni and a dinner and dance during the evening of August 2. To wrap things up, there will be an afternoon picnic on Sunday, August 3, at Fred Henne, complete with water sports, campfires and plenty of sharing of history and memories.

Tickets are available for the homecoming through YK1 Board Office, École Sir John Franklin High School, Weaver and Devore, Overlander Sports, JJ Hobbies, and committee members themselves. To get more information and get involved, contact the committee at sirjohn50@gmail.com or visit their web site at www.sirjohn50.com. As a graduate of École Sir John Franklin High School 19 years ago, I encourage all alumni and those connected to the school to come out and share in the memories.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ISSUES AFFECTING NWT SENIORS

Mr. McLeod: Independent, self-reliant individuals are a goal of the 16th Assembly. I'd like to speak today about a group of people who continue to try to be independent and self-reliant but are sometimes overlooked by us. The group of people I'm speaking about is the seniors of the Northwest Territories. Most seniors have paid their dues and contributed to the rich fabric of the Northwest Territories. It's time we as a society paid them the respect they deserve.

We get calls from seniors back home. They face many issues. A lot of them are trying to get by on a fixed income. The cost of living goes up and their income stays the same. Seniors also deserve to feel safe in the supposed security of their own homes. They shouldn't have to worry about being kept awake by constant partying and noise going on around them.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of seniors still own their own homes, and they try to maintain their own home, but it's becoming too expensive with all the utility rates going up for them to continue to stay there. Like I said, they're on a fixed income. This has caused a lot of seniors to do something they don't want to do: move out of their homes and go into public housing, where they're guaranteed that if they're over 60, they'll get free rent. I think a lot of them don't want to do that, but they're almost forced into that situation.

It causes me a lot of concern, Mr. Speaker, when I see able-bodied young people continue to live off the government while seniors struggle to get by. In this government we do try to assist seniors as much as we can, which is a good thing. However, there's more we can do to ensure that seniors know we are listening to them. Seniors have contributed and still contribute to the Northwest Territories. I'd encourage young people to sit down and chat with them. They have much history to share. It would also give an opportunity to the young people to truly appreciate what they have today, by listening to the stories of hard times the seniors had to go through. I would encourage that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EMERGENCY DENTAL CARE
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to have the Minister of Health and

Social Services, the Hon. Sandy Lee, accompany me on a tour of my constituency May 4 to May 7. I appreciate her going with me to hear first-hand the concerns the residents of Nahendeh have with the NWT Health and Social Services system.

One of the concerns that was brought up several times in our travels, Mr. Speaker, was the lack of emergency dental care in that community. When the residents I represent get a toothache they are expected to wait for the next time the dentist comes to town. The current guidelines state that persons can travel to other communities for dental care only in emergencies. I'm not sure how emergency is defined. Does the tooth have to be broken, or does there have to be an obvious abscess? If I had a bad toothache and the nurse was only giving me Tylenol 3 and I was expected to wait a couple of weeks for a dentist to come, I would certainly classify that as an emergency.

In Yellowknife and a couple of the other larger centres if you have a toothache you can get to see a dentist the same day. Some of the dental clinics even have after-hours and on-call dentists you can call in an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, people are suffering needlessly. It's a pretty simple solution to allow people with dental emergencies in Nahendeh to travel to Hay River or to Yellowknife. The nurses or CHRs in the community can make a determination of how much pain a person is in and balance that need against how long they will have to wait for a dentist to come to the community. To allow people to suffer needlessly because they live in smaller communities is not right. The department needs to develop or improve the policies that address this issue. Mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SAFER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS LEGISLATION

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act was a groundbreaking initiative brought forward during the 15th Assembly in an attempt to deal with the drug trafficking and crimes devastating our communities. Although the SCAN bill died an unfair death, the problems it was meant to address still continue. Law-abiding citizens continue to be intimidated by crack dealers and bootleggers in their neighbourhoods and are frustrated by the inability of the police to shut down these operations, not to mention the time it takes to do that. With drug houses next to our schools, our seniors' homes, et cetera, the days of it being a spectator sport needs to end. It's time this government creates laws and

enforcement tools that finally push back on this problem.

Mr. Speaker, the saying "taking back our streets" is certainly not new, but it deserves the recognition that this government needs to support that. Meanwhile, other jurisdictions, such as the Yukon, have had significant success using SCAN-type legislation that allows the authorities to close these drug and crack houses down and stop the other illegal activities that continue to destroy our communities.

Mr. Speaker, SCAN was a leap forward in protecting our citizens. It should come as no surprise to this government, to this House — to anyone — that for everyday people their quality of life is being stepped on, and they're being taken advantage of. This government's job, principally, is to protect its citizens and to ensure they are safe. But the image out there is that the government's more worried about those creating illegal activity than those who are trying to live everyday, law-abiding lives. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories as a whole would benefit from a Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. I would encourage the Minister of Justice to bring forward a bill at the earliest opportunity to finally put our citizens first.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to recognize my youngest daughter, Janesta, who is down visiting for a couple of days. Welcome to the Assembly.

Mr. Krutko: I'd like to recognize a former resident of the Northwest Territories, Denise Lockett, who is here in the gallery with a bright orange jacket up there. You can't miss her. Welcome, Denise.

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to recognize a constituent of mine, Roy Courtoreille, regional vice-president for the UNW, in the gallery.

If we missed anyone else in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 251-16(2) SAFER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS LEGISLATION

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I spoke about the need for the SCAN legislation to be returned in some form or another. As far as I'm concerned, our law-abiding citizens' quality of life is still put in jeopardy.

My question for the Minister of Justice is: what is his plan in regard to potentially bringing back this bill, bringing it back to life to ensure that our citizens' quality of life is protected?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The quality of life and the safety of the Northwest Territories as a whole is a top priority not only for the Department of Justice but also for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Yes, I will be introducing the legislation to this Assembly during the life of this Assembly. Mahsi.

Mr. Hawkins: Those are excellent words. I'm really appreciative of the fact that this Minister is willing to lead this initiative, although it has had some bumps and grinds on the way. The fact is that it's an important element of protection. When can we expect something like this to happen?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I would like to propose this legislation to this Assembly during the life of this Assembly, taking into account that there needs to be consultation with the Members. It also has to be a made-in-the-North model, not just something that came from the south and changed to our name. I want to meet the needs of the 33 communities we serve. As long as it meets their standards and our standards, we'll be satisfied.

Mr. Hawkins: I appreciate that answer. I respect that. We certainly want to be very inclusive on specific legislation like this, because it's very important to us. When can I expect that type of communication and consultation to come out to the general public?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: As the Members are aware, this legislation was brought forward in the 15th Assembly. There was some consultation that took place. Our plan as a department is to continue with the process of dialoguing with our colleagues, the Regular Members. We were hoping to sit down this fall and start talking on this particular proposal. That's our initial discussion.

Mr. Hawkins: I appreciate that. Would the Minister commit to making sure my office is informed? I don't sit on the Social Programs Committee, but

would he commit to keeping me informed of all steps and developments of this, whether it's in regard to consultation with committee, the general public or other jurisdictions? Any information he can make available to me I'd appreciate.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I think it's clear that the Chair of the Social Programs Committee will be sharing that with the Members. Our office and our department are willing to do that as well with the Members who are not on the committee.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 252-16(2) INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about municipal services infrastructure needs in small communities like Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e. I'd like to follow up with questions to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Can the Minister tell us how the department allocates money to the communities during the budgeting process?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We provide money to the communities through a number of key programs in three key areas. Those areas, of course, are operations and maintenance, community/public infrastructure, and water and sewer services. Eighty per cent of our budget in Municipal and Community Affairs flows to the communities. On top of that, we also have a number of federal programs that we have joint, co-management agreements with. That is the gas tax program, and we're still working on the Building Canada Fund, of course. That comes in at around \$82 million that we provide to the communities on an annual basis.

Mr. Beaulieu: Does the department have a long-term plan to improve standards in smaller communities during the budgeting process?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Historically, a number of governments have worked on improving the standard of living in the communities and the programs to the community governments. I can recall being involved in a committee in the 15th Assembly, the Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs, and we made several recommendations at that time. Whenever we work with the communities to develop formulas, we take into consideration the unique circumstances that face, especially, the smaller communities. Our O&M formulas include the northern cost index. We have a commitment to review programs on a five-year

basis. We certainly take into consideration the special needs of communities.

Mr. Beaulieu: I thank the Minister for part of the response. I was looking to see if they actually have a physical long-term plan that Municipal and Community Affairs works out with municipalities. I'm asking the question: does the Minister have a long-term plan for the communities?

Hon. Michael McLeod: As I indicated earlier, we do have reviews built into most of our formula funding and most of our program-delivery funding that require us to review the allocation dollars. We have more recently embarked on an initiative to have all communities provide us with long-term sustainability plans. These include a number of different areas where they would provide us with information on their capital needs. For example, rather than us as a government providing a five-year infrastructure plan, the communities would compile theirs, including how they plan to finance it. Energy plans are part of that. Capacity-building plans are also part of that. It's a more comprehensive approach than we've taken historically, and most of the communities have embarked on it. A number of communities have completed portions of it. A number of communities, for the most part in the capital area, have identified their priorities, and we continue to work toward getting all the communities done.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Will the Minister agree to have his department do a comprehensive evaluation of programs and services, the budgeting process and infrastructure needs in small communities?

Hon. Michael McLeod: I think we've been doing quite a bit of that over the last couple of years as we have undertaken the New Deal initiative. We would certainly be happy to share our information with the Member. If there is anything he feels we've missed, we certainly can look at providing that information. It's difficult to say that we would embark on another complete review of all the communities at this point. It's something I would hesitate to do.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 253-16(2)
ELIMINATION OF
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister responsible for the Subcommittee on Infrastructure, Mr. Michael McLeod. It's in relation to my statement earlier with regard to the Business Incentive Policy. More importantly, we have these policies, and we have the ability as

Northerners to receive preferential treatment on different types of contracts in the North and also to be exempt from certain federal and national implications such as free trade. There is also the trade agreement between the provinces and arrangements in land-claim agreements. I think as government we have to realize that sometimes the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. It might be that in the long run we're looking at saving money, but the problem I see is that under the free trade agreement we have certain exemptions because we're grandfathered with the policies we have in place.

I'd like to ask the Minister: have you looked at the legal and political implications of making these changes through NAFTA, through land-claim agreements and other agreements we have in place that give us preferential treatment?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm not sure if it's a perception that's not quite correct out there, but there seems to be an assumption that we've eliminated the BIP. At this point our recommendation to Cabinet has been that we suspend a portion of the BIP and that the BIP policy will stay in place. We are recommending that a portion not apply, and that is the portion that affects the capital projects. ITI will be taking that out for further discussion. We intend to have further discussion on all our recommendations with committee, and there needs to be a further involvement from the aboriginal governments. At this point it's a recommendation to which we expect response. Looking at the issues regarding NAFTA and MOUs with the aboriginal governments and land-claim agreements will all be part of that.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I think that whether tinkering with it or making major changes, we have to know what our footing is when making these changes. If there are some legal implications by making these minor changes, is that going to be perceived as an overhaul of an existing preferential policy that's in place in the NWT? So again, have you got a legal opinion from Justice in regard to these changes, and is there a possibility we may be watering down our rights that we have by way of preferential treatment under NAFTA?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the aboriginal governments would certainly let us know if they perceived this to be a watering down of their rights. Actually, I will do further exploration on it. There's no intention to step away from any of the agreements or responsibilities. That information has yet to be compiled.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, again, I believe we do from time to time have to look at the different

policies and procedures we have in place. If they're not working, let's tinker with them and try to make them work. But let's not totally eliminate programs and services because they may not be meeting our objectives. At the end of the day the goal is to build capacity. We are having some major problems out there, especially at the community levels and even in regard to the regional levels, where you only have one major contractor in the Northwest Territories. I think we have to do a better job of inviting people to get into these businesses. I'd like to ask the Minister exactly: have you spoken to the NWT Construction Association or aboriginal organizations in regard to this change?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I haven't personally spoken to any of the associations. ITI has talked to a couple of organizations. The Premier has also, I believe, had some feedback from organizations and businesses. It was mentioned in the previous address, and it's something we feel we need to do. We need to visit, at this point, the way we're conducting business. It's really providing a lot of challenges. In our infrastructure committee we have provided, I think, 14 recommendations. This one's getting a lot of attention.

Having said that, we have to recognize that just about 80 per cent of our tenders that go out are receiving less than two companies bidding on them. In fact, about 15 to 16 per cent of our tenders that went out received nobody bidding on them. We have to really look at how we're doing business. We're making a number of recommendations. Some things have to be further explored. ITI has been directed to go out and come back with some options on how we can revisit the BIP. The FMB and we as a committee will be talking further on looking at how we can change the capital-approval system within our own government — giving us time to have the tenders go out earlier, providing that information to potential contractors earlier — so that we have better timing meeting all the delivery schedules and everything else that's required.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my 13 years here this item has been on the agenda for every Legislature I've been a part of and has always been. We've had committees; we've had special committees. This thing has been worked over probably more than most public items in the Legislature. So I'd just like to ask the Minister if, before we take too many giant steps, we can maybe revisit some of that information, some of those reports, and see what those recommendations are before we make any major expenditures or capital investments going off into another area. I'd just like to ask the Minister that they look at the history of this and bring something

back and also keep the committees informed on this side of the House so we can also have input into the process.

Hon. Michael McLeod: We certainly concur with the Member's recommendations. We intend to look at all the information provided up to now, and a number of us would agree; we've looked at this a number of times now. However, we have to face the reality that there is a cry out there to deal with this issue again. There are a number of companies and organizations that don't feel it's time to do this, but we have to review all the information — review and hear what people have to say. We have to share it with the committee and provide all that feedback to our own infrastructure committee to look at and make the final decisions. We certainly will keep the Members of this House informed.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 254-16(2) BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my colleague Mr. Krutko's questioning on BIP. I'm unsure, though, whether I should ask the Minister responsible for the BIP or if I should ask Minister McLeod. I guess for today's sake I could ask Minister Michael McLeod. If the government has made this decision to move forward on the application on capital projects, I'm wondering when that will be effective, if the Minister could answer that question for me.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you. That is a very good question and a difficult one to answer. I guess it would depend on how much consultation is going to be required. Our target, from our committee, is to have a lot of these things come into play next year. We wanted to have some very good discussion with the committee about our recommendations, and we actually had hoped we would have the possibility of agreement to move our capital-approval process — that has been mentioned by the Premier — to the fall, which would allow us to start planning approval of capital projects in our fall session rather than in February or March. Some things we'd like to see happen sooner than others. For the BIP we don't expect to have a decision for another year or so.

Mr. Ramsay: If it's going to take a year, then I'm wondering why the Minister would stand up in the House yesterday and announce it if we are going to go through the consultation process and get out there and talk to stakeholders and talk to Regular Members on this decision to effect capital projects. I'm wondering if the Minister can answer this question: has the department or the government

done any type of economic analysis to suggest what losses the government would have in the area of corporate taxes and the out-migration of people? There's a big impact by making a decision like this, and I'm wondering if they've done any work in that regard.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Member knows full well that's a very difficult area to measure. We will do some analysis, but whether or not we can measure the out-migration and take our best guess — I don't know if we can go that far. We will do the analysis; that's what we're embarking on right now, and we will have ITI do some of that work.

Mr. Ramsay: As my colleague Mr. Krutko alluded to, there have been many studies. There have been lots of reports done and efforts made to find out the cost of this and the benefits. I don't think we need to reinvent the wheel. What I want to find out is: is this a decision to save \$245,000 and a couple of positions? What's driving this decision? I'd like to ask the Minister that question.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, our fiscal reality, of course, is driving this. We have a huge infrastructure deficit. I think at last count, general estimations were well over \$1 billion. As Members look at our capital budget of \$140-some million, along with carry-over debt, it comes out to \$200 million. It's going to be tough to deal with that infrastructure. We have to do our business more efficiently. We have to have checks and balances in our capital process. BIP seems to have caught everybody's eye and ear. I think we have to really look at what we're planning to do. The Premier said fairly clearly in his budget speech that we would look at the BIP and its application to capital projects, but we'd also look at maintaining our commitment to local and northern purchasing. It's those things we have to keep in mind. We need to have that discussion, and that's what we plan to do.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As long as the cost-benefit analysis isn't done after the fact, after this comes into effect — like the Deh Cho bridge, for example.

I'd like to get some reassurance from the Minister that before this becomes effective the government will come back to Regular Members and sit down with stakeholders in this area so we can work on this together and come up with solutions together rather than it just be implemented by the government.

Hon. Michael McLeod: The over-a-billion-dollar deficit I mentioned didn't include the Deh Cho bridge or the Mackenzie Valley road. I would commit to the Members, and I think all my

committee colleagues would commit, that we would share the information with the Regular Members on where we plan to go and the decisions we're moving toward as the information comes in. Through ITI or with our work with the FMB we will commit to doing that and provide it to the committee and keep them updated.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 255-16(2)
LAW BURSARY PROGRAM
FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I raised the possibility that the reason the law bursary program failed to encourage any recipients to return north to article and practise law may have been related to the lack of attention the department paid to the recipients and the program in general. Can the Minister of Justice inform this Assembly whether, once the department realized the law bursary program wasn't meeting its intent...? Did the department examine the program with a view to improving it so it would meet its objectives?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi. Mr. Speaker, this particular program was introduced in 1999–2000. We have had limited success with this program. That's one area we looked at as a department as part of how we can improve in these areas. That was an area we looked at as part of the reduction that has been brought forward. Due to the fact that we haven't had much success in this area.... Part of that introduction was to increase lawyers in the Northwest Territories, specifically aboriginal lawyers. But there had been a limited intake in the program. Mahsi.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I have a constituent who is currently in their second year, who is in law school because of the bursary program, and has not heard back from the GNWT Department of Justice about articling or summer employment opportunities. It just seems ironic that we've had limited success so therefore let's just pull the rug out from under the whole thing. What about the students who are currently enrolled in law school, who are depending on the law bursary program to conclude their studies?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, currently, for the past seven or eight years we've sponsored these students to return to the Northwest Territories.... Out of the 19 we've sponsored, five returned to article here in the North. Two are in practice: one is in the legal division and one is in Behchoko. One is currently articling.

Mr. Speaker, we hoped that we had more applicants in this area. At the same time, when we talk about the summer employment, the students would have to notify our department by February 28 for summer employment, as with any other students, to be employed here in the North. Also, if they have successfully completed their degree program, the law degree program, they may be considered for an articling position within the Justice Department.

So it's just a matter of applying to our department. Certainly my department will do whatever we can to have those individuals within our system. Mahsi.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, my constituent is in second year of law school. They would like to complete their degree. Why can't the students who are currently enrolled, at the very least, be grandfathered and receive support for the remainder of their degree?

It may be that when these young people do graduate from law school there may be some attraction to stay down south for awhile. Ultimately, a lot of people will return to their roots and will return to their homes when they get ready to settle down, perhaps raise a family. They will come back to the North.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we can cut off support to somebody who's already gone to law school. I mean, I think it's wonderful. I think it's amazing. These people who are undertaking such a thing as a law degree, especially our young northern and aboriginal students, should be congratulated and supported in any way possible.

Will the Minister commit to continuing to support my constituent for the continuation, to the completion of his law degree?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, right now we still do offer, for this year, up to \$5,000 per student to continue for another year. At that point in time the student will have the opportunity to explore other bursaries. There's a whole bunch of scholarships out there. When you attend a university or a college, there are all these bulletin boards that have opportunities for students to apply. Based on their academics, they can easily access up to ten, 15 different scholarships.

So certainly our department will continue to support these students for this year financially and also support them in any way we possibly can with summer employment, if they do apply in time, and also articling when they want to return to the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, when students take up studies in the area of law or medicine, these are more costly than other academic fields. Although our SFA support is very generous, it's not generous enough when your tuition is \$10,000 a year for law school and the cost of books is \$1,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot conceive of this government discontinuing support to someone who's already out and going to law school, wanting to complete their studies. What if other areas of scholarships or foundation support don't come through? Is the Minister suggesting that the student, if they don't have the financial resources or the support of the government, should just drop out of the program?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, that certainly is not the case. We're not encouraging students to drop out. We're encouraging them to stay in school and be successful in their particular program.

This particular constituent is grandfathered as well, along with other students who are in the current system. So we do continue to support them during this transition period.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to highlight that we are here to support them as the Government of the Northwest Territories, and our SFA program is one of the best in Canada. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 256-16(2)
EMERGENCY DENTAL SERVICES
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement with regard to dental emergencies in the community and just to highlight the urgency. I just got another incident in terms of dental emergencies, so I'd like to bring that up with the Minister. What is the current and existing guideline that governs dental emergencies in the community?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that dental emergencies would be handled in the same way as any other medical emergency. When they present themselves to our local health facilities, the health care professionals in those facilities would examine them and make appropriate calls as to the treatment and plan of action. So dental emergencies are considered medical emergencies.

I also appreciate the information the Member has given me about a particular constituent, which I am in the process of following up on.

Mr. Menicoche: I think I'll just speak to the medical emergencies in the smaller communities, as well as the need to develop a policy. I'd just like to know what current plan or what strategy the Minister's office is going to develop with regard to developing a policy.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I want to say, for the record, that I appreciated the opportunity to see first-hand and hear first-hand the challenges that the residents in small communities have with respect to dental care. For our aboriginal people it is covered by the NIHB services, but we have not been able to obtain service providers. There are lots of dentists and dental clinics in the North who have not taken up the opportunity to bid on this contract, in particular for the Deh Cho region. They had a challenge in obtaining a contract, and I believe only in the last month were they able to find a dentist who was willing to travel to those communities from Quebec. I'm hoping that with a new contract out, the contractor will be able to enhance our services there.

Mr. Menicoche: I'm very happy to see that the Ministry is working toward assisting the people in need in the communities.

Just once again, what type of guideline or policy is in place currently within the department for dealing with situations like this?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Once again, I think that dental emergencies are handled as any other medical emergency. I would expect that the health care professional in Fort Liard right now is responding to that situation.

On the larger picture of providing dental services to people in our communities, the service level in the Deh Cho region for the last number of months has suffered because we did not have a service provider. Now, with a new contractor in place, we are hoping we can increase the services there.

On the larger picture, I learned a lot about the requirements for additional dental service, and especially dental service for aboriginal children. It will be something I will be bringing up with the federal Minister of Health, because I think they could do a lot more to step up and be more stringent and more committed to this service to our aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

QUESTION 257-16(2)
UTILITY AND HOUSING
SUBSIDIES FOR SENIORS

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Going back to my Member's statement talking about seniors and the struggles they face, I want to direct my questions today to the Minister of the NWT Housing Corp. A lot of seniors would like to stay in their own homes, but the monthly utility costs are getting to the point where they can't afford it. I'd like to ask the Minister of Housing whether there's a program within the Housing Corp that assists seniors with monthly utility costs, which would enable them to stay in their own homes.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one main program that is there for utilities, mainly fuel, of course, is the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program that is administered by ECE. In addition, there is the fund that is administered with land taxes. We have, through Housing, a Seniors' Home Repair Program that homeowner seniors may be eligible for if they apply. These are three funds that speak to the area that's been raised by the Member.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. The fuel subsidy, I think, is a one-time deal, if I'm not mistaken. It's very helpful. I've had seniors who've accessed that fund before. It's much appreciated, but what I'm talking about are the monthly utility costs, like fuel and electricity. I think that would go a long way in assisting seniors to stay in their own homes and not have them move into public housing and take up public housing stock.

I'd like to ask the Minister if the department would consider such a program that would assist seniors with monthly utility costs and would allow them to stay in their own homes.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The Fuel Subsidy Program is an annual program that seniors can apply for. If they're eligible, they'll get up to the equivalent of five cords of wood, or 2,200 litres of fuel. We also have everybody outside of Yellowknife in the diesel communities in the North subsidized for the first 1,700 kilowatts under the Territorial Power Support Program.

Of course, through the business-planning process we'd be very interested to sit down and talk to and work with the Social Programs Committee. We've already looked at some of the issues for seniors, how the seniors programs are currently structured under the new core program, given, of course, the broad concern of our fiscal reality. We are always interested to talk about ways we can improve services that are affordable.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister again for that. I am aware of the fiscal situation we're facing right now. It's just that this is something I firmly believe is needed, and I think it's something we could discuss during the business plans in September.

A senior moves into public housing and they're over 60; I think they pay no rent. I'd like to ask the Minister: who covers the cost of maintaining the public housing unit they've moved into? Obviously there's a cost to it, and I think it's around \$1,800 or something like that per month, per unit. I'd like to ask the Minister: who covers the cost of the maintenance and upkeep on that unit per month?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The Housing Corporation. There's no rent or costs billed to the seniors, so this is covered through the operations of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. McLeod: I appreciate the answer. The costs are eaten by the Local Housing Authority; I think I'm correct in assuming that. I'd like to ask him if there's any subsidy that comes from ECE, or is the whole cost eaten by the Local Housing Authority?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Those folks who are eligible for the Public Housing subsidy would have funds flow to them from ECE. The issue with seniors' housing and no rent was a political decision of this Legislature back in, I believe, 1995 or 1996. The costs have been built into the operation of the Housing Corporation, and the money's been, over the years, put into the budgets of the districts and looked at yearly.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

QUESTION 258-16(2)
FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I spoke of impact of the proposed cuts to Community Justice committee funding. The elimination of a court worker position will affect the delivery of justice in my community of Tuktoyaktuk.

Can the Minister of Justice inform this Assembly on whether his department still has any focus on Justice activities at the community level?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly for our Justice Department and also the Government of the Northwest Territories, one of the focuses is to deliver programs to the communities, the regions. We will continue to do so. Wherever we need to enhance our programs, we certainly are

listening to the people of the North. That's one area we will be focusing on as the Justice Department.

Mr. Jacobson: I think the department should have considered cuts to the headquarters level before they started touching programs at the community level and regional level.

Can the Minister inform this Assembly as to whether he will consider increasing funding that's available for the Community Justice committees?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I think that is one of the recommendations brought forward by the Committee of the Whole, and certainly we will consider looking at those recommendations. Also, we do have a three-year time span as part of our business planning. We have highlighted where we can enhance and improve our program delivery into the communities. Those will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Jacobson: That's really good to hear. Would the department seriously consider re-establishing my court worker in the community of Tuktoyaktuk?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: We will consider all the recommendations that were brought forward to our Justice Department.

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

QUESTION 259-16(2)
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to ask some questions on the plans for the business incentive program — the BIP. I'd like to give Minister Bob McLeod a chance to respond to some of these questions.

Could the Minister tell us exactly what is in planning for cutback or what changes are being contemplated? I see from the presentation yesterday that he has been requested by Cabinet to implement the recommendation. I'm gathering he must have some firm ground on that. What exactly is being contemplated, just to make sure we're making our comments appropriately?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The GNWT departments, as my colleague has stated, are seeing that the business incentive program has been having a negative impact on both the delivery of infrastructure and on the price of infrastructure because of the lack of competition. So what I will be doing is undertaking a process by which I would proceed through an orderly process to look at the

BIP with a view to rescinding it and coming up with a way to protect local and northern purchasing.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks to the Minister for those comments. Am I to understand that this process would include a public consultation or at least some firm and thorough and comprehensive consultation with the Regular Members on this side of the House?

Hon. Bob McLeod: That's certainly been our intention, and we have followed that, and we have written to the committee advising them of that.

Mr. Bromley: I appreciate that clarification. Again, looking at the presentation yesterday, "to generate the required interest, we need to consider removing the application of the BIP from these...contracts" is one statement, followed by "the subcommittee has recommended eliminating the application of the BIP from the GNWT and community government infrastructure projects." That's sort of two levels there. And then finally, Cabinet has requested implementation. So I just want to be sure. Can the Minister commit to bringing the Regular MLAs in on this process, and can we expect a briefing from the subcommittee on infrastructure and the opportunity for more input there, something I know we're very interested in?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Seventy six per cent of the total businesses that have been BIP'd are located in Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik and Fort Smith. They obtain 62 per cent of government contracting in all of the Northwest Territories. Certainly we will be consulting with the Regular MLAs.

I should point out also that the Business Incentive Policy is only one of several ways to provide incentives to increase competition. One of the problems we've been facing is that several large northern businesses have been bought out by southern businesses and they're still considered to be BIP'd. Similarly, large construction companies have moved south. There are other ironies; for example, Wal-Mart is one of my favourite places to shop, and it's also a good business.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: I appreciate, again, the comments of the Minister. I wouldn't be too proud about being a favourite shopper of Wal-Mart, myself.

Laughter.

Mr. Bromley: But I really do appreciate the Minister's comments and agree that some real innovation is needed in finding ways to protect our northern businesses. Thanks for that. I really appreciate that and encourage that.

Will the Minister include some of the ramifications of things like NAFTA — North American Free Trade Agreement — that's been mentioned by my colleague Mr. Krutko, and the obligations we become vulnerable to when we lose these things that are forgiven because of grandfathering and so on? I'm asking for a very eyes-open approach to this. It sounds like there is a tendency to do that with an attempt to get some real protection and support for the local. I'm sure the Minister will be using full-cost accounting.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I know that Maude Barlow has made some comments about NAFTA, but I'm not clear on what the implications of NAFTA are on the Business Incentive Policy. I do know that under the Agreement on Internal Trade within Canada, which all of the provinces and territories have signed on to, we have been able to carve out the Business Incentive Policy. That allows us to have a northern preference for business. We intend to protect that part of Agreement on Internal Trade and also the fact that... I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 260-16(2) CLOSURE OF LIARD HIGHWAY

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Transportation with regard to the recent ongoing trials and tribulations of the mud areas of Highway No. 7. The road has closed again just recently, and I'd like to know the status of it.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The springtime has the highest risk to the vulnerability of our road systems in the North. And to update the Member, as of 11 o'clock this morning, the Liard Highway is open to light traffic and closed to commercial traffic.

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear it's open again. The residents of Fort Liard are really, really quite frustrated with the highway system. To refresh the Minister's memory, the word "goat" is part of the phrases they have been using.

We had spoken in the House last week about Highway No. 7 and had asked the Minister about the commitment level of getting those mud sections rebased and reconstructed this fiscal year. It has been like that for 20 years. Residents and our traveling public do not want to see it set aside as soon as it dries up. They want to see it rebuilt and reconstructed.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: I appreciate the Member's referring to the word "goat"; it's a virtue. In our region we don't have a highway.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the Minister know, let the people in Fort Liard and Fort Simpson know, that the department has taken a considerable amount of resources at this time of the season. We have indicated in our plans that this road desperately needs attention. Reconstruction is a high priority of our department, and we are concentrating on this section of the highway through our Main Estimates. When we get to our Main Estimates, I will show what type of investments we would like to make in this section of the road. I hope we can fix these problems, these soft spots in the highway, once and for all.

Mr. Menicoche: That is certainly something I will pay attention to when we get to the department and Committee of the Whole, line by line. Once again, I just wanted to reiterate to the Minister the importance of Highway No. 7, which is part of our national highway system, too, and shouldn't be in this state of disrepair. I just wanted to say once again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get a commitment from the Minister's office that they will look at some serious repairs to these sections.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: The problem is in the silt down the Mackenzie Valley into the different roads and our airports. We have noticed through our assessments that the Liard Highway needs some serious work done. It has been known for years. We want to do a proper job. We are going to commit millions into the Liard Highway to fix the road, Mr. Speaker. Right across the Northwest Territories, in terms of value on our investments.... I look forward to when we can get up there to talk about our Main Estimates and let the people know in Fort Liard that this highway has been looked at very seriously by the department. I also want to thank the contractor on Highway No. 7, our staff and the people in Fort Liard for their patience on fixing this muddy road once and for all.

Applause.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 261-16(2)
HOUSING MAINTENANCE AND
UTILITY PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on one of the questions asked by Mr. Robert McLeod from Twin Lakes, and it has to do with the fairness of the support we offer to seniors when it comes to housing generally. My questions are for the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we know to live in public housing as a senior over 60 there is no rent charged. With the changing demographics, the aging demographic in the Northwest Territories, is that offering on a universal basis sustainable?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Sorry, I missed the Minister here. The honourable Minister, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: It will be a challenge.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, we know that we have many seniors who are over the age of 60 who live in their own accommodation independently and who would benefit greatly from some greater support. Is there a plan in the NWT Housing Corporation or a way that somehow we could close the gap between giving one segment everything and giving others such a small amount that it really isn't going to make the difference for them with the rising cost of utilities?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, like many things we do as a government, there are things scattered across different departments. We talked about some of them here today. There's the tax relief from MACA; there's a fuel subsidy from Income Support. For the Housing Corp, it's people paying no rent.

Clearly, the issue of aging in place and working to keep people in their own homes as long as we can is, in the long run, the most beneficial for us. While the Housing Corp has no specific plan, it's clear, as we move into a business-planning process, that it's an area that does need attention. There are things I hear constantly in my own constituency; people talk to you about the fuel subsidy, where they're short by \$10 or they're just a little bit over the limit and they're struggling to make ends meet with all the other high costs.

So I believe there are a number of things we could do — we do have a Minister for seniors — but I think there's a need for us to look at aging in place and keeping people in their own homes as long as possible. We have some supports, but are we as coordinated as possible? I would say we could probably do better.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I appreciate the fact the Minister agrees we could do better, and I think time is of the essence in trying to come up with something. I believe, as I said in my comments yesterday, that with the increased cost of fuel and electricity, this is going to become an urgent matter for seniors. You're going to see many seniors unable to cope with these costs as they come upon us this winter.

Mr. Speaker, another anomaly within the support to seniors is the fact that some of the support is

means-tested, some is not. For example, if you are living in public housing, it does not matter how much money you make — some people are even working — or how much money you have in the bank. However, if you want to do a home repair program through the Housing Corporation in order to make your home more energy efficient or just to maintain it, that particular program is means-tested. In fact, seniors would then be called upon to offer up a mortgage on their house.

I'm just trying to think again about the equality. Some are means-tested; some are not. Is that something the Minister's department or the Corporation is going to look into?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, these are all political decisions that can be made, have been made: the issues for no rent.... There is a contradiction or a discrepancy with, as the Member's indicated, means-testing on one hand and not on the other.

The whole definition of a safety net — which is what we're trying to provide for all our citizens — does not imply universality. It implies that if you hit the safety net, we should be able to help you so you don't fall through into poverty. If you have the good fortune to have enough income to live on your own, then that's a credit to you, and it's a credit to us as a system that you don't require our services as a last resort.

But clearly, the issue of public housing and the issue of seniors paying rent in public housing is an issue that's been discussed a number of times in the Assemblies I've been in. There's been no resolution. The issue has stayed the same. I know the NWT Seniors' Society is also on the record, year after year, suggesting there should be some rent, however modest, charged to all inhabitants of public housing. That, once again, is a policy issue and it's a political decision.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is right in saying there is no resolution. It gets talked about year after year. And in support of, and in fairness to, all seniors of the Northwest Territories, what is it going to take to arrive at that political direction? I believe it is an urgent matter of this government. It should be a very high priority.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, as soon as we conclude this budget, we're going to roll over into the full and first opportunity as this Legislature to have a look at the full development of the business plans for the rest of this term.

I would suggest that if the political will and appetite is there, the government stands ready, as well, to

engage in that discussion. It is going to be one, like most things we do, where we tackle issues in our programs that are long-standing. There's going to be a lot of concern. But clearly, politically, we're ready to have that discussion and work with the committees. If there is an improvement we can come up with in terms of services and programs for seniors, we're prepared to work with the committees to do that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 262-16(2)
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY,
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Premier. We had the opportunity last Sunday to meet with the Senate committee on natural resources. They're travelling through the North. They're going to be here in Yellowknife, Norman Wells, Inuvik and, I believe, up in Tuk.

We had an opportunity, along with my colleagues Mr. Bromley and Mr. Menicoche.... The issues that they touched on were very informative. They talked about global warming; they talked about devolution; they talked about resource development.

One thing they really seemed to have a lot of questions on was devolution and resource-revenue sharing. I think the realization that we have wealth yet we don't have devolution is something they found very surprising.

So I'd like to ask the Premier: did anyone from his Executive Council, or somebody from the Executive, have an opportunity to meet with this Senate committee and talk about resource-revenue sharing?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we had correspondence with the Senate committee and had the Deputy Premier sit down with them and have some discussion, as well as one of our staff members.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a supplementary question. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think it's an opportunity we have to use whatever means of achieving devolution. I think the Senate is probably the second-most powerful legislative authority we have in Canada, next to the House of Commons. I'd like to ensure that we continue to keep them involved in the issues in the Northwest Territories. It seemed like they're focusing a lot of attention in the North, which is great.

I'd just like to ask the Premier: exactly what are we doing to lobby other Senators and other MPs in Ottawa to make them aware of our issues, especially in the area of devolution?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Premier has informed me, there's going to be some correspondence between the Senate committee and ourselves to share more information.

First and foremost, though, we have to realize that the federal government is ready to move on this file. We just have to make sure we get the proper deal. One of those things is to work up north first and get agreement to proceed forward or, if we decide there are just too many differences here, to look at what other approaches are available to us. But we are corresponding with the Senate committee, looking at options and sharing more information.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, again I'd like to ask the Premier if he also can keep Members on this side involved in that process. By working together and also having a strong enough focus on this, I think we can make a difference. I think by lobbying efforts and doing whatever we can as Members and also as Ministers to keep this at the top of the agenda, it will move a little bit.

I'd like to ask the Premier: are there any intentions of developing some sort of kit or package we can hand out to promote this issue? As Members on this side of the House, it will help us to understand the issue and, more importantly, promote it also.

Hon. Floyd Roland: We would be prepared to put that kit together, an information package, and share it with Members. I do believe Members can help us in getting the message up north. The simple fact that we're looking at tightening our belts as a government shows everybody in the North that we need to get more revenues in the North. One of those packages is a revenue source flowing south right now. We need to bring that north so we can enhance our programs and not have to tighten our belts.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Senate committee was also pretty interested in a lot of our infrastructure projects. We're talking about the Mackenzie Highway; we're talking about Taltson; we're talking about hydro development. Again, the problem we have is our borrowing limit. That's something they also found pretty interesting: why is it that we're limited on the amount of capital we can invest, which is going to promote...?

Mr. Speaker: Do you have a question, Mr. Krutko?

Mr. Krutko: I'd like to ask the Premier: are we looking at also promoting other aspects of this

government to get capital invested in the North from the federal government, more than the devolution?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. As I stated in the Budget Address, my focus will now be on getting the message out to the people who need to hear it: about our opportunity, what's available and what we can do. It's about getting the tools in the North to make those decisions in the North, and get on with where we think we should be going as a territory and as a people in the Northwest Territories.

Part of the next process is getting that information out there, and getting the message out about the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Written Questions

QUESTION 17-16(2) EMPLOYEES AFFECTED BY 2008-2009 BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we discussed the Department of Human Resources, we had conversations and discussions at length about affected employees. At that time some Members referenced aboriginal employees.

I have a question for the Minister of Human Resources in regard to some other employees. Of the employees designated as "affected" in the 2008-2009 budget reductions:

- 1) How many of these employees are women?
- 2) What percentage are women of the total number of affected employees?
- 3) How many of the affected employees are single women?
- 4) What percentage are single women of the total number of affected employees?
- 5) How many of the affected employees are single men?
- 6) What percentage are single men of the total affected number of employees?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 11 AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, June 6, 2008, I will move that Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 10 AN ACT TO AMEND THE PHARMACY ACT

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi that Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Pharmacy Act to allow pharmacists to prescribe a limited quantity of certain drugs for the continued care of a patient. Pharmacists are required to notify the initial prescribing practitioner of the continued-care prescriptions.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Bill 10 has had second reading and stands referred to standing committee.

Motion carried; Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act, read a second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Speaker: Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 8, Tabled Document 37-16(2), Committee Reports 6-16(2), 7-16(2).

By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 10-16(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

Committee of the Whole, in consideration of bills and other matters: Bill 8, Committee Report 2-16(2), Committee Report 3-16(2), Committee Report 4-16(2), Committee Report 5-16(2), Committee Report 6-16(2), Committee Report 7-16(2), Tabled Document 37-16(2).

What's the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The wish of the committee is to continue with the Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services today.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if she'd be bringing any witnesses. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Okay. We'll take a break until the witnesses get here. Thank you.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call the committee back to order.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008-2009 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): At this time I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to introduce her witnesses.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Mr. Greg Cummings. To my right is Director of Finance Mr. Derek Elkin.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Welcome, witnesses. General comments. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a good an opportunity as any to bring this up. I notice that the Minister's opening remarks, with the eight pages.... As highlighted by another Member, it seems to be lacking in recognition or a plan — or, I should say, even further — on addictions. Addictions, as we know, is a very significant problem here. It's horrible. That's all I'm going to say. I could probably go on at length about that. The fact is that addictions isn't highlighted. I've

looked through the budget, and of course, we don't have any specific line item for addictions.

The problem with that, Mr. Chairman, is that just the other day we gave away, through a negotiated deal, our Territorial Treatment Centre, which will now become a training centre. Addiction problems continue to rise at an alarming rate, and treatment for larger challenges, such as cocaine and crack and whatnot, require specialized treatment, yet this budget seems to be lacking that recognition. If it is there, I'd certainly like to know where it is, and I'd certainly like to know why it seems to be missing or why no recognition of this problem is in the Minister's opening remarks.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't agree with the Member — the way he puts that. There are programs and services for addiction services. The mental health unit at Stanton is the more acute-care facility for addiction treatment, more intensive care, under the supervision of the medical professionals.

We have mental health addictions specialists and community wellness workers placed in most of the communities. We invest up to almost \$1 million to Nats'ejée K'eh, which is the treatment centre facility in the Hay River Reserve, K'atlodeeche band land. We also provide funding to the Salvation Army, which has a treatment program that is not recognized as much as it should be. We also spend a significant amount of money in counselling here — family counselling services in Yellowknife and all of the territories. I'd be happy to provide the Members with more information.

We work with the Tree of Peace. Yellowknife Health and Social Services provides services for Yellowknife and the North Slave area, but all of the authorities have money allocated for addiction counselling. When we go into the specific item, I'd be happy to point that out to the Member.

Also, with respect to individuals who are looking... I realize the Member is from Yellowknife and he may be referring to cases in Yellowknife. In my office I get lots of inquiries and calls from people who want to get outside of the NWT treatment services. They're treated on a case-by-case basis; they're treated on a confidential basis. I can tell you that anybody who needs assistance is given support and counselling to do that. What I do ask for is that when I get inquiries from a Member who's asking a question, or the general public, I would like the initiative and action to be taken by the people in question. We follow that up.

I do not agree with the Member that we don't have enough of that, although it may not be obvious to the Member, and I will be happy to point that out.

As we go forward, the mental health strategy and action plan as a whole is something I want to revisit. I look forward to having those discussions in this fine process.

Mr. Hawkins: Well, I disagree with the Minister's assertion on that, because quite frankly, we don't have a specialized program that deals with crack. That's taking over a number of our areas in the community, and it's becoming the drug of choice, which is a real shame.

Sending someone to intense treatment in a hospital is not an appropriate use of our hospital. Furthermore, when we describe it as "We send them to the mental health unit," I wouldn't typically want to describe someone who has a drug addiction problem and wants to seek treatment as having a mental health problem. I would say that's someone who has been attracted to a dark side of life, and they can't shake it and they need some help. I don't think sending someone to a mental health unit is the appropriate source.

The Minister further asserted that Nats'ejée K'eh is the treatment centre. I do recognize that, and I've spoken in favour and support of that in the past, and I will today. But the fact is that it's an alcohol, spiritual-based program, and if you're burdened with the pains of crack addiction, that's the last place you need to be. You need to be in an intensified treatment centre that focuses on those things. The way the existing program goes now, you have to be sent to Nats'ejée K'eh, fail and then be further referred out south. Now, I'm not saying that's the exclusive formula for how that process happens, but that's the typical formula.

The Minister has suggested that she will get us details and whatnot, but I still have a number of questions outstanding regarding treatment programming and services provided in the Northwest Territories. When I say investment, I'm talking about real investment that provides real programs for people in those areas. The Salvation Army, I understand, offers a program. I know the Tree of Peace offers a program. I understand they're successful for the levels of what they offer. But they are not the high-intensity programs required when you have that addiction. We do not have family-related programs, so when you have a codependency on drugs, we have nothing that focuses on that. We have nothing for children that offers that.

What I'm stressing is we have a number of these addictions. It's not new to this Minister; it's not new to this Assembly by any stretch of any imagination. The fact is, as I said today about watching drug dealers take over our community, it's time this sort of spectator sport ends, from the sense of a bureaucratic approach. I believe to the bottom of my heart that this territory needs a high-intensity

crack-addiction treatment centre to deal with people in that scenario. If we can't help them with the demons in their life, I don't know where they have to turn. The problem is, I think, that this government continues to offer a soft "sit around and talk through your problem" process, and the fact is that this requires a high-intensity situation of treatment.

Sending people to the hospital for addictions is not a reasonable approach. I don't think it's fair when we talk about the stress that Stanton itself has. It has been highlighted by other Members about burdening Stanton with office space. It's not designed that way. In my opinion, Stanton isn't designed as a treatment centre for people like this. We need a facility that focuses on this. Personally, I really don't care where it is; I really don't. If it's in Sachs Harbour or Resolution, I don't really care. The fact is this is the type of real investment in people we need to make. I think you'll hear outstanding support even from people in the Yellowknife community. They don't care if this is built here; they just want to see it built.

The fact is that people are suffering from this problem. Whether you're a parent watching your children, whether you're a spouse watching your partner, whether you're a child watching your parent, it doesn't really matter. The fact is that people want solutions to this problem, and I don't think it's being met head-on. Money is being given to service organizations to sit there and talk, who I think to some degree are worried about their little "kum ba yah" approach, and having people come in and sit there and talk their way through it. We're not talking about soft drugs, where people can control themselves or get some support from friends and neighbours to work through the problem. We need real intense treatment, and I think that is the real move on this problem that needs to be done.

As I cited, I don't see a significant investment in that area. As I even further highlighted the other day, we just gave away, to a large extent, our only treatment centre for this type of thing. That's not speaking in any negative fashion to the fact that it's going to actually finally be put to good use. I believe it will have a good use as a training centre, and I think that's fine. I'm glad to see we've stopped heating an empty building for a number of years — which kind of draws into the question of why it sat empty for so long.

My time is running out, and I'm sure I made my point a number of times. Maybe Cabinet's smiling because they agree with me on the sense that this issue needs to be done. Do I hear they're finally willing to make that commitment? I'm not sure.

I'm going to leave it at that. I think I've made my point a few times. This is a significant issue in my riding downtown; a lot of the citizens have always

highlighted this and they look for leadership from the government.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, just briefly, as the Member pointed out, late in the evening yesterday he thanked the government for the capital projects: a territorial dementia facility and the Yellowknife consolidated clinic. There is no plan to build a treatment centre in Yellowknife. I think we have a lot of good capital projects happening there.

I don't think there's anybody in this Assembly qualified to speak about what exact services should be provided to those suffering from crack addiction or some of the major addiction issues. What I was trying to simply point out is that if you talk to anybody who has these addictions and mental health issues, it is bracketed as the same issue. Addictions is part of mental health issues, and there is a spectrum of services you need to provide, right from medical intervention at the most acute stage, which has to be provided by psychiatrists at the hospital, who are qualified medical doctors, down to the program that Byrne Richards provides in Yellowknife, which is called Crackbusters. So it is very important that we have a whole spectrum of services available. A treatment centre is only one component of that.

I want to assure the Member again, and it's up to the Member if... I accept the fact that he would never probably agree with anything I present, but it's not for me to speak; it's not for me to convince him. He will do with information that he has. But let me tell you, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, that anybody within our system who is suffering from addiction of any kind, who is in need of support and services and counselling — the services are available for them to tap into in every community throughout the Territories. We have the services available in the whole spectrum — for the children, for the youth. It's not a simple, black-and-white "enter into this door A and everything to do with your issues is going to be taken care of." That's not the approach with respect to a very complex area of mental health and addictions.

Another thing I want to talk about with Nats'ejée K'eh programming is that I was just there visiting as the Minister as well. They organize their programs very much based on the clientele that is in the place at any specific time. I think that it's very simplistic to suggest they are doing some simple alcohol- and spiritual-counselling thing. They are professionals and they provide services.

Anyway, I just want to say that we focus on individual-based treatment programming and services for those people who walk into our facilities, and we tailor our programming to suit the individual's needs.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): General comments? Do we agree we move to detail?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Okay, we can turn to page 6-7, Operations Expenditure Summary. We'll defer that till later. The first page up is page 6-8, information item, Active Positions. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see by looking at this page that 15 positions are being eliminated from headquarters. I was wondering if the Minister could go through the process they followed in order to determine which positions would be eliminated. Of those positions, which ones are currently filled and which ones are vacant?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: As I indicated yesterday, in adhering to the realignment exercises that we've had to go through, my department placed the most minimal impact on the front-line services as much as possible. That is the reason most of the reductions are within the headquarters, within the Department of Health, not in the authorities.

There are reductions of 17 positions from the department, and that is about 12.5 per cent of the entire workforce of the department. I do have a table here for the Members that I can provide to the Clerk. I can advise the Members that out of the 17 positions, nine positions are vacant, six positions are filled, and five of the six have been placed or other arrangements have been made. There are two positions to be determined, and they are placed in headquarters. They're not in any of the authorities.

The reason those are to be determined is that our reduction exercise for these positions spans over two years. It starts this year; some of the savings are this year, as I stated in my opening statement. But some of the reductions will be implemented next year because of the planning we need to do with programs and services to make sure our alignment is done in a way that impacts the program delivery at the headquarters level as minimally as possible. Seventeen positions out of 133 is quite large in that context, and we need to make sure we do it the right way. I'd be happy to provide the Member with that table.

Mr. Abernethy: Yes, I'd like to see that table, please. In thinking about the positions you're eliminating, I'm under the understanding that you're getting rid of a number of positions in your communications area. How do you see that impacting the promotion and marketing that that department does with respect to the provision of health care in the Northwest Territories?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I want to assure the Member that in all of these realignment exercises we have not eliminated or taken out entire programs. It is about better using the resources we have, and I think the communications section is a good example of that.

I do want to note that the budget reduction exercise is about choices. As the Premier mentioned in his budget opening address, these are hard choices — to eliminate positions. But the way to do that is to make sure we minimize the impact on the programs and services as much as possible and that we make every effort to make sure our employees affected are given all the opportunities to be reassigned wherever possible.

With respect to the communication section, we will be eliminating a communications officer position, which has been on transfer assignment for a while. We will be eliminating a graphic design area, but we do have resources there, so we could continue to do the web site work and other services. That's the principle we have applied in all of our realignment exercises.

Mr. Abernethy: I've indicated before that when it comes to the reduction exercises, I'm less concerned about vacant positions. There are still a number of positions that have incumbents in them.

In my first question, I asked you if you could go into the type of analysis you used in order to figure out which positions were going to be eliminated, what that analysis entailed with respect to the department's mandate, and all those things. You didn't really answer the question on what kind of analysis you used, what you used as criteria, and how you dug in and figured out which positions weren't contributing to the mandate of the department in your selection of those positions you were going to eliminate. If you could go into some more detail as to how you actually chose, that'd be useful.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I think the Member mentioned that.... I'm not sure if I would put it that way. I mean, I don't think a Minister or any official in the department goes into the book and says, "What mandate can we eliminate?" May I just get that reworded?

Mr. Abernethy: The Department of Health and Social Services has a mandate. In reviewing the positions you're eliminating, how did you determine which ones weren't contributing to the mandate of the department and, therefore, you were justified in eliminating? I want to know what type of analysis you did in relation to what your mandate is, and how you chose to eliminate specific positions and not adversely affect your mandate.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I think I heard it right the first time. I don't agree with the premise

that by eliminating some of these positions we're suggesting that any of these positions are not contributing to the mandate. I don't think that's fair to the positions affected or persons affected. I don't think that's the right conclusion to make.

I think, Mr. Chairman, communications is an important part of our mandate, as are all other divisions in the department. As I stated earlier — and I've said this many a time — what you will see if you look at the positions affected in the department is that we have not eliminated any mandate at all. We have not eliminated any program. What we have done is look, program by program, to see how we could reduce some of the positions and expenditures but still deliver the programs we need to deliver.

I think that with communications, you will see we have a number of positions in that area — Policy, Legislation and Communications; that's what it used to be called before it was restructured — and that there are a number of people engaged in the communications work and graphics work and advertising work and pamphlet designing and annual report designing and web site designing. There's a group of people who are doing the work. The best decision to make is to look at what everybody's responsible for and see how we could do the same job with fewer resources.

If we had choices, we don't want to do less. So to say we are reducing those positions because they were not contributing to the mandate is not fair to the employees impacted. With respect to all the employees who have been impacted, these are choices we had to make.

I think the Member should keep in mind that when we make these choices, it's not about, "Do we not appreciate the communications section more? Do we not appreciate some of the other positions that have been impacted?" We had to make an overall department mandate, which is to provide health and social services. I have made the commitment publicly that, as much as possible as the Minister, I do not want to impact front-line workers. We're talking about nurses, doctors or medical services — a myriad of services that we provide. I think we need to go to a bigger circle about how we make those choices.

Mr. Abernethy: I'd like to thank the Minister for putting words in my mouth. I'd prefer it, obviously, if she'd actually listen to what I'm saying.

The department has a mandate. I'm asking you what criteria you were using to ensure that the elimination of specific positions would not adversely affect your mandate. I'm not suggesting they weren't doing or contributing to the mandate. But changing positions — which were obviously, at some point in the department's history, put in there

because they contributed to the mandate.... Removing them has an impact. I'm asking you what criteria you used to dig into the department to figure out which position eliminations would have the least impact on that mandate? Clear?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'd just like to remind the House we can have some civility here and show some respect for each other. All these personal shots across the bow aren't helping anything. I think we should be civil here. I'd just like to ask that you keep your questions directed to the page we're on, and also if you can keep your answers short and specific to the point that's being asked so we can move on.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I could advise the Member that the elimination of these positions does not impact, in any way, the department's ability to follow our mandate and deliver the programs and services we have been given to do. We just have to do them differently.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley and Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Actually, Mr. Chairman, I don't have questions until 6-12.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is specific to page 6-8. I thank the Minister and the staff for providing this layout as to the description of the positions. I find it very useful, and I appreciate that work.

A similar question to Mr. Abernethy's is: if I could get some information as to what analysis was done to determine why a specific position was needed or not needed? Was there any specific analysis to weigh out whether a position was needed or not needed?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: The analysis of the department and my approach — I say it again and I've said it many times — is to minimize the impact on the front-line health and social service workers. For that reason, the largest brunt came in the headquarters positions. I really don't want us to characterize these affected positions as ones that were not needed or that were not necessary. I think those are positions that had work to do, but under the circumstances and under the fiscal situation, we've had to reorganize the staffing to deliver the services but reduce resources where possible. Once again, it's a choice between eliminating some of the positions in headquarters versus eliminating positions in front-line staff.

Mr. Hawkins: I appreciate, and I'll make special recognition of, the fact that the Minister's

instructions were probably to ensure that whatever impact was going to happen.... I'm sure they were, to some degree, not focused on making sure we created as few ways as possible. I'll recognize that's probably an assumption on my part, but I would think that any reasonable person would say, Let's try to make this as seamless as possible. Assuming that, we would have to come down to a reason as to why these specific positions were chosen over others.

With approximately 117 positions within the headquarters region of Yellowknife, when we would focus in on a specific area a couple questions arise, from my point of view. If I were in the management position of making this type of decision, something I would say to myself would be, "What impact, if I delete this position, would it have?"

I would have to take some analysis, in my mind — whether it's strategic, where I lay out their job description and say, Well, what do they do and how will it be affected if I suck them out of the system...? I'm trying to get a sense of why these positions were determined as they are. Was that analysis done in any way as I've described?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, absolutely. I think that's what I've been saying. Once again, there are 17 positions impacted in the Department of Health and Social Services. It's all in the department, not in the authorities. Out of 17, nine positions were vacant, which means there are no active bodies impacted there. Out of those impacted 17 positions.... In six positions there were incumbents there, and most of them have been reassigned or they have places to go.

We looked at whether there were vacant positions, whether any of those positions could be rewritten or re-profiled so it did not impact the program, delivery and services and, most importantly for me, we did not impact the front line. I feel very strongly about this, because I believe the department officials have done a really great job of minimizing the impact wherever possible under the circumstances. I believe this was done in a way the Members had been saying it should be done.

Mr. Hawkins: As we move forward, I continue to share a number of Members' frustration over trying to get the details on what type of work was done.

I'm just going to take a position here, and I want them to explain to me how it worked. It was already highlighted in the House that it was the communications position that's been targeted for reduction. I'd like to know what analysis was done and the procedure of how they decided that communications wasn't required or who is going to pick up those duties. That's the type of analysis I'm trying to get to understand this.

Further highlighting the concern I'm raising is the fact that two of the positions are yet to be determined. So how do we know what analysis has been done on positions? We don't know. And we don't know if they're filled; we don't know. It sounds like a Donald Rumsfeld tongue-twister here. We've done analysis on positions we don't know are going to be there, but we're deleting them anyway and whatnot.

There are obvious questions here, Mr. Chairman. As I highlighted with the one communications position here: what analysis was done on the principle of what that job description offers and the evaluation of where those duties will be picked up?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Chair. With regard to the graphics design/communication specialist, we looked at the entire staff we have in the communications division, which is four full-time positions. We looked at the current duties of all four of those positions, and the specific duties of this position, to see if we could rewrite the job descriptions of any of those people to optimize the amount of work we could get out of each one of those positions, and subsequently reduce from four to three.

With regard to the To Be Determined positions.... During the reduction exercise we were also contemplating a realignment of the Department of Health and Social Services to make it easier for us to determine which positions could be eliminated without impacting the front line and the service to the authorities too much.

In that context, we have done the initial phase of that realignment but haven't completed it. We did actually identify two positions we thought could be removed, but we haven't made a final determination about that, because we haven't completed the realignment of the department.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you to the Minister and the staff for that answer. That's the type of answer. It sounds like someone put some thought into it.

A number of Members are concerned about the approach we've used. Quite often that seems to be the answer that's missed — how someone did some analysis on potential workload and where they can do this. That's caused a lot of frustration and some pushback that not just this Minister but all those Ministers over there should be receiving so we get that type of detail.

The frustration we're receiving here is that.... My fear is, the fear in the public — whether it's the public service or just the people on the street — is.... The magic eight ball was approached on the fundamental process of going to find money within

a department. Should we eliminate a job? The answer is: only you will know.

That's the type of answer I'd like on some of these, and I want to be assured that all the positions received that type of scrutiny to make sure we didn't just tell somebody today, "We're eliminating this position. And by the way, two seats over, you're going to do all the work, whether you know it or not." I think what happens is that we end up having fallout problems on top of this.

I'm running out of time here, but I certainly see there are issues as that falls out as well. I want to make sure that sort of a begin-with-the-end-in-mind approach happens with it. If you want to eliminate — go down from four positions to three.... I'm glad they've done some analysis to say, "Well, you know, we could spread the work out." That was the answer I was hoping some thought had gone into.

Also, if I were a human resource specialist of some sort, my next fear in that area would be whether we have now burdened people with work they can or cannot do. On top of that, have we changed their job descriptions by now? Have we changed the phase of how we pay?

Those are other items. I'd certainly hope the Minister will have some feedback on that, to ensure we've done this from top to bottom, thinking it through.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I appreciate the Member's comments. I don't believe there were questions there.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): I'd like to take a second to recognize Ms. Kathy Tetso in the gallery. She's the CEO of the Health and Social Services Authority.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hate to belabour this issue of staffing, but I do have a couple of questions.

Information that the standing committee was given by the department some time ago indicated that all 17 positions we have on the new table were to be eliminated in '08–09. I just would like to get clarification from the Minister whether that's a typo. If it's not, how do we eliminate two people we haven't yet determined?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the third month of '08–09. We are, as the deputy minister indicated earlier, engaged in restructuring of the department, where the health side of the mandate is more specifically laid out. This is

probably my layperson's explanation of that. I could have the deputy minister explain more of that.

We do have the remaining nine months to finish reorganizing the department and to make sure we do more in-depth research into how to re-profile and realign the positions so we minimize the impact on the programs and services.

I could ask the deputy minister for more information. It's your call, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Specifically in the departmental realignment, one of the items we addressed was that we had a division that was referred to as the Territorial Integrated Services, which included some aspects of health, some aspects of social services and some aspects of public health. Over the past two years there's been an increasing sort of profile in the public health area, in particular since the SARS outbreak in Toronto. The Department of Health and Social Services felt it probably was important for us to place much more emphasis on the public health side of things. So I have tasked the chief medical officer to do some work to define for us a structure that would allow us to continue to do the work we do to support our hospitals and our primary care system but at the same time bring increased emphasis to the public health side of things.

There are positions that were identified in the health area, but we thought it would be premature to eliminate those until we had completed the realignment and I had taken the recommendations of the chief medical health officer.

Ms. Bisaro: Thanks for the explanation. I just want to explain that we have data that says 15 positions and then we had data that said 17. I think that's where a lot of the confusion came from. I think I finally understand.

I did want to ask a question. There is an indication of reduction in the children and family services area. I wanted to ask how many social workers are currently employed within children and family services.

Mr. Cummings: The practising social workers we have in the Health and Social Services system are all located in the authorities. The Department of Health and Social Services has program support specialists and policy people who do that kind of work for the system, but there are no practising social workers in the Department of Health and Social Services.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask a few questions on the position reductions as well. Maybe

I could get a comment from the Minister on what her definition of "placed" means.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, those are people who have been notified as affected status. If they choose to do so, they have to submit a resumé and ask to be considered for other options. "Placed" means they have either been placed within the department or government-wide.

Mr. Ramsay: This isn't to pick on the Department of Health and Social Services, but I'm wondering under whose authority is the Minister and the other departments. They seem to be placing employees at random without this budget having gone through the full scrutiny of the Regular Members of this House. There's something fundamentally wrong with a process that allows the government to do this to employees without it getting fully aired in this public forum by the Members duly elected to the 16th Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to ask the Minister: who's giving you the instructions to be placing employees? Is it the Minister of Human Resources, or is it the Premier?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that this is an issue where the Member has concerns, not specifically with Health and Social Services alone but government-wide. I believe the answer has been given in that regard, in that a decision was made to notify the employees of their potential impacted status. Then the choices are given to the employees to see whether they want to pursue other options. I do understand there are affected employees who have chosen not to do that. That's their option as well.

As the Member is aware, the principle behind it and the good intention behind it was so that instead of having the entire civil service of 4,500-plus employees wondering whether they would be impacted or not.... It was thought it would be a better idea to have 100 or so employees who were potentially impacted notified of that. Obviously, nobody is forcing these employees to be looking at other options, but there are constantly positions being opened for competition, and these employees are free to consider other options if they have chosen to. If they want to wait until the budget is processed, that's up to them as well. I believe that's how the processes were rolled out.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I guess that is a fairly large assumption on behalf of the department and on behalf of government: that this budget is actually going to pass. We're affecting the lives of over 100 people to what end? It's not entirely necessary, in my mind, that we've had to do this. Notifying them is one thing, but moving them around and impacting other people while you're doing it, to me, is not a

very good process we're following here. It's totally pre-empted the budget we have before us.

Really, we're working with a document that's not set in stone. It's evolving every day as people come and go and move around. I really don't know what we're doing here. I don't want to pick on the Minister and the Department of Health and Social Services, but they do have 17 positions that were eliminated. By the looks of things they've moved around five people or placed five people without us even passing the budget. That's more an observation than anything, and that's an issue I'll bring up with every department that comes before us.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. As there was no question there, we'll move on. Page 6-8, Department of Health and Social Services, information item, Active Positions — By Region.

Department of Health and Social Services, Department Summary, Active Positions — By Region, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Active Positions — Community Allocation, information item.

Department of Health and Social Services, Department Summary, Active Positions — Community Allocation, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving on to page 6-10, also an information item, Active Positions — Health and Social Services Authorities. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is an increase in staffing at community health authorities of seven positions. I wonder if I could get some explanation, some rationale for the need for these changes. I want to say I don't begrudge the health and social services authorities from getting more staff, but I'd like to know why we're cutting positions in headquarters and increasing at the authorities.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a reduction component of this budget, but there are lots of other investments. The increases in the positions for the department are on the THAF program, which is federal funding that we have. It's the Territorial Health Access Fund. There's a coordinator for accreditation, which is located in the department. There's patient wait times, e-health project management in the department. There's a midwife position being funded in Fort Smith. There's an STI nurse being funded in Yellowknife. There's a registered nurse, a Northern Women's Health position, being funded at Stanton. There is a dialysis registered nurse at Stanton, a home care nurse in Deh Cho, a home care coordinator in Hay

River, and home support workers in Tlicho, Beau-Del and Hay River. That amounts to 12 additional positions, but with the reductions and reallocations that's a net increase in the authorities.

Ms. Bisaro: Thanks for the information. I thought I heard the Minister say there is a position in Fort Smith, but if I look at the numbers on page 6-10, Fort Smith is going down by one. I'm getting confused again.

Hon. Sandy Lee: These are net numbers. I am going to ask Mr. Elkin to do the math for me.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: Thank you. There were three positions related to the aboriginal health position at Stanton, and in last year's budget they were reflected in Tlicho, Beau-Del and Hay River incorrectly. We are just correcting that to show them under Stanton as opposed to those communities.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Elkin. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. Thank you. That's fine.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just trying to get a grip on some positions here. Are all the positions listed on this page funded?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes.

Mr. Hawkins: How many unfunded positions do we have?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, there are 2.5 unfunded positions in Health and Social Services, and they are in the department: one in population health and one senior policy adviser and intergovernmental officer.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, under Stanton Territorial Health Authority I see we have five in growth. Is that a net gain of five, or was there a growth of, say, 6 or 7 and the loss of a couple? Is that a net, or what type of change has happened at the Stanton Hospital?

Mr. Elkin: At Stanton there is a net change. The three Aboriginal Wellness positions are reallocated — the two dialysis RNs, the RN for the Northern Women's Health Program — and offset by the Telehealth reduction.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Elkin, for that. I have to tell you it got muddled in there. I was trying to get a sense of the dialysis positions. Were they lost or gained?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It's a gain.

Mr. Hawkins: Seeing as we're on the dialysis positions, how many positions are dedicated to that type of treatment in the unit?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, we don't have that detailed information. I'd be happy to get it for him.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you. I'll accept that. On the positions that were deleted, could you highlight exactly what positions they were? If I understand it, the Aboriginal Wellness came in and two new dialysis positions. Were there any losses in this calculation, just for the official record? I was having trouble hearing that.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the increases to Stanton are the registered nurse for Northern Women's Health and two positions for dialysis registered nurses. So that's three. There is a typographical change, a correction of the error from last year, on three positions, so it's not real positions per se. The only reduction at Stanton Territorial Health Authority is a Telehealth position.

Mr. Hawkins: On that Telehealth position, what analysis was done on that?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It's exactly the same analysis as previously noted. If you look at the program we have there, currently the Telehealth program has a coordinator in headquarters. Then there were a regional position in the Inuvik health authority, one in the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority and one at the Stanton Territorial Health Authority.

We had to look at that program and see whether it was possible to deliver the program with fewer resources. The technology has improved a lot in that regard. The machines and equipment we have from the funding from Canada Infoway have enabled us to deliver those services much more cheaply.

The decision was made that the Stanton position and the Yellowknife position could be eliminated but we could still do the programming in a different way. I think it should also be noted that there are lots of communities in the Northwest Territories without a coordinator for Telehealth. But they do still turn on the machines, and they do still participate in the Telehealth program.

So to answer the question — sorry for being long-winded — looking at the job description, duties, the make-up of resources within that program and how we could still deliver the program were the criteria that were used.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I'm just trying to get a sense of all of this. We have a Telehealth coordinator in headquarters, and that makes sense to me. As to whether we need a coordinator or not,

I'm not in a position to say yes or no. But then we lose the Telehealth person at Stanton. I'm just trying to follow the format here. That's not seen as a position that needs to be kept, but the duties could be spread out.

Again, I'm not necessarily speaking for or against the reduction. But then we lose one in Inuvik and it gets reinstated because the program can't run without that person, but then in the communities it runs fine without a Telehealth coordinator. I'm just trying to understand the principles of how we can save one and not the other. I'm just trying to make sense of this. Is Telehealth training a practicality of training to all nurses? Or is it reasonable for administrative staff to do that? Or are the patients scanning themselves? I'm just trying to get a sense of why it works well in one area where you need a coordinator of some sort, or an operator in that area, but you don't in other areas. Someone says you don't need one at Stanton. That seems to be the evaluation. I'm trying to get a sense of how this was justified and, furthermore, if I held it up how it would make sense. If the Minister could explain that.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the analysis we did, we looked at all of the positions we have supporting the Telehealth program for the whole system of Health and Social Services. The position that exists in the Department of Health and Social Services has system-wide responsibility and participates in things like negotiations with Canada Health Infoway to receive additional funding into the system and so on. It also provides support to staff in the authorities and at the local level, if they have equipment and they need troubleshooting, et cetera. So the position at the department can be written to exclusively provide support from the department to the regions and the local areas or can take a greater role in a particular authority where there's more need.

We looked at all the positions, but the positions don't support only one service or one community. They all support additional communities. For example, the position in Inuvik supports all of the communities in Beaufort-Delta and also provides services to the Sahtu.

We did that kind of analysis to see how we could take the existing expertise and spread that out to provide as much support as is needed to all the communities. The other thing we took into consideration is that the kind of equipment we have has evolved, sort of in the same way as equipment related to satellite television. It used to be more difficult to operate and less reliable than it is today. Nowadays the equipment is fairly straightforward, so we're able to increase the application into small

communities and not provide specialized expertise just to book appointments and turn it on.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Cummings. Any further questions on page 6-10? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although I had asked this question, I would just like ultimate certainty.

I have a constituent who uses the services at the dialysis unit, and it's my understanding that that position has been left vacant or unfilled or other — and I'll leave "other" pretty vague — and I just want to make sure it is fully staffed at this time. What is the exact staff of that whole unit again, just to make sure it's on record?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I could give him that assurance. Anybody who needs that dialysis service is being, and will be, provided with it at Stanton.

Mr. Hawkins: There is another area I forgot to mention, and I'd be remiss if I didn't bring it up. I've heard from a number of nurses — and it's been heard by a number of Members throughout this Assembly, and I'm sure even the Minister must have heard this from time to time.... The nursing staff have been described as over-prescribed in work and undersubscribed in relief. Does the Minister — speaking of Stanton specifically — have a grip on the actual numbers of staffing of nurses there, and how many? Is there a difference between how many we have staffed and how many we have in the sense of funded/unfunded positions? Furthermore, is it grouped around how many are required to operate the hospital properly and safely?

Hon. Sandy Lee: There's lots of information that's required there. The information I have is that the vacancy rate at Stanton for nurses has been decreasing over the years. I could give him specific information on that.

The overtime hours there.... I think I saw the stats where it's a little bit less than the national figure, and I could provide the Members with that. Over the years the casual nurses float pool has increased NWT-wide, making it possible for us to use fewer agency nurses.

I could advise the Member that right now at Stanton we do have the stand-by, the float pool nurses, of nine. There has been a suggestion made that perhaps we should look at increasing that to 15. Stanton is actively looking at that option, to see what the optimal level of float pool nurses are, taking into consideration the qualifications required. Because, from my understanding, the float pool nurses need to have intense two-year training to make sure they're at least trained to work in three

or four areas: ICU, surgery, psychiatry, pediatrics, medicine, obstetrics and such. Obviously, these are not for all the nurses, so we need to get a pool of nurses to be trained for that. At the same time, we need to do a cost-benefit analysis to see what the optimal level of those numbers is. What I want to tell the Member is that I'd be happy to get him all the information on those stats I've mentioned already.

There's no question that the human resource issues at the hospital have been under stress or under a little bit of pressure. I think I'm working toward getting some of the more clear information on that, an action plan on that. Part of the work the public administrator is doing there with the management of Stanton is part of that exercise. Finishing the human resource plan is part of that exercise, and it's one on which I am confident I could have a full and more clear package of information to go forward to the Standing Committee on Social Programs and other interested Members to address that situation.

Mr. Hawkins: Although I'm not on the clock, I thank you for giving me the chance to say, Yes, I'll take that information. I certainly would hope that every other Member on this side of the House would receive the offer of that package of information the Minister had offered.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to, unfortunately, review the Telehealth positions. I got confused with the numbers, and where they are, how many they are, and how many we're going to be left with. I thought I heard that there currently or were four Telehealth coordinator positions and that the budget is going to leave us with one in Inuvik. If I could get that confirmed, please.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The headquarters person in Yellowknife.... We have one in headquarters, one in Inuvik, one in Yellowknife Health Authority, one at Stanton. We are proposing to eliminate the positions at Stanton and the Yellowknife Health Authority.

Ms. Bisaro: So we would be left with two coordinators then: one in Inuvik, one at headquarters. I do understand from the information the department provided to the standing committee that some of the sort of technical support is going to be provided by TSC, and that's a good thing. What is going to be the function of the two coordinators that are left? Will they have a regional scope, and just what regions will each of these two people cover?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The remaining positions actually have a territorial scope, and the functions they provide are to assist with the scheduling of sessions on Telehealth and to do training around Telehealth and to provide support if there are technical glitches during the sessions. It is possible, with the technology we have, for that to be done remotely. So the people who do that work can be located anywhere in the system and can do that work on-line. The plan is to have the position remain at the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority and in the Department of Health and Social Services, but either could have a territorial scope of responsibility.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. That's great. That's good.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 6-10, Department of Health and Social Services, information item, Active Positions – Health and Social Services Authorities. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In Mr. Hawkins' questions to the Minister I don't know if she answered as to how many unfunded positions we have across the health authorities. I'd be interested to know that, especially at Stanton.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have information on unfunded positions for authorities. I would be happy to make a commitment to get back to the Member about Stanton.

Mr. Ramsay: I have heard it was as high as 26 at Stanton, but I guess I'll wait for the Minister to get us that information.

I would be interested in knowing, not just at Stanton but in the rest of the authorities, what the unfunded position level is.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'll get that for the Member.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 6-10, Active Positions – Health and Social Services Authorities.

Department of Health and Social Services, Active Positions – Health and Social Services Authorities, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to 6-11, Department of Health and Social Services, information item, Health and Social Services Authorities, Active Positions – Community Allocations.

Department of Health and Social Services, Health and Social Services Authorities, Active Positions – Community Allocation, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to 6-12, information item, Revenue Summary. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that the Government of Canada has a fiduciary and legal role to provide health care services for aboriginal people in Canada, including the Northwest Territories, but that there is an agreement for this department to cover those services in the Northwest Territories.

I understand that the federal government compensates the department with about a 3 per cent annual growth for increasing costs, but we've been experiencing something like a 7.8 per cent, or thereabouts, average increase in annual costs. I'm wondering, if I've got that right: what is our current estimate of the accumulated debt that the department views is owed by the federal government and over what period of time does that apply to?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the Government of Canada under supervision of DIAND department is responsible for funding for insured hospital and doctors' services to our Inuit and Indian peoples of the Territories.

That's in line with the practice before the health programming and service delivering was transferred to GNWT in 1988. At that time there was an agreement in place that put a 2 per cent cap on the funding they would provide. How we would do it is that they would provide the services to our aboriginal peoples and then we bill DIAND for those programs. The stats we have available is that since 1999 the expenditure has been a lot larger than 2 per cent, obviously, and the accumulated deficit there is about \$95 million.

Mr. Bromley: I'm wondering what the estimate for this particular year will be for the addition to that debt and where that shows up in the budget here and where we're at in the process to recapture those costs.

Hon. Sandy Lee: We estimate that this year's expenditure will be at about \$41 million, and the expenditures we could claim as per the agreement will be about \$25.6 million, which gives us a gap of about \$15 million a year.

Mr. Bromley: I'm wondering where we're at in negotiations with the Government of Canada or DIAND to recapture those dollars and the accumulated debt. Also, does it show up here in the book somewhere?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It does show up on the page that we're on, 6-12 under the Hospital Care and Medical Care for Indians and Inuit. Those are the expenditures we are incurring. Then we submit our reimbursements. We will be submitting last year's reimbursement this year.

We have been going back and forth in the House about some of the actions and interactions the Premier has had with the DIAND Minister and the Prime Minister in his previous role as Minister of Health and Social Services. There are two federal departments involved in this issue. The major one is the DIAND Minister and the Prime Minister, obviously, and then on the side is the federal Minister of Health, Tony Clement.

I think we need to renegotiate, and the Member may appreciate that in order to negotiate you need two parties to come to the table. We're asking the federal government to come to the table and negotiate a better term and to remove that cap, but I believe the federal government feels that some of these fundings are being provided through other means — their transfer payments and such. We will continue to pursue this issue and see if we can renegotiate and raise the cap.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Any other questions on page 6-12? Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I must be having a tough day, because I'm confused again with the numbers. Page 6-12 is titled Revenue Summary, yet the two amounts that were referenced by the Minister add up to about \$25 million to \$26 million, which I thought she said was the amount we incur in expenses, and we only get \$15 million back in revenue. If I could have a clarification, please.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: The \$26 million for the agreement is reflected in the two lines: one says Hospital Care Indian and Inuit and the other one, Medical Care Indian and Inuit. But we receive that full amount. Our expenditures are \$40 million.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. I am having a bad day. I did have a question, as well, on this page. There are two numbers, a 1 and a 2, that reference notes, I presume. But I don't know where those notes are in the document. If they're important, I guess I need to know. What are they referencing?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I have the same copy as the Members do, so I can answer that. I will undertake to get that information for you.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Further questions? Page 6-12, Revenue Summary, information item.

Department of Health and Social Services, Department Summary, Revenue Summary, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on, under Directorate, page 6-14.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Directorate, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 6-15, Operations Expenditures Summary, votable activity: \$6.780 million. Questions? All agreed?

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Directorate, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$6.780 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 6-15. We're agreed. Moving on, page 6-16, information item, Directorate, Active Positions. Questions? Mr. Robert McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you. Not so much a question, Mr. Chair, as a comment. I was just noticing the staff at the headquarter level and something I've been telling the departments I've been speaking to. Taking more staff from headquarters and leaving the program staff on the front lines is something I appreciate. I think more of the departments should have been looking along those lines and saving a lot of people on the front lines, especially if they're positions that are not really needed or vacant positions. I just wanted to comment that I thought this was a good move on Health and Social Services' part.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Comment only. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier today we were provided with a list of position reductions under Health and Social Services. I just want to be clear. Under Active Positions here there seems to be a loss of eight positions. If the Minister could clarify which positions have been re-profiled in the bigger scheme of things.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have the seven positions that were provided already — FTP policy adviser; graphic design and communications specialist; communications planning specialist; senior adviser, financial planning and analysis; junior financial board analyst; data entry clerk; manager of planning and reporting, impact assessment analyst. Those are the seven position reductions, not eight positions.

Mr. Hawkins: No, it didn't seem quite clear. There may have been a position missing or something there. Could we clarify that? If we have 15 positions here, two to be determined, and this is headquarters, that's minus eight. If I read this paper, there are 15. The paper I'm citing is the one. I just want to make sure.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I believe the eight positions are the first eight listed on the page there. Is that correct, Minister Lee?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, those are the first eight. I think the other positions are under other tabs.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Anything further, Mr. Hawkins?

Mr. Hawkins: No, that's it.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): On page 6-16, Directorate, Active Positions

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Directorate, Active Positions, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on, page 6-17. Questions? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the third paragraph down we have a section highlighted under the recruitment....

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Excuse me, Mr. Hawkins. We were still on page 6-17, Directorate, Active Positions.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Directorate, Active Positions, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on, 6-18, Program Delivery Support, Activity Description. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, colleagues, for that.

Mr. Chairman, there's a section under Human Resources, and it talks about recruitment and retention. If I understand it, there's the difficulty of balancing this out. I'm just trying to find out what the activities are that this would apply to. If I can get some breakdown as to some examples of how they're reaching out.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Okay. The activities under human resources recruitment are the recruitment and retention activities we have the Human Resources Department do on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services. They include programs such as the Community Health Nurse Development

Program, the nurse mentor program, the nurse practitioner development program, the medical bursary program for physicians. Those are the programs the Department of Human Resources administers on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank the deputy minister for that detail. As I understand it, for better or for worse there are nurse practitioners out there on term positions. They haven't been made permanent, in other words.

That said, I'm under the understanding that this section, through this type of program, goes out to continue to find more potential nurses to become nurse practitioners who we don't have jobs for. As I understand it, the situation is that you need to be a practising nurse practitioner in order to keep your credentials active and useful. It's not a question of losing typical RN status. It's more in the sense of how are we investing. If we continue to pay people to become nurse practitioners when we don't have positions for them, that's a concern. If I can get some information as to how they deliver this program for nurse practitioners. How many do they train? What positions exist for this transition from training to practical work?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yesterday I think I touched on this when I stated, and I want to state again, that the nurse practitioner program is very important to us. As Ms. Bisaro mentioned yesterday, hopefully it's more than a six-month situation at Stanton. I want to make it clear that what we know happened at Stanton should not be construed as a reflection or any sort of.... It's hard to explain. It's a situation that is really internal to the operation of the hospital in that those two positions were put there to be incorporated into the operation. That's the understanding of all the authorities.

All the authorities are very proactive, and they're open to hiring as many NPs as possible. We have lots of NPs in the Yellowknife Health Authority; we have an NP placed in Fort McPherson; we have one trained and placed in Fort Resolution. This is the way to go for the future, and you'll see there is a lot more money being put toward training our nurse practitioners and placing them.

The difficulty a few NP positions at Stanton ran into was with the fact that the hospital setting was not as conducive to accommodating positions in a way that they are able to do in more primary clinic settings, such as the Yellowknife Health or in other regional centres. If we are to continue, and we are going to continue to rely on NP positions to enhance our services and to lessen the burden on the medical practitioners, it's incumbent on our operators to use these NPs and to incorporate their

work into the practice. It's not supposed to mean extra services, but it's a service that would replace some of the nursing positions or take on some of the work that is not typically done by nurses.

I just want to advise the Members here that the situation that happened at Stanton is an anomaly. It should not in any way reflect negatively on the commitment this government has, and that I have as Minister, to continue to pursue and support the NP program.

Mr. Hawkins: Through this program is the Government of the Northwest Territories paying for the training for RNs to become NPs at a rate at which we cannot fill empty positions? Because they do not exist. If that's the case, how many do we have in training school? How many have we trained to date? How many openings do we have to provide for these people who have taken this training the territorial government has paid for?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The system as a whole is open to accepting all of the NPs we train. I could get the information on exactly how many NPs were trained. The situation is that they are meant to be in a primary care setting and we may not be able to have those NPs exactly where they want them and in exactly the jobs they want. I think we have to respect the ability of the health authorities to make decisions about where to place those NPs. Those are the things we need to iron out. It needs partnership and collaboration with all of the parties involved, with all the health care professionals that work with the NPs. But so far we have been able to place all the NPs we train.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on, we're on page 6-18. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the area of program delivery and services, I think as a government we have tried different things in the past. Some things have worked out, and other things have been problems by way of recruitment, implementation. I'll use some examples. The midwifery legislation that was passed — and we were able to activate that program — seemed to be originating in one community, which is Fort Smith. But to enhance that program to other regions and other communities.... I know my colleague from Deh Cho made reference that it was something that community would like to also consider. I think that's something communities elsewhere throughout the Territories could probably access. The legislation is there, but it's not really being implemented to its fullest.

The same thing applies in regard to the mental health positions. We've implemented legislation to bring people under the public workforce whereas, before, a lot of these positions, such as alcohol and drug programs, were run out of the communities

that needed them — government employees. Yet we made it so stringent that it's very ineffective to find people for those positions. The qualifications are so high and so stringent we are having problems attracting and recruiting and, more importantly, training our own people to take on those positions.

I think also in regard to programs we have in this government, we seem to be quick on the draw, passing legislation, establishing these particular legislative authorities to do so, but it's the implementation side I think we're lacking in. I think we have to find a way to have the flexibility in the legislation, to realize we're unique and we have some unique challenges. Through the ways that individuals, either at the regional level or at the territorial level, interpret that legislation, they have to have some flexibility or basic moral understanding of the people, the communities and the regions they're serving, and work with those NGOs and community organizations to deliver a lot of these programs and services.

I talked about the Tl'oondih program. They had 200 and something people go through that program. It was unique because it was the first time in Canada, I think, they had a program strictly designed to deal with family issues, to deal with the children, the husbands, the wives, the grandparents and whatnot. It was unique in the sense that a lot of the problems we see in our communities and in our families you can track back decades to residential schools, going back to first contact. I think it's important that we work with our community and aboriginal organizations to develop programs and services that meet their needs, meet their goals of trying to achieve some of these successes and not put road blocks in their place because we had so much legislative red tape in there.

I'm wondering if there is anything this government is doing by way of reviewing its policies, procedures and legislation, seeing if there are ways we can, not overhaul the system but review the procedures and policies and see if we can make it not as restrictive as it is right now.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Obviously, I'm not as familiar with the situation in Fort McPherson and Tl'oondih as the Member is, but I like to think I have spent some time in meeting with the people and talking to the Member. I have had the occasion of meeting with the people from Tl'oondih Healing Society and the community people. I don't think we could generalize; we need to work on specific situations.

With respect to Tl'oondih, the Beaufort-Delta authority has been working with the community to have that community person do the job she has been doing for a long time. There were extra

training models provided. She was following that path, but I understand some other personal situations have happened. I don't know all the details, but she made the decision to discontinue.

I have made a commitment to the Member that I will work with the Member to find a community solution to that issue. The fact is that the authority is providing that service temporarily; it is to stay temporarily. The authority has assured me they are looking for proposals to work with the community. The community has agreed to make a submission to the authority with a plan on how to fill that position.

As well, I understand that at their meeting the Beaufort-Delta authority and Tl'oondih Healing Society as well as leadership in Fort McPherson have agreed to work together on communications, on other ways to work together on that project. So I just wanted to express my commitment to work with the Member on that project.

Mr. Krutko: On another issue, as I mentioned in my opening comments in regard to this department, we have to find a solution to the apprehension of children and find a way so we don't have 620 kids in care. We have to find a way to work with the families, work with the communities and work with the children to find workable solutions in our communities. I think it's important to realize that apprehending children is not the way to find solutions to these problems. We can blame the parent; we can blame the community; we can blame society in general. But at the bottom of it all, a lot of it has to do.... We can blame history in regard to residential schools. We can blame the world for alcohol and drug problems. But at the end of the day, these are problems that are not just unique to us. They're something we have to find solutions to. A way I see to take hold of that is finding control mechanisms and finding systems in place so we work with community social workers, community bands, people on the Community Justice committees, groups like that, to find ways of looking at this through a different lens than we are today.

I'd just like to ask the Minister: are you open to some sort of working arrangement that, like in the legislation...? I asked questions when the legislation was being brought forward in the Child and Family Services Act, that communities have to be involved.... One of the things we were assured of at the time legislation was being passed was that there are going to be Plan of Care committees. Communities will have a say in regard to the Plan of Care orders that are going to be issued. There will be an opportunity for people who have these orders placed on them to have a system in which they are being heard by their leaders.

I'd like to ask the Minister: exactly what is her department doing to ensure these Plan of Care committees are working? As far as I understand, talking to the only community in the Northwest Territories that has implemented it, they haven't had any support whatsoever from your office out of Inuvik, in regard to Inuvik health board; there hasn't been any attempt to work with them to basically give them the tools they need to productively do their job. Again, they are being stymied by a system that basically does not want to download or upload powers and authorities to other community groups where the legislation clearly states that Plan of Care committees is part of the Child and Family Services Act. I'd like to ask the Minister: exactly how are you going to improve that relationship with the communities in regard to the Plan of Care committees in communities, which seem to have done a bad job to date?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I want to advise the Member that I understand his commitment and passion on this issue. Department policies have been developed, and it's working. The changes to the legislation also reflect the department's focus on keeping the children in families as much as possible, in extended family and community, wherever possible.

The statistics show that in, say, 1999, we only had about 30 to 40 children who were in families or extended care out of what were, I'm sure, as many as we have now — I mean, out of the total number. This past year we have 630 children in care, and almost 400 of them, NWT-wide, are within either the families — with some sort of agreement with the department as to the actions they have to take — or extended families. I think we need to recognize that we've gone a long way in following the principle of keeping our children in their families and extended families as much as possible.

Now, with respect to Plan of Care, these are new changes to the law, and it's the only one in Canada, so we are sort of developing our work as we go forward. There are no other models to follow.

That new provision is not being implemented by authorities. It's the work of department headquarters and the shop of the director of Children and Family Services. He has been to communities, providing workshops on how to set up that Plan of Care committee.

I do agree with the Member that we're not moving on that as fast as possible or as numerous as possible, because we do not have those Plan of Care committees set up in a lot of communities. But it's one that I would like to see happening, and it's one that, in talking to department officials, they're committed to providing as well.

When I attended the NWT Foster Family Association, I encouraged all the foster families to

talk to.... A lot of them are from communities, and they're aboriginal foster parents from communities. I've asked them to help me and to work with the leadership, to make sure we have Plan of Care committees set up in as many communities as possible, because it's an avenue for communities to get involved in the welfare of the children that are in care.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Moving on to Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. In my comments yesterday, I talked about how the Premier's statement made reference that there's going to be a one-time \$1.8 million investment for on-the-job Community Health Nurse Development training programs and expansion of the nurse practitioner program.

Now, both sound really good to me, but I was having trouble reconciling the two, from the Premier's statement, to the fact that the department is eliminating the full-time leave program for nurse practitioner education, as well as reducing the number of seats in the Community Health Nurse Development Program. So the two don't seem to be consistent with the Premier's statement.

First, about the nurse practitioner program. I applaud the department's commitment to the nurse practitioners. Clearly, there's a significant amount of value to integrating nurse practitioners into the system. But by cutting the NP education leave program — and the fact that Aurora College no longer delivers the nurse practitioner program, due to low enrolment — how does the department intend to live up to its commitment, in light of these reductions, to train and prepare nurse practitioners for the delivery of NP services in the Northwest Territories, with a primary focus on maximizing northern employment?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I could assure the Member that the reductions being proposed are more than compensated for by new investments we're making. As the Premier stated in his budget statement, there's a \$1.8 million new initiative, and most of the money is coming from THAF. It's going to enhance the NP programming we have and the opportunities we can give to the NPs.

Mr. Abernethy: Just so I understand, it sounds to me — and I may misunderstand this, so feel free to correct me if I'm wrong — like you're eliminating the departmental commitment, or the previous departmental investment, and you're now going to rely on the staff funding — which, I understand, ends in a couple years — to enhance nurse

practitioner training, which I suppose is all right as long as the training continues to go.

But I do still wonder how, in fact, this department intends to invest in nurse practitioners and train nurse practitioners, given that the primary delivery agent in the Northwest Territories is history: it doesn't deliver the nurse practitioner program, due to low enrolments. So how does the department intend to use this THAF funding to enhance the training of nurse practitioners in the Northwest Territories?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Could I ask the deputy minister to provide that information.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Speaking to the Community Health Nurse Development Program and the nurse practitioner program?

Mr. Abernethy: My initial questions are about the nurse practitioner one. When I get some answers there, I have some on the CHN. So my first one is specific to the nurse practitioner program, and it's related to the fact that you're investing this \$1.8 million THAF fund to train the nurse practitioners, yet you got rid of the nurse practitioner education leave program, and Aurora College doesn't deliver the nurse practitioner program.

Like I said, I'm happy with your commitment to support nurse practitioners. I'm just not sure how you're going to be doing this. I'm confused a little bit, and trying to reconcile what appears to be here with the Premier's statements about investing the \$1.8 million in. So just some clarity.

Mr. Cummings: We're in a position where we have to find a balance between the number of nurse practitioners we can take into the system, and providing a meaningful experience for them so they'll be able to train themselves up to practise as nurse practitioners and also be able to practise to their full scope once they're in a position.

We are fortunate to have more-than-adequate funding currently from the federal government, through THAF and also through the Wait Times Reduction Program, to take as many nurse practitioners as our system can accommodate. So that leaves us in the position to be able to reduce funding to the program from the Government of the Northwest Territories, and use this third-party funding to fund as many positions as we would be able to accommodate.

Mr. Abernethy: Does that mean that the Nurse Practitioner Education Leave Bursary program still exists, although now it's funded by THAF? Or does

that mean you're looking for other alternatives to train nurse practitioners?

You've mentioned an ability, or willingness, to take as many as you can accommodate. Given our history with Stanton, do you have an idea of how you're going to start placing the nurse practitioners? And when you say as many numbers as you can accommodate, do you have some idea of how many nurse practitioners that may be?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I understand that that bursary program still exists — it's just reduced — and it still meets the level of demand or interest that has been shown in the past.

Mr. Abernethy: So what are you going to be using this THAF money for? To help develop nurse practitioners?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the information I have is that the money will be used to provide nursing staff in smaller communities, as well as expanding nurse practitioner services in communities.

Mr. Abernethy: I'm not sure what that means. I'm not sure how you're planning to train these individuals. I'd like some information on that.

Mr. Cummings: I can at least partially answer the question. The THAF funding, in particular, is going to be used to allow nurse practitioners in the Territories to engage in the PLAR program, which is the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition program. What that will do is identify existing community health nurses who are partway toward achieving nurse practitioner status and then tell us what we would have to invest to get them up to full nurse practitioner status so they can continue in existing jobs or move into jobs that can be re-profiled from community health nurse to nurse practitioner jobs.

Mr. Abernethy: I think that's great. I think the PLAR process is an important one and certainly an avenue to help some of our nurses get to the level of NP. It's good to hear that that's where some of the money's going and we'll be continuing to invest in our current nurses who wish to upgrade to nurse practitioners.

I want to drop back to the Community Health Nurse Development Program. As I indicated before, there was specific reference in the Premier's statement to enhancing the Community Health Nurse Development Program, but based on the reductions, it looks like you're cutting the program by four positions.

Given the importance of the community health nurses and our desire to maximize northern employment and give northern nurses an opportunity to transition from a more hospital-based

setting into a community-based setting — where our real demands and our real challenges lie — I'm not sure how I can reconcile the Premier's statement to the departmental cuts in light of maximizing northern employment and supporting the development of nurses for community health roles. If you can help me understand that, that would be great.

Mr. Cummings: We certainly do recognize the value of the Community Health Nurse Development Program, and it is actually a program that I think was initiated in the Northwest Territories, or at least we've put significant investment into it.

The difficulty we have with expansion of that program — considering that we do have a lot of candidates who would be prepared to participate in it — is that we have to find a balance between the current experience and expertise we have in our communities to be able to receive new grads and give them the kind of work experience they would need to be successful in the program. So there's a limited number of people we can take.

The funding is really not a huge issue for us at the current time because of the Wait Times Reduction fund and THAF funds we have available to us. We would be happy to take all comers if we could provide them with valuable learning experience within our community health centres, but we're limited in terms of the capacity we have to provide teaching opportunities in the health centres.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Cummings. I'd like to move on now to Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may seek some clarity on the Nurse Practitioner Program that we started: I don't think I received a full answer in regard to how many we train. It may have been picked up somewhere else through another person's question. My question specifically — and even if it's for my own benefit, that is, Mr. Chairman — is: does the Minister know how many nurse practitioners we continue to train, and how many we have positions available for? The reason I'm asking it in that way is.... Are we training more nurse practitioners than we have positions available for?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As of May 2008, we have 24.5 funded positions and two unfunded positions for nurse practitioners.

Currently, out of those, 11 funded NP positions are filled, plus two unfunded. So out of 26.5 NP positions available, we have 14 positions filled. Seven of them are in Yellowknife, one is in

Resolution, one is in Smith, and two are in Fort Providence.

There are two unfunded positions at Stanton, as Members are aware, that we have funded for six months. And there is half PY funding being used for NP relief in Yellowknife.

Mr. Chairman, I could also add that there are 12 NP positions vacant all over the Territories: there are four in Beaufort-Delta, one in Fort Liard, one in Fort Smith, two in Hay River, two in Norman Wells and three in Tlicho. Obviously, we have room here to recruit and retain NPs.

I don't have information on exactly how many NPs are in practice and in training, because we will take NPs trained not only in the North but anywhere. If they are willing to go to any of these communities, we will welcome them wholeheartedly. And really, they are meant for a primary-care community clinic setting.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Anything further, Mr. Hawkins?

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to be clear, if the Minister can provide the information to ensure whether we are training more NP nurses than we have available positions.

It's not a question of whether I support training or not. That should never be put into question, because I do. The principle, really, is value for money. If we don't have positions for them to fill, it draws the question as to how big of a resource pool of nurse practitioners do we need.

The other thing is these temporary positions we create and fill with newly trained nurse practitioners. Are they limited by their credentials and experience? When they go into that and then they're placed back into their old jobs, do they lose some of that? Because I've been informed, whether it's a fact or not, they lose some of their operating credentials if they're not left in a nurse practitioner position.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, we have positions for every NP we have in the Territories, and we'll have more coming, whether we have positions for them. As I said earlier, we may not be able to place them exactly where they want them. It's like any other northern grads we train. Whether we support lawyers to be trained down south, or doctors, engineers, plumbers.... We, as a government, are committed to hiring these and offering them positions. It's just that they may not all be able to work at the hospital, or in the exact section they would like to, because you have to respect the right of the operator of the hospital to place them.

I just want to say, Mr. Chairman, there are nine vacant positions in the Territories for NPs.

Mr. Hawkins: The question is still outstanding: do they lose their credentials if they're not in a practitioner position?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Further, Mr. Hawkins?

Mr. Hawkins: Then what's the plan in the department for those people who come to the end of their term and there are no existing nurse practitioner positions? Is it a plan to convert existing RN positions into nurse practitioner positions, as primary care, obviously? And if there is, what's the cost to do a transition from an RN to an NP position?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): For a response, Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the nurse practitioners who do their return-of-service with us, our first priority is to place them into a position that is defined as a nurse practitioner role. We have a whole contingent of people working together to define how that role can be implemented into the authorities. We continue to work on that.

Certainly, it is our intention, when a fully trained nurse practitioner comes to us, to be able to utilize the full scope of practice they have, and we would place them into positions to be able to do that if we could.

We're really maxed out in Yellowknife in terms of existing nurse practitioner positions, so we would have to work with the authorities to re-profile existing positions if we were going to allow additional nurse practitioners to work to their full scope here. But as the Minister stated previously, we have many opportunities for nurse practitioners to work to their full scope of practice outside of Yellowknife, and they would then not put their certification at risk.

Mr. Hawkins: How long has this been going on, in the sense of this training process? Have we lost any who had to return to their home position per se? When I say "Have we lost any," I mean: how many have we lost who have gone back to being RNs, unable to practice as an NP, and how many have left the North because they couldn't find an NP position? Furthermore, what protects our investment on that, if we're training nurses who won't go to a community, and there are no existing NP positions they will take and they end up leaving?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The nurse practitioner program in the Northwest Territories has been in place for 11 years. We have seen much progress in Yellowknife. The positions I think the Member may be speaking to, at Stanton.... Those NPs were informed of the

fact that there were no permanent positions there. I think it's incumbent on the employer and employee to work together to see if those positions could be re-profiled to make them available.

If not, as I stated earlier, we as a government want to accommodate NPs to be employed in our Territories, but we couldn't guarantee employment in a specific setting, in a specific office, doing specific things that specific NPs feel they ought to do. That would be enormous and unreasonable limitations on the employer, the hospital authority, or even this government. It's a commitment we could not meet. But I want to advise the Member that I believe progress has been made at Stanton. They are looking at all possible options to see how these NP positions could be re-profiled, and it's the responsibility of the new public administrator to do that.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I didn't get an answer as to whether we have lost any to this program, where we've trained them and they didn't want to go to the communities. How many have we lost because they decided to seek employment outside of the Northwest Territories, because quite obviously their first choice was not a small community so they've packed up and left? I'm trying to get a sense of how many we've lost and what that's cost us in government money that's been invested for that. I just want to make sure our investment is going in the right direction, which is filling nurse practitioner positions that are needed for the North. I'm trying to get a sense of the number of nurse practitioners who would have left the North that we've trained, and how much in financial dollars we've lost in that investment?

Hon. Sandy Lee: My information is that we do not know of any NPs trained in the North who have left. I got a motion from one of our Members, who knows there might have been one. I will undertake to look into that further and get back to the Member.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given that we're on the page, I just have a real quick question. I see that the graduate placement program is being reduced, and I understand that's due to lack of enrolment or lack of uptake on the program, which makes sense. I mean, if we don't have enough students, it makes sense not to spend the money — or rather, to reinvest that money in more appropriate areas. But it raises a different question to me.

Given the importance of nurses and the success we've had at Aurora College and intake on that nursing program, I'm really curious why the enrolment is dropping off so far. I understand that graduate levels next year.... There will only be

seven nurses graduating out of the Aurora College nursing program. Given the importance of northern nurses and their ability to contribute to our system and hopefully help us alleviate some of our challenges, what is the department doing to help increase enrolment at Aurora College, thus increasing the number of nurses in the program?

Which leads to another question: if you do that and it works, and your enrolment goes back up, are you not going to be in trouble on the grad placement front? Are you then not going to have enough money to place the grads as you currently do?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: The information we have is that almost all the grads who graduated from Aurora College this year — I believe there were about 18 — were offered positions within the NWT, some of them in Stanton; some of them have gone to Fort Smith and other areas — Beaufort-Delta. I think there are three who did not take the option. There are some who have chosen to move away; their families are elsewhere. But that was a huge success. Now I would like ask the deputy minister why there might be reduced enrolment for this year.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the issues we're aware of is that many of the nurses who entered the Aurora College program are entering that program with a requirement to upgrade themselves to be able to participate in the nursing program. Also, many of those people are coming from communities outside of Yellowknife. The key fact we're getting is that they're having difficulty being away from their home or with child care or family responsibilities. Also, the requirement to upgrade and be able to participate fully in the nursing program is a difficult one for a lot of the people who have enrolled. That's the reason for declining enrolment.

Mr. Abernethy: I commend you guys on the placement of the grads. I think that's fantastic; I think it's going a long way to helping us with our nursing problem.

My question was more around.... I understand that the enrolments are dropping, but to me that's very worrisome. We need to keep those numbers up, and we need to be graduating as many northern nurses as we can. So my question to you is: what are the department and the government going to do to continue to get people to enrol in this program and succeed? If the nursing students are facing challenges with child care and finances, what are we going to do to help maximize northern employment and keep our enrolment levels up in a program we know is good and successful? Your grad placement is good. You've placed almost

every grad that's come out of that program into this system. All great; all fantastic. I'm a little worried about what's going to happen now with these enrolment levels dropping.

Then it comes back to the budget reduction. I get it now. It makes sense: if enrolment numbers are low, let's spend the money somewhere else. But if we can get enrolment back up to where it needs to be, you might find you don't have the money to actually do grad placement. So two questions: if you do your job well and you get these enrolments up and more graduates, are you going to have the money you need after you do this cut?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The program at Aurora College, even though it's nursing- and health-related, is really the jurisdiction of the college. I'm sure the Minister responsible will be able to provide additional information in that regard.

I do agree with the Member. My observation has been also that we could do a better job in terms of coordinating the government work in the way we.... The nurses we train at Aurora College should be placed properly and get the support and resources needed to pursue their practice. I think we could do a better job of coordinating that, because I am aware of some of the pressures that Stanton has had in incorporating those nurse grads.

I think we will continue to face the challenge of not only nursing grads but other professionals who want to work in Yellowknife and are not so interested in working outside of Yellowknife. That's a challenge for us, because that's where the most needs are. I think Yellowknife is more capable and better positioned to be able to recruit and retain staff from southern jurisdictions — better, anyway, than smaller communities. We need to work toward refining the program, working the program better to enhance the opportunities for these professionals to move into communities.

I have not had a chance to look at that as part of the human resource work at Stanton and system-wide. As we move forward under this fiscal situation where we have to look at systematic changes to better use our human resources, whether they be doctors, nurses or any other health care professionals.... I am really interested in looking at staffing models, service-provision models and recruiting and retaining policies to better meet that. So I don't have that answer. I understand the Member's issue, and I look forward to going to the standing committee with that plan.

Mr. Abernethy: Just in closing, I think it's all well and good; I think it's great. I know that Aurora College is the responsibility of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. But as the primary employer and the organization that facilitates practicum and on-the-job training

opportunities, I do think the department should collaborate and work very closely with Education, Culture and Employment to find solutions to keep these enrolment levels up.

As far as placements go, I understand your challenges. I get it. I know we can't place everybody in Yellowknife, and I think you have done a great job through the graduate placement program. I hope you continue to do a great job through the placement program. My questions were more specific to what we are going to do when there aren't nurses coming out of that program, period. Like I said, I encourage you to work closely with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to find the solutions to these problems as they come forward. So no question; just a comment.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. That was a comment. Next on the list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. A motion is on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is non-debatable.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, Minister Lee, and thank you to your witnesses. Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Thank you.

Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

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

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The committee has been considering Tabled Document 37-16(2); Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: The question is on the floor. The motion is in order.

Motion carried.

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

Orders of the Day

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Priorities and Planning Committee at adjournment.

Orders of the Day for Thursday, June 5, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 5) Returns to Oral Questions
- 6) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 7) Acknowledgements
- 8) Oral Questions
- 9) Written Questions
- 10) Returns to Written Questions
- 11) Replies to Opening Address
- 12) Petitions
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2007–2008
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 8: Appropriation Act, 2008–2009
 - CR 2-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Public Housing and Homeownership Programs

CR 3-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Review of the 2006–2007 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner

CR 4-16(2): Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 5-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 6-16(2): Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 7-16(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

TD 37-16(2): Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2

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 Thursday, June 5, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

