



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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**Monday, February 13, 2006**

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Monday, February 13, 2006****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve

**ITEM 1: PRAYER**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Good morning, colleagues. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS****Minister's Statement 68-15(4): Minister Absent From The House**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Michael Miltenberger will be absent from the House today and tomorrow to attend the Joint Review Panel in Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

**ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Member's Statement On Northern-Based Drug And Alcohol Treatment Programs**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently in Inuvik there was another meeting held on the effects of crack cocaine. This is the second such meeting within the past 18 months and people up there are still getting frustrated with the onslaught of drugs into the community. Many people seem to think that with all the money coming into town from the pipeline, the use of drugs will increase.

We've always had problems, Mr. Speaker, with drugs in the communities. We've always had some sort of social problems. One of the biggest problems, I still believe, is the amount of alcohol that is abused in the Northwest Territories.

When I sit, Mr. Speaker, and listen to a parent agonizing over the decision their child is making on crack, that bothers me and the lack of options for treatment. We have to send them south for treatment in a lot of cases.

In Alberta, Mr. Speaker, there is a program that is run close by the mountains for kids who are addicted to drugs. It's a three-month program. They go out on the land for three months and a lot of these kids don't want to leave once they are doing this program. Why can't we have such a program as this, Mr. Speaker? With all the money we seem to spend in sending kids south for treatment, we should be able to build our own ranch. Some people say it's hard to earn a living off the land and I tend to agree with that with the way things are going; it is getting tougher. But I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, by being out on the land you can learn how to live.

Mr. Speaker, let's give residents of the Northwest Territories an opportunity to heal on their own land instead of sending them south. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**Member's Statement On Attendance At Tlicho Leadership Tour**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to say something. Last week, I visited my four communities with a leadership meeting. Ever since August 4<sup>th</sup>, since the leadership has come into place, I have not met with them. It is very important for all different levels of government to work together and to consult each other. Although we are meeting here in the February session, they are fully aware of this, but they felt that my presence at their meeting was important since I am their elected MLA. So that is why I attended their gathering.

It's very difficult to be travelling to these isolated communities. I am their representative and sometimes it's very difficult to travel to these communities. Sometimes I feel it's easy for the MLAs of Yellowknife to consult with their people right here in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, the gathering of the Tlicho people is very important and they were really thankful for me to attend their meeting because they had not had this kind of consultation for a long time. I consulted with the leadership and also the elders and even the youth came up to us individually to thank us for attending their meeting to listen to them for their concerns. They have many concerns they would like to bring up to the government and they have given me a lot of concerns that I have to look into. There are many decisions that are being made within the government that affects the communities, so these are the concerns that have gone to me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Member's Statement On Tu Nedhe Participants In The Arctic Winter Games**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I just want to recognize some of my constituents from Tu Nedhe who will be attending the 2006 Arctic Winter Games in Kenai, Alaska, from March 5<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>. They are Demien Kailek, who will be participating in the NWT Dene Games in the junior male category; Amber Mandeville, who will be participating in Team NWT badminton junior female category; Glen Collins, who will be participating in Team NWT badminton junior male; Deserae Jonasson,

who will be participating in the arctic sports junior female category; and, last but not least, Darryl Marlowe, who will be participating in Team NWT volleyball junior male category.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to wish the very best of luck and good luck to all my constituents and all the fine NWT athletes in their pursuit for athletic excellence and sportsmanship. It was very encouraging to see representation from our small communities in an international sporting event such as the Arctic Winter Games and give these individuals an opportunity to showcase their talent, dedication and hard work. I will definitely be cheering Team NWT on in their quest for gold. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### **Member's Statement On Readiness To Address Crystal Meth Abuse And Addictions**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My theme today is let's get prepared. Recently, I have been talking to people about crystal meth and the common concern about it. Is this government prepared? Judging by our track record with resources and facilities for other substances that are already in our communities, I can be confident in saying that, no, we are not. Will this government be proactive and immediately address these issues, so I can be confident in saying that, no, we are not? Will this government be proactive and immediately address these issues so I can say with some confidence that, yes, they are, and, yes, we are ready to deal with this?

The Yukon territory has recently taken one small and significant step by initiating a campaign addressing the issues around the introduction of crystal meth and the use of other addictive substances. They are to be commended because this campaign will develop and raise awareness. Looking around our territories, in our communities, there are many needs. There is lack of homelessness and safe houses, inadequate detox facilities, and our communities are having meetings like the ones in Inuvik that gives us a clear indication that there is much more that is needed. Study after study, meeting after meeting, has shown that, as our economy gets better, so will our attraction to hard drugs. Young people are going to Yellowknife in alarming numbers for addicted related reasons, whether they are going to get counselling or going to a place where it is easier to get drugs. This growing centralization trend must be addressed by this government through a creative and effective proactive campaign.

The major problem with crystal meth is that it can be made by fairly simple products, such as cold and allergy medications, easily available in our drug stores. In some jurisdictions, such as Ontario, many locations such as grocery stores will no longer be selling some of these products and having others behind the pharmacist counters. These are the little things that the government could implement while it is still not too late. I have tried my best to also walk the walk and do my share in raising awareness and a "say no" strategy for our youth. I

recently shared a DVD with schools on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

#### **Member's Statement On Recognition Of Sporting Achievements Of Rex Cockney**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, February 10, 2006, the winter Olympics officially began in Torino, Italy. Recently, Mr. Speaker, Sharon and Shirley Firth were recognized for their involvement in the sport of cross-country skiing. The two twins have represented Canada over a number of Olympics in the 1970s.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Rex Cockney of Tuktoyaktuk. Mr. Cockney also represented Canada Olympics in the 1970s and has received a number of medals in the Olympics. Mr. Cockney was an avid cross-country skier. I am proud to say that I have seen Mr. Cockney's collection of medals in his home.

Mr. Cockney not only represented Canada as a cross-country skier, Mr. Speaker, but he was also a very good athlete in the sport of hockey as part of the Grollier Hall Fliers.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to know Mr. Cockney as a neighbour of mine in Tuktoyaktuk. I would like to congratulate him on his accomplishments and see him this weekend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

#### **Member's Statement On Role Of The GNWT In The Development Of The Mackenzie Gas Pipeline**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to discuss the role that the Government of the Northwest Territories is playing in the development of the Mackenzie gas project.

I have always been, and remain, a strong supporter of the Mackenzie gas project and the benefits that are going to come as a result of this multi-billion dollar pipeline project. Some of my colleagues have brought up the issue of the letter of comfort that the GNWT sent to the proponents of the project. They had their own opinion on what that letter meant or didn't mean. The issue I have is that there hasn't been any opportunity for public discourse or discussion on what the Government of the Northwest Territories, on behalf of all the communities, should, or would, be receiving.

Mr. Speaker, we just recently went through a federal election campaign where these issues were front and centre. However, our government does have some questions to answer on what their role is and what public expectations are of the GNWT. In my opinion, the letter of comfort was nothing more than something that Government of the Northwest Territories felt obligated to do. The letter itself is basically a letter about nothing. I

would like to call it the Seinfeld letter, where the GNWT drops the ball in that we are a public government. As a government, we just came out looking like losers.

The socio-economic fund, the \$500 million, is earmarked for communities along the pipeline route. Let's not forget that \$50 million per year over 10 years split amongst 20-odd communities does not equate to much. Left out of the equation are three of the four main population centres like Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith, which are set to receive a grand total of zero for socio-economic impacts of pipeline development.

Our government has failed 70 percent of our people by not including, or demanding, a discussion on benefits for all communities. Of course, there will be economic benefits like jobs, training and further exploration. Who will pay the price for the added socio-economic impacts in all of our communities? We will, Mr. Speaker. To me, it just looks like we missed the boat. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

#### **Member's Statement On Housing Opportunities Arising From The Mackenzie Gas Pipeline**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has been acting like it has won a gold medal ever since the Harper Conservatives stated during the election campaign that they understand that the northerners have to be the primary beneficiaries of resource development. I agree with that principle as well, Mr. Speaker, but I must say to this government that it should lead by example and really practice what it preaches, because the possibility of having upwards of \$300 million being invested into northern economy is a great thing for whatever reason. To do it for housing is even better. This is the kind of thing that the governments are supposed to take a leadership role on and do it well. Mr. Speaker, I don't see that happening. I'm sorry; I'm losing my speech this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that we can be doing this by the Minister of Finance stating that his aim is to promote the conversion of a pipeline workforce housing. Mr. Speaker, I think the more important questions this government should be asking are, how are we going to maximize our opportunity for all our northerners, northern labour and businesses? Questions that the government should be answering are things like, how are northern businesses going to be asked? How could they work under these housing projects? How are northern businesses going to be able to take advantage of these housing project benefits? How is our northern labour going to be trained and hired for opportunities under these housing projects that would train them for the long term and not just for three months or whatever short-term task to do a small thing?

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that the government should ask is, how is this government going to develop 1,400 lots, and how and when are they going to start talking to other governments, departments and organizations to make this happen? Why is it that the government should be developing lots when it is usually the private industry that should be doing that? Why is it

that the government is approaching Imperial Oil about one idea from one company, when they should be looking at a very broad view? I would like to say to this government that it should really practice what it preaches. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

#### **Member's Statement On Financial Plight Of Non-Government Organizations**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The financial plight of non-government organizations, or NGOs, is a matter that received considerable attention in the pre-budget consultations that your committees undertook this past fall, and has been an item of fair frequency in our debates here.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that if it were not for the NGO sector, the quality of life in the NWT would be seriously diminished. They are at work across all of our sectors: economic, in the arts, environment, sports and social. It is especially in the social environment where the public of the NWT really feels and sees their impacts.

Mr. Speaker, our government supports many NGOs through program delivery. The Canadian Mental Health Association, the YWCA, the Literacy Organization, Sport North, and the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre are just a few examples. But, Mr. Speaker, project funding is all too often arranged only on a year-to-year basis. Very often, these NGOs have a great deal of difficulty attracting and keeping qualified, trained staff because they just can't be certain of their cash flows.

Mr. Speaker, this government should be looking at, or is right now looking at, tax adjustments for both large and small businesses. This is fine. But I think we need to pay similar attention to the plight of our NGOs if our citizens are to continue to benefit from the calibre and the reliability of services that these NGOs are delivering on behalf of our government.

A salary survey by the YWCA, Mr. Speaker, shows that there can be as much as a \$30,000 a year difference between a job performed in that organization as to one hired by our government. That is a huge discrepancy, Mr. Speaker. Something that we have got to be looking at more and more seriously is the consistency, the stability and the sustainability of our service agreements with non-government organizations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### **Member's Statement On Protection Of Children Using Drugs**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to draw attention to the plight of parents who have had to watch helplessly as their teenage children become involved with and eventually addicted to drugs.

Many of these parents have tried every means to get through these difficulties and are running out of options. There is only so much physical control a parent can realistically exercise over someone who is 16, 17 or 18 years of age, Mr. Speaker. This leaves parents in a constant state of worry, where they don't know what is happening to their children and they worry that they may hurt themselves or others.

I am speaking, Mr. Speaker, to an issue that has arisen in Alberta and they have found a solution. I am aware that they recently passed a Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act which will come into force in July of this year. I am also aware that Saskatchewan is discussing similar such legislation. This new law allows parents to apply to the courts for an apprehension and confinement order for their children who are abusing drugs and alcohol. The order can authorize confinement in a protective safe house for up to five days. This allows Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission to conduct an assessment and provide detox treatment during that time.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that, once this law comes into force, it will be a welcome relief to those Alberta families who are struggling to help protect their children and overcome the abuse that drugs and alcohol has caused.

The Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act in Alberta means that you do not have to commit a crime to get help when you have drugs taking control of your life. I think it is time that the NWT consider such acts to help protect our families and our youth. Some of the plans, when it was originally drafted, were 30 days of confinement, 90 days' mandatory protection, but I am not calling for those numbers. All I am asking for is the Department of Health and Social Services take a look at the effectiveness of this program to see if we can do something here in the North.

It is no secret, Mr. Speaker, as mentioned by MLA McLeod and MLA Menicoche, that drugs are a problem in our North and we need to stop the abuse that ranges in all ages and social groups.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, when loving parents are left without options, it is critical that our government find something so our young people don't become another statistic. So we need to affect change to stop this cycle. We cannot give up on our youth. It is not an option. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Consultation Process On Government Procurement Policies**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of the status of the business incentive policy was raised in this session last week. The Minister responded with a reference to a consultation process to determine the opinion of northern businesses surrounding the business incentive policy. I would be very interested in hearing how effective businesses feel the BIP is working and how it benefits them or not.

My initial inclination is that a tax reduction across the board to small business would actually have a more

positive impact on the bottom line of small business than does the BIP. The BIP has no effect with northern business competing with northern registered business. It is an important adjustment on contracts for goods and services when northern business is competing with southern business, with the economy as heated as it is and as it is anticipated to be in the next while. The GNWT is not the same engine for the economy that it once was. In this regard, a reduced tax rate effects all profits generated by business, not just those potential earnings from GNWT contracts affected by a contract price preference margin.

Mr. Speaker, we have other ways of effecting our procurement methods to recognize northern investment and content through such things as request for proposals and negotiated contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward, with interest, to what the business community will have to say about our business incentive policy versus a lower business tax rate. I will have questions, later on, how that process is going to roll out, for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

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

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a constituent of mine and he is also the chair of the WCB, Mr. Denny Rodgers. Welcome, Denny.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Gerry Cheezie, a constituent and manager of the Yellowknives Dene Housing Authority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

#### **ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are on Novel housing. I would like to direct them to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, in his budget statement, Hansard page 680, he says that, and I quote, "Working with communities and industry, we'll pursue a comprehensive solution to the critical housing needs in the communities by promoting the conversion of pipeline workforce housing into more than 1,000 residential homes."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister. On Friday, in answering my question, the Minister of Housing stated that this is really going to be a business deal between two companies which I think that there is a company who, obviously, has a product that they want to sell, and there is an oil company that, if they decide go to with pipeline housing, they are going to need a workforce, and there could be a potential marriage of two businesses with mutual interests. I don't understand why the Minister of Finance sees it as his role to include it in the budget as a way to deal with the housing needs is to promote this idea. What is the idea behind that, Mr. Speaker?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the budget itself deals with all kinds of issues. It deals with housing, health, education and business incentive policies. So, Mr. Speaker, the issue of dealing with housing in the Northwest Territories is one of the critical pieces of any budget when we look at our situation in the Northwest Territories. The Novel concept that has been introduced in there is something we see of taking what is coming down in a project and using that and having something that is left behind for us to use for our residents. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

**Supplementary To Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister knows that the budget document is a very serious and important document. In the written answer to my question, the Minister of Housing states that there are so many things that have to happen before this: the pipeline has to go ahead; Imperial has to make the decision to do that; they have to decide what housing they are going to go with; they have to decide who they are going to go with, and on and on. The list goes beyond the control of this government. Is the Minister of Finance, as the Minister of Finance when he is talking to federal counterparts, is this one of his items: a product idea for one company? Is that what he is promoting with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland

**Further Return To Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now I haven't had the opportunity to meet with the new Finance Minister for Canada. With the work that we have done, the Minister of the Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko, has met with his counterpart on this project. My role has been more in the sense of the financing, the total impact on a territorial-wide basis, and does it meet the criteria that we have in place and working with the Housing Corporation and ensuring that the numbers that are being presented are legitimate and making sure that the flow that we use is an appropriate programming that we are going to use in a sense of how this project would move along and ensuring that all

departments are included in work that would need to be done.

Mr. Speaker, the Novel project itself is going to possibly be a by-product of the pipeline project. It would take the businesses to get together to choose the company. I think it is incumbent on us, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, to ensure that, if there is going to be camp housing and if there is a possibility to use it, we should make sure that the systems are put in place that would make it economical for us to, in fact, convert these over to homes in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**MS. LEE:** Mr. Speaker, I believe by including this idea of promoting this idea into the budget, I believe the Minister has already taken a lot of intervention and stance than the bystander sort of standoffish attitude that he seems to be showing in his answer here. I would like to know, in thinking that this is important enough for him to put it in the budget, what kind of analysis he has done in terms of determining that this is the way to go, that it would be done at the exclusion of all other housing ideas. This is an idea that is going to occupy the work, budget and mandate of the Housing Corporation for a long time to come. I want to know when he is going to make this information available to the general public before he negotiates with the Minister of Finance. From my understanding...

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**Further Return To Question 385-15(4): Meeting The Housing Needs Of Northerners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is continually, on a number of occasions now, talked about this project in a very negative manner in a sense of what we can do in the Northwest Territories or what we should do or shouldn't do. It seems that there is an inherent dislike to the fact of trying to use this concept as one that could help families in the Northwest Territories, especially those in the smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, specifically to the issue of what we have done, we have been working with the Housing Corporation on a number of factors, coming up with impact potential costs, timing of when decisions need to be made. We have looked at the issue of lot development, land costs, total land and lot development, conversions from the architectural side, conversions from the mechanical side, conversions from the electrical side, conversion materials, freight average, total costs, so we have been working on all of those numbers. I think, Mr. Speaker, if we are actually going to go down this road, then we have to do our homework. I presented to all committee members the pros and cons and risks of this project, and believe that there are still some questions that need to be answered. If we are going to take advantage of this, we are going to have to move now and not wait for something to fall on our laps. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for the Minister of Finance. They will cover some of the aspects of how our government goes about contracting and funding some of our non-government organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the experience, I think as many northerners have as volunteers, to work on boards and agencies that have gone through considerable efforts and sometimes angst to get their books, programs and plans in order and then have them go through the government inspection, review, rinse, wash and spin cycle, sometimes taking many weeks into a fiscal year before you know whether you have your commitment, and, in the meantime, staff and everything else is very uncertain.

Mr. Speaker, do our current policies and financial arrangements allow for long-term arrangements to be made with organizations? Do we have that flexibility in our financial administration systems? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in our financial arrangements that we hold and that we are accountable to, our arrangements do allow for some flexibility in arranging for long-term arrangements. But there is always a condition on the appropriation process and the budget being approved in this House. So we can, and we have, for example, with communities, Education, Culture and Employment has entered into some multi-year funding. That is something that we seem to be heading down more and more, but the issue is, it is always contingent on the budget being passed in the House which does have some impact on yearend and start of money flowing to these organizations when the budget is passed. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a condition that, of course, we uphold. We cannot guarantee anything outside of a current fiscal year. The point is that the arrangements and the expectations that organizations have in so many cases come to a complete and sudden stop on March 31<sup>st</sup>, if I have my calendar right. It is as if the door closes. There is nothing that an organization can count on. Even if it has a long and good track record, there is still that level of uncertainty. How, Mr. Speaker, can we change our approach so that organizations that have a good track record and are applying an essential service can continue, Mr. Speaker?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**Further Return To Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct. There are a lot of groups out there that do some business on our behalf I guess, is a way to put it. When it comes to yearend, funding flows seem to slow down and wait for the next cheque with the new fiscal year to come in place. That is one of the reasons why we have started to look at multi-year funding agreements and arrangements. That would be the tool that would be available to us. Again, it is always contingent on the House passing the budget. There is still going to be some lag time there, but those groups that have multi-year funding agreements would know that. Once the budget is passed, it is fairly straightforward from that point. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, does our government take a proactive approach to redesigning and renegotiating our contribution agreements with NGOs to actually push and promote the idea of multi-year funding arrangements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**Further Return To Question 386-15(4): Funding For Non-Government Organizations**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the arrangements have been done on an as and when basis in the sense when individuals or groups would come forward and make that request, we would look at it to see what type of arrangements, the history, the working arrangement of that group and the government or department. It has not been one where we have gone to all organizations and said here's an offer for a three year multi-year funding arrangements. We have done it on a case-by-case basis. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

**Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Inuvik is well trained in finding alternative arrangements for some of our government-run buildings up there. I would like to ask the Minister of Public Works and Services on the status of the five departments that were within the Perry Building after it was closed down. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Public Works and Services, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last indication I have is all departments are up and running. Human resources have moved into the

Tuma Building. That was approved by the town council that they can operate in there. We have FMBS staff sharing space with Municipal and Community Affairs office. Education, Culture and Employment has moved to the second floor of the Mack Travel building. I believe they are right up to speed now in the sense that all the connections, hardware and wiring have been done. The phones are in place. The Department of Transportation's office has moved into, I believe, the Eskimo Inn; their renovations portion there. Public Works, we are a bit scattered in different places. Petroleum products division is working out of one of the warehouses. We are still working on the rest of the space for the department. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for the update. I understand that the Perry Building, once the other floor or top floors are cleared of equipment and personnel and snow is kept off the roof, I understand that the bottom floor tenants might be able to move back in and I'd like to ask the Minister, are we going to ask these employees to move back into the bottom floor of the Perry Building? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

**Further Return To Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the structural engineer's report that we had received stated that with the loading on the second and third floor being removed, that the main floor would then be available for occupancy, and we're still working at how we can get that done. As well, the owner of the building has hired their own structural engineer and we're going to have to see what their report says before we make a final decision. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the Minister is, are we still making lease payments on this building? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Roland.

**Further Return To Question 387-15(4): Impact On Closure Of The Perry Building**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information available. I will check on that and get back to the Member before the end of the day. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

**Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier and it gets back to my statement from earlier and it's in terms of resource development. I just wanted to say we certainly have a strong economy here in the Northwest Territories; we have jobs. If you look around specifically the city of Yellowknife where we've had some experience with resource development on our doorstep, they've brought a strong housing market where some homes are in excess of 400 or 450 thousand dollars, expensive costs of living where families are having trouble making ends meet. It's also brought some social concerns to the city. Obviously, if you look around, you can see it if you walk downtown Yellowknife. Money doesn't always bring good things, Mr. Speaker. It brings increased crime, drugs, things like that. We have some experience. Communities have IBAs with industry. The city of Yellowknife doesn't have anything. I'm wondering why was there no consideration for any type of funding for socio-economic impacts in large centres like Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith. Why were they left out?

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

**Return To Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the Member's referring to the past when we negotiated agreements on diamond mines, or if he's referring to the pipeline. Mr. Speaker, the agreements, the access and the benefit agreements that have been negotiated and signed have been entered into with aboriginal groups who have rights to the area that is being impacted. It's only with them. Mr. Speaker, it is expected in a normal situation that other municipalities, other communities would benefit from the overall wealth that these kinds of activities bring to the Territories through taxes, through public money and so on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to set up a context that the city of Yellowknife has seen resource development and seen the bad side of it as well as some of the good side. I'm speaking specifically about the \$500 million socio-economic fund. I want to know why communities like Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith aren't part of the equation. Why are they left out? Why are 70 percent of the people in the Northwest Territories left out of this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Handley.

**Further Return To Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$500 million socio-economic impact fund is a fund that was negotiated with the aboriginal organizations along the

valley and our government for the impact on those specific communities. So that was those communities directly impacted. It was not a fund that was going to go across the whole territory.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, we did negotiate at the same time a \$40 million, albeit a one-time fund, through the Northern Strategy that would benefit all communities. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that out of that \$40 million, 35 of it was allocated to communities. Yellowknife is benefiting from over \$7 million from that fund alone that they can use for socio-economic impact if they choose to do it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think maybe the Premier is not quite understanding what I'm trying to get at here. What I'm trying to get at is I think the Government of the Northwest Territories let down 70 percent of the people. We've seen resource development here in the city of Yellowknife and the impact it's had on our community. The city of Yellowknife got nothing. By the sound of it, our government is content to allow the city of Yellowknife to get nothing again, Mr. Speaker, and I don't agree with this. I'd like to ask the Premier -- this is my final question -- why no public discussion or debate of the Government of the Northwest Territories' responsibility to all its residents took place. Why didn't it happen? Why weren't we able to discuss and debate this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Handley.

**Further Return To Question 388-15(4): Socio-Economic Funding For Larger Centres**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, when we look at why the \$500 million socio-economic fund was negotiated the way it was, we have to go back to look at the reasons and the origin where it started. It started as a result of Imperial and its partners' efforts to negotiate access and benefit agreements along the valley. What they did last April is they shut down everything, saying that we cannot enter into access and benefit agreements with the communities along the valley until we get this issue about socio-economic impacts sorted out. It is not our responsibility as a company to build schools, set up treatment centres and so on. That's something that is really more in the realm of public government. That was their view. So all the way along, this negotiation was with those communities who would potentially be impacted by the pipeline. Mr. Speaker, that impact did not, and does not, give benefit. It didn't include the mayor and council in Inuvik; it didn't include the mayor and council in Yellowknife; it did not include communities outside of the pipeline route. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the same situation we had when the access and benefits agreements and so on were negotiated on the diamond mines. It didn't include anything for communities outside of the area that was being impacted. It did not include Hay River; it didn't include Inuvik; in fact, it did not directly include Yellowknife. But it was strictly with those aboriginal groups who were along the route or in the area that's impacted, Mr. Speaker. So that's the origin; that's why it's set up the way it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, and it goes back to my Member's statement in talking about the prognosis, I guess, of the business incentive policy. I'd like to ask the Minister what percentage of northern businesses show their interest in a business incentive policy by registering with the GNWT, and I'd like to have those numbers of registered business has shifted or changed dramatically in the last while. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

**Return To Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the exact number in front of me of BIP registered business in the NWT, but I can say that the trend has been that there has been a drastic decline in the number of businesses that, in effect, bother to register as BIP businesses. I think there are a number of reasons for this, but one of them certainly is, as the Member has mentioned, the government procurement generally, in terms of our overall GEP, is diminishing in terms of its importance. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister, what's the cost of administering the BIP and the cost of any premium paid to award a northern business or contractor, compared to the revenue that will be forfeited by this government if we switch to a tax reduction? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that the direct costs to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is about \$300,000 in terms of administration, but that is a conservative figure when you consider the fact that all the departments have BIP monitoring committees set up in order to make sure the BIP is properly applied to their departmental procurement. So it is bigger than that. It consumes a lot of our time. We know it consumes a lot of time on the part of small business in order to make sure they're in compliance, and our numbers from the last year we have data for, on \$200 million worth of GNWT procurement, there was about a \$200,000 BIP premium paid to BIP registered businesses. I would also point out that about half of those are what we consider ex-NWT companies.

So they have a presence here and a presence elsewhere, as compared to just NWT home-grown businesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not so long ago there was quite an extensive consultation process undertaken regarding the business incentive policy, and the contract registry was reaffirmed after that by businesses reregistering. Was there any information that was obtained from that consultation round that will give the Minister and his department some indication of how they need to assess business interest in this going forward in a future consultation process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 389-15(4): Business Interest In Business Incentive Policy**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly, from my perspective as a committee member who was involved in the BIP review and watched government's ill-fated attempt to do away with the BIP the last time, I think the one thing that was obvious to me was that if you propose doing away with the BIP and leave a vacuum, you're likely not to get much political support. I think what we've recognized, and I've had discussions with the Minister of Finance about this, that one of the possible options is to replace the BIP with a tax cut for all NWT businesses. A 50 percent tax cut in terms of small business tax rate is one of the options we're considering. I think that's significant; I think it would have an impact not only on those who do business with the GNWT, but on those who do business in the NWT more generally. So this is one of the options we're considering. We think it would go a large measure toward equalling the playing field, and I'm hopeful that the consultations will go positively. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, just with respect to mortgage assistance policies and client involvement and construction of their homes. We provide loans to our clients in the regions to help them build their homes, yet we don't allow them to be involved in the building process. Like with a bank, when a bank lends a person money, where that person actually does the research and gets the call of a general contractor or general to build their houses. But with us, we provide money to the clients, like a bank, but yet our corporation, our government, builds the houses for them, and therein lies a lot of issues and a lot of problems over time. So I'd like to ask the Minister, what's the reasoning that the government's building houses for the clients as opposed to them building their own houses? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko.

**Return To Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, because the government is paying for a large portion of these houses which are subsidized and the Housing Corporation pays for a major portion of that construction, that's the reason the Housing Corporation wants to ensure that they are in charge of the construction and the management, and doing the inspections on those units, because we do have an investment by way of the loans that are given in which, in most cases, they're subsidized through our different programs where we hold the majority of those mortgages. So because a large portion of the money that is loaned to the client is a subsidy, we have to take responsibility of that asset. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can see the reasoning they want to follow a National Building Code standard, et cetera, but typically general contractors in the housing business know these codes and they adhere to them or else they would be quickly out of business, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is talking about a policy or a guideline or some kind of directive. Will the Minister provide that policy or directive to me so that I can see for myself what policy they're following? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Krutko.

**Further Return To Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I commit to that.

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

**Supplementary To Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little bit confused, as well, because in some of our other departments, like the ministry of ITI where we provide business loans, or BDIC, we provide business loans and we let the client be responsible for that money. It's still a government department, but that person's responsible. So I'm not too sure how we can do it for one department and not another, Mr. Speaker. Once again, is that policy or directive, is it an FMBS directive, Mr. Speaker?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Krutko.

**Further Return To Question 390-15(4): Homeowner Role In Housing Construction**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a directive which is internal in the

Housing Corporation. It's not tied to the...(inaudible)...but I will check if it is, and I'll get that back to the Member.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of MACA. Behchoko is considered one community, but we look at it as two communities with Behchoko and Edzo. Can the Minister tell me...I'd like to ask him a question. Why are Behchoko and Edzo only funded as one community? If you look at Yellowknife and Detah, it is physically two separate communities and they are funded like that. So I would like to ask him that question, why our communities are considered just one community when we have two separate communities? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

**Return To Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the easy answer to why Behchoko is funded the way it is is because historically it was considered to be Rae-Edzo and was viewed as one community. The community had desired that it remain that way. It's not an issue that has been raised to us in terms of changing how the funding flowed, and it's possible we could have that discussion, if there's a desire. Whereas, Detah is a separate community from Yellowknife. Detah has funding that comes from two different sources. The federal government does provide money through the Yellowknife Dene there, and we also provide dollars for the community to deliver our services, as we do to the City of Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

**Supplementary To Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for his comments. If you look at the community, the government they have there is new and they have policies in place. We want to do the best we can for our communities, so that is the agreement we have with them. So I would like to ask the Minister again, can the Minister meet with my community to review this, to meet with the Tlicho Government so we can discuss the future funding for the communities of Behchoko and Edzo? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. McLeod.

**Further Return To Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we'd be very much interested to sit down with communities and the leadership and talk to this issue. This is not an issue that has been flagged for us up to now, so we'd really have to discuss what the complications would be of dividing the resources that

come to this community. It would involve setting up a whole new administrative system. So there is going to be extra costs incurred by going this route. But we'd certainly welcome the opportunity to sit down and talk to the people of the Tlicho. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

**Supplementary To Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they have not brought up this issue for a long time, but since the new government has been in place since August 4<sup>th</sup>, that issue has been discussed again and is a concern. I'm setting up a meeting this week with the Minister, but I would like to bring this issue to them. Funding is very important and that is something that we need to discuss and we need to invest into our community, which is very important because it's important for the people of our community. Are you able to set a date? We will have a meeting sometime this week. Is this week good for the Minister? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. McLeod.

**Further Return To Question 391-15(4): Funding Structure For Behchoko And Edzo**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to get back to the Member to confirm whether we can fit in a meeting this week. I would also like to point out that this is an opportune time to review the funding and how the process is dealt with with the communities of Behchoko and Edzo. We are reviewing our community government funding policy, so we welcome the comments made by the Member and the leadership in those communities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of MACA announced the long-awaited land transfer to the City of Yellowknife. To put it into perspective, the City of Yellowknife had requested five years' worth of land in order to do fair, reasonable and balanced development in our city. Our city is growing by leaps and bounds, Mr. Speaker, but this Minister put a two-year freeze on this land and only gave the city half of the land requested.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is, why did the Minister of MACA approve only two years when the city requested five years' worth of land? Why did he put a two-year freeze on this land? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

**Return To Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we had actually requested that the city come forward with five years of land needs identified on a map.

We also requested that the Akaitcho people come forward and identify, on a map, areas that they were interested in. Then we tried to look at areas that did not have significant overlap. We tried to look at areas where we could release some lands that would not be too controversial. When we tried to map that out ourselves on an overlay, we decided that five years was too long. We had initially considered a five-year freeze. We realized that that would be too long of a time period to freeze land in this area. Then we had discussions with Aboriginal Affairs to see where things were at in terms of negotiations. Then we came to the conclusion that two years was probably a more realistic time frame for this to be settled.

The amount of land that we transferred, we feel, would be able to accommodate the city for two-and-a-half years. So we did freeze the land in this area for two years. There is still opportunity if there is the ability by the city and the Yellowknives to agree on parcels of land that they would like to see transferred over, the opportunity is still there. However, failing that, we will stick to the two-year time period. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**Supplementary To Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I will say on the agreement part, it's been my understanding -- and I would like to hear the Minister's correction on this -- that they have never seen eye to eye on all the land. I believe the Akaitcho wanted all the land. Mr. Speaker, at the request of MACA to come forward with a five-year plan, but they only approved half of that, sounds unfair. We have to note the land applications. How is he going to process them on two years plus a day, because there may be a flood of land requests? So I think the Minister has actually put the city in a limited, broke opportunity by freezing its fair and balanced position. Mr. Speaker, land was also left out of this reasonable application that it had homes on it. So those people are now put into limbo for just over two years. So, Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister doing to alleviate the concerns for those people who had land requests for their homes to be bought, but now it's been trapped up in this land freeze process? What is the Minister going to do? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

**Further Return To Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, the land identified for transfer has been conveyed to the city. We identified lands in that map that had existing leases. We identified lands for commercial leases. We identified lands for industrial purposes. We also identified lands for residential. All the other lands that are not on that map are considered to be available for the selection process that the Akaitcho is embarking on, and we will not be moving from that position, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**Supplementary To Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in October, this Minister had said that they were going to make some clear decisions, but, unfortunately, I never thought that they would only go halfway. Mr. Speaker, he just said, earlier, that he requested five years. So why isn't this Minister making a decision and putting the city of Yellowknife's growth in jeopardy? Why is the Minister not making a clear decision for the City of Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

**Further Return To Question 392-15(4): Land Transfer To Yellowknife**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the Member is getting his information from that we are not dealing with the Yellowknives' request for lands and not dealing with the growth issue. We have identified two years' worth of land; two-and-a-half years worth of land. There are several hundred residential lots that would be available for development. There is industrial land, there is commercial land. There is land that was previously occupied by people who leased it. We looked at it from a basis that there would be needs for two-and-a-half years addressed, and we are very confident that this is significant and will be enough for the city to deal with all their needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the Order Paper, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to recognize in the visitors' gallery, two well-known Hay Riverites, Mr. Paul Gammen and Mr. Vern Tordoff, and my assistant, Wendy Morgan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

----Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would like to welcome everybody in the gallery today. Welcome to the House. It's always a pleasure to have an audience. Written questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS****Written Question 27-15(4): ATCO Novel Site Tours**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

- 1) Please provide details of the number of visits the Minister and his staff have taken to the ATCO Novel plant in Calgary since taking up the portfolio, including the dates and duration and all costs associated with each trip.
- 2) What is the total cost the department has spent on behalf of any invited guests from the North who have taken up the Minister's invitation to visit the ATCO Novel plant in Calgary?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other Matters: Bill 18, Committee Reports 5, 6 and 7, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I will call Committee of the Whole to order. When we left off on Friday, we were on general comments for the Department of Health and Social Services, on Bill 18. Does committee agree that we stand down Health and Social Services?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** The committee wishes to consider Public Works and Services, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The committee agrees, and we will do that after we take a break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Good afternoon. I'll call committee to order here. We'll be starting off with the Department of Public Works and Services. At this time, I'd like to ask the Minister if he has any opening comments.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to present the Department of Public Works and Services main estimates for the fiscal year 2006-2007. The main estimates propose a department operations and maintenance budget for 2006-2007 of \$47.1 million and an infrastructure investment of \$9.3 million. This is a 6.4 percent increase over the 2005-2006 Main Estimates.

The Department of Public Works and Services provides support services to departments and communities, including:

- the management of capital construction projects,

- operation and maintenance of infrastructure,
- technical support in the provision of community drinking water,
- leasing of government offices, and
- records management services.

The department also manages an additional \$112 million on behalf of its clients through a number of revolving funds, chargebacks and capital transfers. Through the use of these funds the department provides:

- computer and data communication services for government offices throughout the territory,
- fuel services for residents, businesses and the Northwest Territories Power Corporation in 22 communities, and
- renovation and construction of territorial and community infrastructure.

Public Works and Services provides necessary technical and professional support to government departments. In this way, Public Works and Services contributes to achieving government-wide goals and an appropriate balance between the expectations of our residents for high quality services, the practical constraints of operating in our difficult northern environment, and the limitations of our current budgets.

The strong economic growth in the NWT has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of large industrial, government, commercial and residential projects across the NWT. At the same time, similar activity increases are occurring across the country in many jurisdictions. Skilled tradespeople are at a premium, resulting in higher labour costs. Material costs are also on the rise due to sharp increases in demand from planned projects and unplanned events, such as hurricanes and other natural disasters in other parts of the world. Public Works and Services is currently projecting construction costs to increase a minimum of 10 percent in 2006-2007 and five percent in each of the fiscal years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

While these cost increases are, to a large extent, out of the department's control, it is incumbent upon Public Works and Services and all client departments to do what we can to keep costs within budget through better management of capital projects. Public Works and Services has incorporated higher energy-efficiency standards into our building designs that result in immediate and long-term savings in building operating costs.

I would like to take a moment to mention some of the more recent building and infrastructure projects served by Public Works and Services:

- the new curling rink in Aklavik,
- the new college student housing in Fort Smith and Inuvik,
- Ecole Boreale - the new French school in Hay River,
- the new tank farm in Gameti,

- repairs in Fort Good Hope to seven flooded houses, and
- the extensive Mildred Hall school renovations in Yellowknife.

All of these are important community, regional and territorial facilities that contribute in a positive way to achieving the government's long-term objectives.

The department also provides information systems and communication services for use by the government. More and more, the ability of the government to provide services to northern residents is dependent upon the availability of secure and reliable information and communication systems. Consolidation of the Technology Service Centre and the systems and communications division has enhanced the department's ability to provide IT services to government departments. This centralized service will play a key role as we make the necessary investments to upgrade outdated technology equipment and systems.

Another important role for this department is to be a key member of the GNWT team responsible for ensuring the quality of community drinking water, working closely with the departments of Health and Social Services, Municipal and Community Affairs, and Environment and Natural Resources. The Department of Public Works and Services provides technical support for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of community water systems.

Finally, I would like to mention the provision of essential fuel services. Through the petroleum products revolving fund, Public Works and Services funds the provision of heating fuel and gasoline in communities where a commercial operation does not exist. This includes providing safe tank farms in these remote locations, as well as contracting with and training local fuel delivery agents to provide the services. These agents have an important function in their communities and Public Works and Services works with them to carry out this important service.

In December 2005, the petroleum products division was contracted by the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to supply required fuel volumes and manage its tank farm facilities in 20 communities across the NWT. This additional business will increase the economies of scale of the operations of the petroleum products division and provide for some savings to both Public Works and Services and the Northwest Territories Power Corporation that would otherwise not be available.

Public Works and Services continues to strive to be responsive to its many clients and to provide a high level of support to departments and the people of the NWT. The budget that we are reviewing today will contribute to achieving this objective.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be happy, at the appropriate time, to answer questions Members may have. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Now I would like to recognize Mrs. Groenewegen.

## Public Works And Services

### General Comments

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are the comments of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development regarding Public Works and Services.

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 22, 2005, to review the draft business plan of the Department Public Works and Services.

Members also received a briefing from the Minister of Finance on January 17, 2006, outlining the changes to the budget of the Department of Public Works and Services since the committee reviewed the business plan in September.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$47 million in operations expense and \$9.2 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2006-2007.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2006-2007 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle.

### Consolidation Of Information Technology (IT) And Information Systems (IS) Within Public Works And Services

The Governance and Economic Development committee is always encouraging the departments within their envelope to realize cost savings and operate as efficiently as possible. For instance, the Governance and Economic Development committee has been working with Public Works and Services over the past year to see where more cost savings could be found by amalgamating all IT and IS staff under their department.

In the past, the committee had asked during their review of the department's 2005-2006 Main Estimates if there was a way to further amalgamate these applications in order to realize further efficiencies and savings. PWS replied that a number of departments have a large number of complex applications in house. The Informatics Policy Committee, a part of the Knowledge Management Strategy, was trying to come up with the best balance between resources that are dedicated to the departments and resources that are pooled corporately.

The committee then noted during their review of the PWS 2006-2009 Business Plan that although TSC and systems and communications were amalgamated, there are still department-specific applications and positions that remain decentralized.

The Governance and Economic Development committee recommended that PWS supply the committee with information about the IT and IS people who are still employed outside of the department, what applications these positions are supporting and if there is a plan to migrate these functions to the TSC.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, although it's not directly under Public Works and Services, I would like to ask our deputy chair of GED to bring the committee's general comments on the Cost of Living Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Villeneuve.

## General Comments

### Cost Of Living Strategy

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. General comments on the Cost of Living Strategy. As the high cost of living was one of the issues that members of the committee heard about during our pre-budget consultations, the committee is supportive of the Premier's initiative to establish a Cost of Living Strategy committee, composed of Cabinet and Regular Members.

One of the biggest cost drivers is the price of fuel. The increasing costs of energy will affect everyone across the Territories. Some communities will see an increase in fuel between one to 20 cents per litre because the government has decided it can no longer average the price of fuel that Public Works and Services delivers.

The Governance and Economic Development committee, after their review of the 2006-2009 Business Plans, wrote to the government asking them to establish a concise plan that balances the provision of affordable energy with plans for conservation.

This committee also commented that the government should be highly conscientious of its own use of energy and establish itself as a role model for the Northwest Territories. The cost of utilities for some government facilities, such as hospitals, is rising dramatically. Every opportunity to demonstrate commitment to controlling energy costs should be taken. For instance, government vehicles should be turned off and not left to idle, and appliances should be unplugged in vacant public housing units.

The Governance and Economic Development committee would like to see the government take the lead in pursuing demonstrable energy savings. The committee would prefer not to see a huge increase in forced growth cost as a result of energy consumption.

### Recommendation

The Governance and Economic Development committee recommends that the government design its facilities to be energy efficient and also use their equipment in an energy-efficient manner.

The Governance and Economic Development committee also recommends the government develop a program to recognize and reward employees for suggesting ways to save energy.

Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my general comments.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. At this time I'd like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in any witnesses.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Okay. Could the Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the...Oh, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Can the Sergeant-at-Arms please bring in the witnesses? Thank you.

Thanks a lot. Mr. Roland, could you introduce your witnesses, please?

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right I have the acting deputy minister, Mr. Mike Aumond, and to my left I have the director of the Technology Service Centre, John Gable.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to share a few general comments on the department and my comments will be on one topic, really, and that has to do with information technology. I'm glad the Minister has his staff there with him, although I don't think I'm going to be asking any real hard questions here. But I do just want to put on record the importance of keeping up with technology for this government. I know at times it seems like a luxury item as to whether we have up-to-date technology and all the advances that are being made, not only in technological hardware and computer technology software, but I think it's really important to look at it as an important tool that the government has to work with and make maximum use of. In a place that we operate in, which is a territory far from major centres in many ways, and we oversee the administration of 33 communities, I think technology is an important tool that can bring us together, keep all our regional centres and communities connected, and it's just simply something that needs to be updated.

I'm just concerned that because of some of the cost-cutting measures or the general feeling, perhaps, in certain areas that the IT area might be where we could economize. I'm not saying that I have evidence to suggest that, but things that I observe around me are giving me concerns.

I don't think our network system, our e-mail system, has had a lot of investment in recent years. I do believe that there's enough money being put in there to keep up with it, but I do believe that it's a pretty old system and I think that there will be a lot more disadvantages and costs associated with anything that could cause it to crash or something. I worry that it could happen if we don't continually invest.

I was telling the Minister that I was working in my office over the weekend and I wrote a statement that I wasn't prepared to finish yet for me to use the next day, so I e-mailed it to myself, to my home address in my house, and I didn't get it when I got home Sunday night. I didn't get it Monday morning. I came to work and wrote my own, I revised my statement, and then the next day, when I got home that night, I saw that the e-mail got there about 11 hours later. I know that government e-mail, I think, shuts down during the night because I have tried to access web mail at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and I could see that it was shut down. I guess it needs time to reset itself or clean up and stuff like that.

But, you know, we can't take these things for granted. I think it is a tool, not a luxury, and all the government employees have to be connected here. It has to be constantly upgraded. I just think it's also a very important tool for the regional staff and everybody to be connected to the work.

There was another area, upgrading of software. I'm not sure if we're keeping up with it or not. So I'd like to ask the Minister about what the government's plan is and what sort of investments the Minister is aware of that should be made that we're not making because of the budget restraints. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, indeed, the TSC side, or the technology we deal with, is ever changing and, at times, quicker than we've managed to keep up with it. The specific area that Ms. Lee has referenced around e-mail is something that you'll see in this budget that we'll be dealing with. We'll deal with the converting of our OpenMail system -- that's what we're operating on right now -- to I believe a Microsoft Exchange e-mail system, which would then bring us back, I guess, into, I guess out of the Dark Ages. Maybe that's the way to do it or say that.

The other area is, there are times when our system, we have to back up all the work that's been done on it. That occurs in the evenings after midnight, and it can run almost four to five hours, sometimes six hours of doing the backup system before it can be accessible again. So that's one of the areas.

It is a fact that we have had a number of problems over this last year with some of our systems and what we found, as it's been referenced in a number of the reports that have been done for us, is the area of our equipment; the backup. Although when we talk about trying to be efficient, one of the areas when it comes to the systems we operate with, is to try to create a level of what we would say redundancy, where if something breaks down it can be quickly switched over to another piece of equipment and we can operate, then, without losing a lot of things. But, unfortunately, we've had to work along and just make due with what we have and that's caused some other significant problems over the past year. We recognize that, and I believe this year, within the government, as well, we're looking at making an investment to replace the FIS system, but that's within the FMB side of things. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Just a last question, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the Minister could state how much we're expecting to vote on in the budget with respect to what I just raised. I'm sorry I'm not as specific as I'd like, but I'm not an expert in computer areas. I'm a user and I noticed that, and I think the example I gave is just probably it could have had many, many different reasons. I'm just speaking to a sort of general trend that I've seen.

Another thing that I've had concerns about is the fact that we have recently received a communication about the overload of the network. I guess how I think of a computer system is, from my layperson's point of view, computers always have a lot more capacity than a person could ever use -- that's what I think -- whether it's hardware or software, to get a communication that says we're being overloaded and you have to start cleaning stuff out of your outbox or inbox, I just think that might be, that just tells me we're getting way too close and we should have bigger capacity to do it. So now I don't know if that has to do with

the general system. I think it had to do with the Outlook e-mail system. But I don't know if that relates to the general capacity we have for the government overall. But I just think this is a very important area and we should use technology as a tool rather than a luxury that we could short change on because, sooner or later, we will get caught up with that and it could cost us more than any amount of dollars we were trying to save in the first place. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I guess from the Public Works side of things and what we're planning for this year, we've started in '05-'06 with the initial looking at the OpenMail system and what we'd need to update it. About \$250,000 was identified for this year; \$300,000 was identified in the '06-'07 budget. So a total of about \$550,000 and the exchange from OpenMail to the Microsoft system.

Just for some information, we deal with, this is probably a little low now, but about 100,000 e-mails per day. Seventy percent of that, I'm told, is probably spam, which our systems have to be able to remove from the system. We deal with a lot on a daily basis in this area, so we know the need for an adequate system and timely communications between government offices, as well as from headquarters to regional staff and to community staff. So it's something that we always have to be prepared to upgrade and work with. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ms. Lee. Thank you. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the Minister and welcome the witnesses to our proceedings this afternoon. I just have a couple of questions on the Minister's opening comments. I guess the first one, it's on page 2, Public Works and Services provides necessary technical and professional support to government departments. I'm just wondering, the budget deliberations that are going on here for a month are very important to the people we represent. As well, Mr. Chairman, they're important to the 4,400-or-so-odd employees that the Government of the Northwest Territories has. Without us having the APTN contract, we've gone out and tried to do some web broadcasting, you know, for video and audio of the proceedings of the Legislature. From my knowledge, government employees aren't able to access the proceedings of the House either in video or audio format.

I'd like to ask the Minister today, I mean, we are in the process of our budget session looking at approving over \$1 billion worth of government spending, and I believe it's very important that the GNWT staff in all the various departments are able to listen or to even view the proceedings of this House, and that they have the ability to do that, Mr. Chairman. Again, probably the vast majority of our employees wouldn't access an audio broadcast of our proceedings, but some would. Especially in senior management, I think they'd certainly want to pay attention to what's happening here in the House in their office. I'd like to ask the Minister what his plans are to make that available to anybody that wants it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Minister.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the situation with the APTN coverage that no longer exists for this Assembly, we've made arrangements with all staff that normally would have this session going on in their offices, they can access it. We have that set up. The deputy ministers have met regarding the contingency plans for staff that should be picking up on this and having input or being aware of what decisions are being made here.

For the rest of the staff within the Government of the Northwest Territories, we have not put in any provisions that would not be there on a normal basis. One I guess we talked about productivity levels. If we had all employees tuning in at this point to take in the proceedings, would that be the best use of time? I guess the issue is that those that are normally part of the process and have this session being broadcast over to their offices, that arrangement has been made. We are getting it out to communities and regions through a number of other processes that the Assembly itself has been involved in. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that, in Yellowknife here, the employees also have the ability to dial into the 3555 number that is available, but in terms of accessing the Internet and to access the proceedings of the House, how is this provision being carried out? How are people accessing it? Aside from the 3555 number that I am aware of, I don't know how else the employees are able to access the proceedings of the House. I would like the Minister to give us specific ways people can do that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, number one, if departments are finding themselves unavailable to tap into that, we would make arrangements through ourselves and NorthwesTel to provide that information. What we have besides the 3555 is the audio link that is available to them. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. He said something about the system may be being overloaded or whatever, but why can't rank and file government employees access the audio version of the proceedings of this House? Why can't they do that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess, ultimately, if the deputies feel that there are further staff that need to have this type of coverage, we would work on making it available. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given the nature of the business that we are in, Mr. Chair, where we get together once a year to go over the \$1 billion appropriations that are included in our budget this year, I think some of this work should have been done before. The deputy ministers should have got together before this budget session and come to some kind of realization that probably the best thing to do would be to allow employees to access the Internet to listen to the audio proceedings of this House. I think, by not doing that, we have let down a number of our employees that would take the opportunity and you could work and listen at the same time. We have the Internet in every government office across the land. I am sure people are on the Internet a fair bit, too. What is the difference? Why aren't we providing this service? To me, it is just something that should happen, Mr. Chair, and it shouldn't have to wait for another meeting of deputy ministers to get together to figure that out. I would like to see it happen immediately, if it could. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are a number of factors that we have to take into account. One being that we are in session now in early afternoon and we go through the rest of the day. If individuals are using their computers to access the audio side, what else are they doing with their time when it needs to be focussed on doing the job that is before them? As well, we have to deal with the network capacity. The area of the network and its ability to do these things is something that we were beginning to explore when the news had come down that we need to put something in place for the immediate, so that became a concern. As well, within the government itself, we have our Internet policy on what is acceptable usage of our system, so that is another fact that comes into play here. Ultimately, it is available here in Yellowknife as the evening community cable channel puts us out to the public on a daily basis, whereas other parts of the Northwest Territories right now, there are other things trying to be put in place, but delayed and only a small amount of time is being broadcast to the rest of the Territories. So it is something we have to look at on a number of fronts. One, is it the best use of our time, equipment and our employees' time in the middle of the afternoon? Those that are required and should be plugged in, we've made the necessary arrangements. If there are further requirements, then those requests would come in and we would do our best to have those individuals plugged into the system. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know the system access is denied if you try to get off the Internet someplace where you shouldn't be. In Yellowknife, anyway, that is the case. Your access is denied. I can think of a lot of worse things that employees could be doing aside from listening to the work that legislators do in this House. Perhaps it is too late, Mr. Chair, to get that in place for this budget session, but I think it is not lost on the Minister that my belief is that employees should have access to this. I will just leave it at that. I don't want to belabour the point. My belief is that employees should be able to access the audio on the Internet when they are doing their work in their office. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess, ultimately, we have to ask ourselves, to what level do we want to be able to deal with this issue? Before the systems or the contract changed with APTN, we did not have this available to other employees out there. Those that needed to be plugged in, were plugged in through the system in providing a live audio as well as video coverage. We have made arrangements for those that need audio coverage at this point, and other arrangements throughout the territory. But if we want to enhance what was there before, that is different than trying to just deal with the existing caseload that was out there. Again, network capacity as well as appropriate use of time and equipment is something that we have to remain cognizant of. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you. General comments. Next I have Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to the Department of Public Works and Services, this department provides a lot of services to the communities I represent, as well as within Public Works and Services, we have the petroleum products division. Their headquarters is in Fort Simpson. People are very pleased that we do have that as a central office there. By far, the biggest concern that I have been hearing over the past year is, of course, the amount of fuel that people are getting in the communities. The biggest single concern is that fuel went in there last year but the price wasn't adjusted until July, so communities like Trout Lake and Nahanni Butte are saying, what's going on? You raised the price this year in July and you didn't bring us new fuel, because the Minister had always said we are adjusting it because new fuel is coming in. They are saying, well, it is July. We didn't get new fuel and yet you are raising the prices. The Minister indicated to the community that there was a delay factor in there but, again, in September, the ministry had to once again adjust the prices upwards. The fuel prices are still the same, so the communities are really concerned that they are paying, like in June, I think it was \$1.40 per litre, which is one of the highest communities in the North right now.

The problem there is that the fuel prices everywhere in the North has stabilized and, in fact, has dropped in many other communities except those communities being provided service by our petroleum products division. I can appreciate that the ministry is getting stuck with stock, but there must be some way to be more flexible to provide our communities market pricing. I don't think it is fair at all that the communities would be stuck with paying \$1.40 per litre only because one of the communities like Jean Marie, when the fuel price is at \$1.40, they would be getting their fuel from other places like down the road, either Fort Simpson, Hay River or Inuvik, stock up with those fuel prices, so they will have a catch-22 there, Mr. Chair, where the product in that tank is not going to move at all. It is stuck at \$1.40 and then some of the other criticism, too, about the fuel stock is that not all the stock in that tank was bought by the government at \$1.40. If there was half a tank, does it mean that the full 2,000 litre tank gets charged out at \$1.40? They are not exactly fuel specialists or financial wizards, these people in our communities, but they know that, if the tank is half full, you can't be charging full rates just because you put in 10 gallons. They see that and come to me saying there must

be a better way of doing it. Either that or else you provide some kind of subsidy to community people, because a lot of the fuel is used for living off the land, like the community of Trout Lake which is...I don't know the word for it. I guess it is like landlocked. They are remote enough that, for half the year, things have to get flown in and out of there. So they are saying there must be a way in order to benefit us in world market pricing. I know that the ministry is going to be looking at it, but if the Minister can comment on what is a better way of doing that to make the prices reflective of the world.

I know that we have a petroleum products revolving fund. I don't know if we can use this and take advantage of that to provide lower prices to the communities. I really think, Mr. Chair, that we have to, as a government, take a hit and adjust those prices downward. That is what governments do. We take a hit sometimes just to level out the playing field. In fact, in this House, we talk about it quite often. It is through subsidies. This is one instance that we are going to have to do it. I am not too sure how many communities are serviced through the petroleum product department or how much of an impact it would be to drop all the prices down to, just to pick a figure, Mr. Chair, \$1.00 per litre. I don't know how much of a hit we are going to take if we do that, but I don't see a way out of this, Mr. Chair, especially if the price is going to remain stable for the rest of the next six months anyways. That is all I can see. But yet our communities are stuck with these high prices. There is only one way to do it. We are going to have to take a hit there, Mr. Chair. I will leave that up with the Minister to consider and look and provide something back to our community.

Another concern that stems from my riding was a problem of procurement of office spaces. We have wonderful guidelines and procedures of how to give out contracts. Yet we had an instance in one of my communities where a contract really didn't...There was some question as to how it was handed out. I had a couple of enquiries saying, hey, I wasn't even put on the bidding list. I provide that service. Why am I left out? But the response of the department was rather neat. They are saying that business or those businesses didn't provide adequate type of services that we wanted. But, just the same, that is why we have a bidding process, Mr. Chair, that everybody should be entitled and offered an opportunity to bid and provide that service. At that point, then, once you have the bid in front of you, that is when you determine when a provider didn't have enough in their bid package or meet some type of minimum standard to provide their services. It is at that point that you make a determination. You don't make a determination beforehand. You have to give people the benefit of the doubt. I don't think it happened in this particular case. I have been in contact with the Minister's office with regard to this. He assured me that things were followed properly, yet there is still the perception that a step was missed, that there were some discrepancies with how that contract was awarded or given out. It was kind of like...While we are having this discussion, too, in the House, it is that whole area of negotiated contracts and what qualifies for it. In this case, I really didn't think that negotiated contract applied. Again, it is about offering our services to the general public and to the businesses out there, providing everybody equally in having a bid on the services that the government wants.

One further point that had caused great distress to the community, as well, is that jobs being provided in my region are one of the ways that we are stimulating economic development. One can argue that Nahendeh, my riding alone, is economically depressed. By providing jobs and decentralization, it is an injection of new money into our communities. One government job at a manager level is probably worth about \$120,000 or more there, Mr. Chair. What happened in the last year, too, is that one of our jobs got transferred. I am not too sure about the reasoning too, and people back home are not very clear about the reason for transferring the position away from the regional office. Petroleum products are supposed to be a central office, but yet we moved that job over to Yellowknife and they are still quite concerned about that in the community because it is a lost job. It is a big thing. ITI did an ad and had been running it for some time about the story of the bouncing buck. So that is \$100,000 or \$120,000 that doesn't get to bounce around one iota in my community and in my region, Mr. Chair.

With that, I will be looking for some comments from the Minister. I will just end my opening statements.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will try to respond to all of the issues that Mr. Menicoche has raised.

First off, with the petroleum products division and the stabilization fund, we used to, when the Northwest Territories was part of Nunavut or Nunavut was a part of the Northwest Territories, have a \$5 million stabilization fund. What we found after division occurred was that the economies of scale had dropped significantly for ourselves here in the Northwest Territories, and we were unable to carry that fund as it had a large debt. In fact, the previous government had already taken a hit by writing off a large portion of that debt. What also occurred at that time was to drop the stabilization fund from \$5 million down to \$1 million. So the impact of a plus or minus could quite quickly affect our ability to mitigate any increases in fuel prices across the territory. Since then, we have done a couple of other things. One is because of the old situation of trying to deal with price changes, it had to follow a process to go from the department after refuelling, reviewing, after the final refilling had been done in all the communities, then a paper would be brought forward to the Minister who would then carry that to FMB for any changes in prices. If there were questions about it, it would go back to the department for further clarity and then back to the table again. That could provide a delay of a few weeks to a few months at times, thereby delaying the impact of any changes plus or minus.

What we have done now is, with changes coming forward, FMB has given myself, as a Minister, the authority to make changes on it by notifying them of the change and then having it put in place so the timelines between changes can be significantly reduced to the changes. But what we found last summer, was the price of products across the country was going high extremely fast. We were just at the refuelling stage with barges and by road to a lot of our communities. As a result of the fuelling, we found that we had to make the increased prices effective when we were able to bring it forward to FMB.

One of the things that we have done to try to mitigate some of the prices on communities was we had an average of 10 cents a litre for home heating oil reduced. Instead of having the full impact of...Let's just use an example of \$1.50 down to \$1.40. That is on the high side. Home heating oil wasn't getting high in most communities. The price of gasoline was. But the subsidy we put in place of 10 cents average was to protect those in the communities.

The policy we face from petroleum products division, or from Public Works and Services, is one of full cost recovery. That decision was made as well in the last year that we had to recover the cost of the product delivered in the community. When we say full cost recovery, we are still not adding in a cost for capital replacement of our facilities, so that part is still not covered. What we are covering is actual delivery of the fuel product into the community, the contract we have with fuel delivery services and a bit of O and M levy within the department. Those are the things that we have to have full cost recovery for. Unfortunately, once the fuel is put into the facility in a community, we are charged that price when it is delivered. When it leaves the barge or the truck into those facilities, we are tacked with the price of that day. That is going to be the price until the next refuelling happens. What occurs is there are measurements. We know the quantities that are left in the tankage in those communities. From the previous year's refuelling to the existing season when the tanks are filled up again, there is an average of what is left in that tank, and it is blended with the new products. When we top up the tanks, not everybody is paying the new price per litre of the full tankage. It is blended, so there is a formula there to take into effect the amount of old fuel in there, the amount of new fuel that goes in, and blends within that area. Nobody is paying the full price of a tankage if it was one-third full and we topped it up with two-thirds new fuel that was more expensive. It is blended.

As well, one of the other things we did within Public Works and Services was reduce the O and M levy by two cents a litre on top of the 10 cent average decrease on home heating oil. That is one of the things we have available, but, beyond that, our policy that we have to work with is one of full cost recovery.

The other area that was discussed was office space procurement. Fort Simpson, specifically, the office space, as the Member stated, we did work with him on the area of concern that did come up. Our practice will be that we will be going out in that community for RFP for office space. It still won't help the individual unless the company that was in question builds office space that would fit the criteria. When the departments come to us requiring office space, they have a design and criteria of an office that they are requesting. We would go look in the communities to see who has that available. In the case that we initially dealt with, we felt that the other space that was available didn't meet the criteria that was established. But I made a commitment to the Member that, from this point on, it would be an RFP process. It might not change the future decisions of what is required, but it still would be open to all those that would have space available.

The issue of employment in communities is one that the government has dealt with on many occasions in this Assembly, about how we spend dollars, how we either have a centralized system, or we try to regionalize or put as many frontline positions in communities. I have

corresponded with the Member on the amount of positions that we have seen developed in the community. Within the last year, we have seen a significant growth trying to just deliver services in the community. That has been one of the factors. The specific one within Public Works and Services, and specifically within PPD, was the director position, or coordinator of fuel operations is the title of that position. We had put out for an ad to hire someone to fill that position. It was identified to go into the community of Fort Simpson. We had a successful individual who applied and initially took up office there. Unfortunately, due to a number of extenuating circumstances, he felt that he could not continue on in that community. We made a change in our structure to allow him to work out of Yellowknife. Because of the work that was going on was critical, we kept somebody in that position. Further to that, as we go through this budget, we will see within Public Works and Services another creation or position within the community of Fort Simpson. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Next on the list for general comments I have Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Public Works and Services has a pivotal role to play in how we manage and, of course, pay for our facilities or buildings. With the skyrocketing price of energy of late, it is very much in fashion now, Madam Chair, to look not only at the base lease or construction costs of a given building or facility, but at the long-term O and M costs. How much over the life of a lease of a building, Madam Chair, will the government be paying to heat, light and ventilate a given structure? All of this will come back to haunt anyone who is paying to live or use a building if we really haven't paid very close attention to how we can incorporate good practice and policy when we make a decision on leasing a building and designing or refurbishing buildings.

Where I would like to go with this, Madam Chair, is to ask the Minister to what extent we are incorporating the O and M costs of our buildings in terms of making decisions about leases or getting involved in the design and the specing of our capital projects. I know that could be a very big and technical area, but one thing I am really interested in is just how much weight or significance do we put on those longer-term O and M costs versus, say, what a bottom line, square foot cost would be? Can we start there, Madam Chair? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the department does look at a number of factors when looking at the type of office space we look at. In fact, the type of buildings we are involved in constructing through project management with other departments, the Canadian Building Incentive Program is one of those that we've endorsed and are using as we look at new facilities. The area of leasing office space and what's included in the waiting of those percentages, I'll ask Mr. Aumond to respond to that as he's much more familiar with the technical, I guess, discussion that would flow from this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Aumond.

**MR. AUMOND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to leases, the O and M costs for any lease is important. What we have done is, when we're going out and acquiring new lease spaces, we put an incentive in the RFP process for energy efficiency with the landlords, and that's given an important weight in terms of the amount of credit we'll give the perspective proponents for the lease space as opposed to those who won't provide any. I guess just so that I'm clear here is that the O and M component is just one part of the overall cost of a lease. The other part is the base rent, and it's the overall bottom line, I guess, that we're looking for, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Madam Chair, something that I've learned about this aspect of government, we're a big tenant and a big landlord, and we've got to be paying attention to this. Something that I'm quite happy to pass on, Madam Chair, is a compliment and a credit to this department from some of the engineering and architectural firms in town. At a workshop a few weeks ago, we were talking about this aspect of collaboration and working how we can best look for the next generation of buildings and structures and getting things that work for both the tenant and are economical. I was told, Madam Chair, that Public Works and Services and the engineers and the folks there are, if anything, ahead of the curve in Canada for paying attention to this kind of thing. So that's something that I've heard and I don't mind passing on, but I'd sure like to keep this aspect of how we manage our facilities at the front, and I would ask the government if it has gone so far as to set any targets for energy consumption, energy management, energy reduction? We hear all sorts of talk about the need to conserve, the need to use energy wisely, but what are we doing to set some targets and measure our performance, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we've been working with the government overall on the aspects of energy efficiency and how we operate. I guess one of the areas that we look at, from the Public Works and Services side, is one where it is in that initial design of how we put new buildings into service and how we might upgrade when we do renovations and the codes that are out there right now. Again, the Canadian Building Incentive Program is one where we're putting to use, for example, within the Tulita school, the planning for a new courthouse, and the new schools in Inuvik, the replacement of those two facilities. So those plans are being incorporated upfront to ensure that, as building owners, we are getting the best value for our dollar being spent, and addressing those upfront would, in the long run, increase our efficiencies when it comes to paying out the dollars for that.

As well, we have in the budget upgrades for a couple of the local office spaces we have here, being the Laing Building and the Stuart Hodgson Building are the two areas that we've got work, as well, to increase energy efficiency. So those are happening on the big side. Of course, on the day-to-day process, when you go into many of our offices, we've already, through previous years, practiced and ongoing practices as either we get better or increased efficiency as the type of lighting we've

used, the fixtures, whether they shut off automatically. That type of area.

As well, I would just like to thank the Member for his positive comments around the news he's heard. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the question was really targets. Is it realistic to say look, you know, we're going to go for a two percent reduction in kilowatt hours or litres of fuel consumed? Are we able to focus on that kind of measurement and that kind of performance, Madam Chair? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as the Department of Public Works and Services, we haven't set a target to reduce by a two percent target our fuel consumption or kilowatt hours. What our goal is that what assets that we have available to us, or I guess increasing efficiency of products, is to just maximize what's available to us in the savings and that we go forward. As a government overall we are working, again, around efficiency and the cost of living in the Northwest Territories. We haven't gotten to that detail of trying to set actual targets of a percentage drop in that area or if it's a cost area of reducing by a certain number of dollars, but we've yet to do a fair bit of work in that area. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Braden, your time is up. Next on the list, I have Mr. Hawkins, general comments.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think Mr. Braden actually captured some of my questions. I was concerned in the area of page 3 where the Minister had pointed out incorporating high energy-efficiency standards into our buildings, and I was going to follow up on the details of that, but is there a strategy...What's the buy-in strategy or what's the program to sort of make this a territorial policy because, from his perspective, it would be the lead department held by Public Works. I brought the matter up on a number of occasions, although it's caused the Minister to laugh when I've talked about switching the lights off, and his suggestion would be just to change the light bulbs from 100 to 60 watts or 40 watts, I can't remember, but I mean what is their strategy to become the role department through Public Works to be the model for other departments to follow? I'd like to hear on how he'd encapsulate that sort of positioning where his Department of Public Works will, yet again, lead the way on another matter and through energy efficiency recognizing these times that we now live in. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, one of the first and probably most effective areas that we could and have worked in the past and will continue to work with those in the field in construction would be design standards. What would be incorporated in some of the designs for our buildings and, as well, make them available to all those that are in the

construction industry as to what new products and systems may be in place to help reduce the cost of operating a building? So the most critical area that we would see in working with the private sector is design standards. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I wasn't listening to Mr. Braden's questions, I will ask, and I apologize if it's been asked already. Has the Minister looked at, for example, dialling back the registers in our public works buildings or whatever seems applicable? You know, just like they have on television, those little advertisements about turning your heat registers down in the evening. Are we looking at those types of strategies, recognizing the cost of fuel, you know, if we can use our fuel and our power in an efficient way? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the area of day-to-day use is something that we have been involved with for quite some time and we'll continue to be involved in that area. The practices of individuals to the type of lighting, as I had stated earlier, the fixtures we use, the automatic shut-off features, those types of areas, as well as temperature control, would be one of those things we look at. For example, as well, although we live in a winter climate, plug-in stalls for vehicles outside are not on a 24-hour basis anymore. They're on timed increments throughout the evening. So those are things that we would continue to be involved in monitoring. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Minister would agree to commit to giving us a small, one-page or briefing note on some of the short-term strategies that they're coming up with, just like the things he had added, to keep Regular Members apprised of these simple, but yet cost-effective and cost-saving measures, it would be appreciated. Just further to that, continuing on the same page, if the Minister could elaborate...We see in one of his points extensive Mildred Hall School renovations in Yellowknife Centre here, and I'm wondering if he could mention what the details are of that? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Roland

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that work that is highlighted there is work that has occurred and was completed in this fiscal year. It's for 2005-2006. So it's work that has occurred. We were involved with the design and worked with the board to ensure that they were getting what they had requested for space and the type of construction. So we've been involved from that stage of it and it's now, I believe, completed. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I was thinking it was the work that is potentially

going forward, but I'll leave it at that. No further questions, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Comments. Next for general comments, I have Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I said I wasn't going to ask any more questions about this, but the more I think about it, I think it's important that I do ask questions about it. That, again, is the access to the proceedings of this House to government employees. I started thinking about this, Madam Chair, and, for example, right now, if you're sitting in an office building in downtown Yellowknife and let's say there was a semi-final or a gold medal game going on in the Olympics and you wanted to tune into it, you could do that. You're not going to have your access denied, but the second you go as a government employee to try to get access to the proceedings of the House, your access is going to be denied. To me, Madam Chair, there's something not right about this. Like, why can employees access sporting events or whatever the case is, live audio to sporting events, but yet they can't access live audio to the proceedings of this House? Again, I really do think it's all about access for me. I don't think for a second every government employee is going to run out and access the proceedings of the House, but if their ability to do so is not allowed or is impeded, then I have some difficulty with that. I don't think we should be denying access to the proceedings of this House. The Legislative Assembly has gone a great distance in getting the web casting and the audio for the proceedings here. They've gone to that length, but now when it comes time to deliver, for whatever reason, Public Works doesn't want to step up to the plate and allow -- sorry for the sports analogy, Madam Chair -- but allow the employees to access the proceedings of the House. To me, it's just all about access, Madam Chair, and it's just not right the way that this is being allowed to take place. I'll leave it at that. The Minister can comment if he likes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I pass this one for some of the technical issues that we face around the amount of access being requested or of providing an open base to all employees, there are a number of factors that we have to look at. One, as I stated earlier, is our acceptable use policy that's in place today of what's available, and if there are people looking at the sporting events or Olympics, then that is probably not one of the things that fits within that criteria. The issues of network capacity and so on, I'll have Mr. Gable speak to that. But as well, the web casting issue, there was some discussion of what was available. We were looking at doing a pilot project and then when the requirement for providing this information or getting this out to individuals was requested of us, we still didn't have all the information available of how it would be done, how it could be done in a way that would not tie up the rest of our systems. So that's an area that we were looking at and trying to see if there were ways we could do it. We have provided the necessary plug-ins for those that had access to it as part of their job requirements, but to enhance it, and that's what I believe the Member is requesting here, is the enhanced ability during work hours, because that was not available prior to this unless somebody had cable TV in their offices to be able to pick

up on the proceedings. But for the technical side of it, if we can have Mr. Gable provide some information.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Gable.

**MR. GABLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The one issue I think I would like to comment on, and further to what Mr. Roland said, the network capacity issue is a major one. People rely on that for their e-mail and for file transfers and all kinds of things in terms of government business, and once we get into the whole game of media streaming, which is really what this is, we do have to be careful that we don't saturate that network. We have had a couple of other requests from other departments for this similar kind of thing where there is media streaming. Whether it's audio or video is a little more network intensive, but they both take up network capacity. In the other cases, we have tried to take it very slowly and do a full analysis of what the impact might be to basically ensure that bringing anything online in way of video or audio would not bring the network to a screeching halt because it just becomes saturated. So in this case, that was a concern on the technical side. I think added to the concerns that Mr. Roland has made, it is something that really needs to be sort of taken one step at a time, and we can't just sort of throw the doors open and do this with our existing network capacity. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Gable. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** No, I don't know what else I can say to this. Again, I go back to the capability that exists right now in government offices, and that is that you can access live sporting events, you can tune into the Olympics, you can tune into the Masters when the golf tournament starts, you can do a lot of things out of your government office and if you can do those things and not listen to the proceedings of this House, or have your access denied, I know it's an enhanced service, I know that, but to me something's wrong when we have that type of standard in place and I'm glad to hear that the Minister and his staff will look at it. I know it's an issue of network capacity and there are some issues there that have to be ironed out, but I think the sooner we can iron them out and have access to the proceedings of this House available to our employees, the better off we'll all be. I think it's imperative that access isn't an issue for our employees. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess if this proceeding is competing with the PGA or the Olympics, I'm not too sure how many people would choose these proceedings over those venues. Number one, those venues are not allowed to be...Government policy of our systems does not permit that. Now, I'm sure that not everybody is following the rules to a T and that's part of the situation we face, as Mr. Gable talked about, is when our systems slow down and get saturated is when a lot of people start logging onto these systems and doing other things. For providing information just to reassure those that are required to be plugged into the system, we've made the necessary arrangements. If departments, Ministers and deputy ministers feel that they need other employees to be plugged in, we will make those necessary arrangements to plug them in. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A lot of my questions have also been answered already by a lot of the other Members' questions, but I just have a couple of technical questions on the fuel pricing. I know the department is mandated to break even on its fuel sales and there's going to be different fuel prices for different communities. I just have one quick question on the taxes that are applied to the cost of fuel. Let me just understand one thing first. When the government purchases all its fuel supplies that are going out to the communities every year at a specific rate, the government pays the GST on that fuel. Is that not correct?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, we do not pay the GST on the prices that are delivered to us, but because there is the GST when we sell through our contractors to private sector, we have to include the GST. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the GST that the government collects on the sale of the fuel at the community level, is that going into our surplus fund in order to offset some other costs associated with petroleum products?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the GST that's collected from the sale of our products is remitted back to the federal government.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that even in one of my communities when the government is selling non-government customers fuel or heating fuel, or gas, that the GST is, like, over eight percent. So why is that?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chairman, the GST rate is seven percent and that's all we can collect on that side. So if the Member would like to raise a specific issue about that, I'd gladly look into it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know I have here the breakdown from the Public Works and Services and all the GST that's applied, even government's, is over seven percent, and to non-government customers it's seven and 8.39 percent. So, to me, GST is seven percent and that's the end of the story. I can't see why non-government customers, especially private individuals in these remote communities, are paying more than the required GST amount that the

federal government needs. So maybe the department has to go back and sort of revisit the whole GST scenario, but I'll leave that up to the Minister to follow up on.

Just with the question of the operation and maintenance costs associated with the pricing of the fuel, I just want to ask the Minister if some of these O and M costs...I know some communities are getting new tank farms, and some communities have old tank farms, and some communities move more fuel than others. I'm just wondering if the O and M is directly related to some of these differences in the various regions, or is it just one flat rate for everybody? Is that equalization? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the O and M side of the equation, the way it breaks out is every community pays the same O and M charge that is levied out there. So it's not specific to a community or the volume of sales for that community. An O and M levy is placed on every customer. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To me, if we want to make it fair and equitable to everybody, I think we have to make adjustments to every aspect of the whole pricing system. I think some of the newer tank farms don't require as much O and M as some of the older ones and the more remote communities, and I think that should be reflected in the price that a community is actually paying for. A community that moves a million litres a year should be paying, because the economy as a scale should be paying less overall for a community that moves 200,000 litres a year. I think that should be reflected in the community's costs somewhat, because I know up and down the Mackenzie Valley probably more fuel is moving in and out of those remote communities as opposed to, say, a community like Lutselk'e. But again, maybe that's something that the department has to revisit, and if we want to make this fuel pricing fair to everybody and everybody pay their costs associated with it, I think every part of the whole pricing system has to be adjusted to reflect the real costs. That was basically the main concern I had with the PPD and Public Works and Services. Other than that, I know that during the budget process we've got a lot of other questions related to the energy efficiency measures that the department will be taking on, and we're going to be going through that and bringing up some of those issues a little later on today in the deliberations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if we were to have every community pay actually fully burdened costs for supplying fuel in communities, it would be significantly higher than we sell it now. As I stated earlier, the capital portion of the tank farms in communities is not incorporated in any pricing. So if we were to go strictly on a fully burdened full-cost recovery on every community, the price of gas and fuel in the communities would be significantly higher because of the remoteness, the transportation costs of getting that, and the construction of those types of facilities. So the way we've structured it for our O and M costs has been as

fair as we can develop it. If we were going to go the full private sector style where each community would set its own rate based on volume and so on, then we'd also have to incorporate an actual capital cost feature in there to recover those so that there is a fund building up to replace those facilities in those communities, and that would be much higher than we'd want to pass on to those residents in the smaller communities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments, Public Works and Services.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Detail.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Detail, okay. If Members would please turn in their books to page 5-10 under Public Works and Services, this is an information item and it is a revenue summary. That's where we will start. We'll come back to the operations expenditure summary after we've considered the other pages. So page 5-10, information item, revenue summary. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Page 5-13, directorate, operations expenditures summary, \$7.341 million. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The activity description in this area, the Public Works and Services directorate defines a number of areas of responsibility and it's not directly stated here, Madam Chair, but I was wondering if under this area here I could ask about Public Works and Services' involvement with the Arctic Energy Alliance. This alliance, Madam Chair, was created several years ago as a partnership among several different GNWT departments and some of the energy utilities, and I would just like to get a sense of where Public Works and Services stands. Are they currently a member of the alliance? Do they make a contribution to its operation, Madam Chair? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Public Works and Services was a part of the Arctic Energy Alliance and we contributed to it. The 2005-06 budget, it was one of the areas where we reduced, but the acting deputy will be making a call to the president of Arctic Energy Alliance and we will become a contributing member once again in 2006-07. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Okay. Thank you. I am very pleased to hear that. I made no bones, Madam Chair, about my trust and faith in the Arctic Energy Alliance to be a good and effective player in our long-term energy management, and I am pleased to hear the department is coming back into the fold. Will this be on a full-term and equal basis with the other departments and other partners, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will be matching the contributions of other departments, yes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just getting back to the activity description that Public Works and Services has in their budget, the first part is the directorate, and I have no qualms with the activities of the directorate and basic description here, but I just want to point out something in the second paragraph where the director coordinates activities in support of GNWT's priorities and department goals, and maintains effective communication with department staff, as well as other departments, governments, the private sector and aboriginal and other special interest groups. To me, Madam Chair, I don't view aboriginal governments as special interest groups, and I don't think this government should either, whether it's in an activity description or not. I think this contributes to the lack of this government's various departments to fully recognize that the aboriginal governments, whether emerging or settled self-governments, are legitimate governments. I would effectively communicate with other staff, other departments and aboriginal governments, I think would be more fitting of a description for this department and any other government department. Like I said, to me, aboriginal governments are governments and they will be legitimate governments. We do have legitimate aboriginal governments, and I think they should be described as legitimate governments and make it known in the department that aboriginal governments are not interest groups, and I don't agree with the description that says they are. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** I would like to thank the Member for his comments. We will be making a change in there to highlight aboriginal organizations and governments. As we know, there is one other legal government in the Northwest Territories, that being the Tlicho Government and other discussions are ongoing and, as they come in, they will come into force, as well. So we can go aboriginal governments and organizations. So we will make the changes necessary in this section. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Page 5-13. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Also in the area of the directorate is a responsibility outlined for records management. Of late, Madam Chair, this hasn't been a high profile item, but in recent years it has been, Madam Chair. From my recollection on serving on standing committees and looking on budgets over the past few years, one thing that has come to light is our government is not very consistent across departments, Madam Chair, on how it undertakes records management. Some departments, I understand, are fairly progressive. They are able to stay on top of editing and storing and keeping current their records management systems using new technologies, while others, apparently, were occupying a heck of a lot of storage space and shelving space at government warehouses with boxes and boxes of files that, again, some departments have not undertaken so much of an initiative to stay on top of.

Through this, Madam Chair, it became apparent that while this department, Public Works and Services, does have

an overall records mandate for the GNWT, a lot of the actual authority, and decision-making, and budgeting and tasking is still in the jurisdiction of each individual department. So, Madam Chair, I wanted to ask, as of today, does our government have a central overriding policy and program for records management, or is it something that is still largely disbursed at the discretion of each department?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member has highlighted areas that have been a concern and growing concern across the department from headquarters to communities and how we deal with our records management. It was more of an opt-in system where we provided a service. We could provide training to departments and boards for records management. We have now been charged with setting up the actual policy itself and setting those guidelines. So it's gone more from opt-in to this is the requirement now, how to store your systems or what's developed in that place. So we have gone to the next level, although the expenditures and requirements still are maintained within each department. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Okay. So then, Madam Chair, are we actually revising policy to make it a requirement for each department to maintain certain standards and accountabilities?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we have been charged with setting the level and type of storage that needs to occur and how that is done. So it is something we have been charged with and we will be setting those guidelines. Departments will have to follow those guidelines now, although they will still have the budget and people within their own sections doing that work. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to compensation and benefits on page 5-13, there is an increase of \$150,000. If I could just get an explanation with respect to that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the majority of that is due to the Collective Agreement and forced growth. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$7.341 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Information item, directorate, active positions, pages 5-14 and 5-15. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** May I just get some detail on the reduction of four positions between last year and this year? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That was due to the HR amalgamation that occurred.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Information item, directorate, active positions, agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Activity summary, asset management, operations expenditure summary, \$38.092 million. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I may not be on the right page here, but I would like to ask a question about a particular building that we are leasing, the government leases. It is known as the Rockhill Apartment Building. It is in my riding here in Yellowknife and it is actually operated by the YWCA. Out of that building, they provide a number of housing and family-oriented programs.

I'm not sure, Madam Chair, whether we own or lease this building, but I do know that the arrangement with the YWCA is coming up I think within the next two fiscal years. They're anxious to know whether this arrangement with their organization can be continued, but also the building is in some need of maintenance and upgrades.

To this area, Madam Chair, I note that in the Health and Social Services capital plan, which we haven't gone to yet, there is a quarter million dollar upgrade program for the next two fiscal years. I'm wondering if Public Works and Services, which I understand has the overall responsibility for the building, could advise of what the current status is of the Y's occupancy and any future capital investment in this building, Madam Chair. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Rockhill Apartments are a government-owned facility and Public Works does deal with the O and M on that piece of property. An agreement was entered into in 1997, a 10-year agreement entered into. We've been working with Health and Social Services; Education, Culture and Employment; and I believe the Housing Corporation around that facility. Health and Social Services, ultimately, the decision has to be made from their side of the equation as to how we would proceed. A technical evaluation was done on the facility and we'll have to come up with a plan here in 2006 as to what the next steps will be for that; if it's a renovation for that. But that we'll have to work in conjunction with Health and Social Services on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. The Minister, I think, is alert to something that I was looking at here. I think Health and Social Services has some contracts with the Y that are operated through or around

that building, but to my understanding the vast majority of our interest for occupancy through the Y is through the income support and the housing services now under ECE. While I notice that Health and Social Services is planning a capital project in that building, there was nothing there from ECE or Public Works. So this is where I'd like to go. But this arrangement is not up for another couple of years, so I do appreciate there is still a bit of time on our side. But I'll be looking for some progress on collaborating on this building in the near future, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. I didn't hear a question there. I believe that was a comment. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, just on that facility, our involvement would be once the department has got the dollars in place, we would become involved with the project management of that and how that work would proceed. Ongoing O and M at that point, as well. So Health and Social Services has identified the dollars and that's where the work will start in their books. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to ask the Minister a question about charity leases. I'm just wondering how they're reported and how they're accounted for under the expenditures summary that appears before us here in the budget. How are those accounted for? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That would be found under grants and contributions of asset management. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So grants and contributions only totals \$260,000, but just off the top of my head I could probably come up with a value much higher than that in terms of what the government's supplying various folks out there in terms of charity leases. So I'm wondering where else is it accounted for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, each department, if it had a facility and kept it on its books and was leasing it as a charity lease to an organization, would have to account for it under their appropriation. So Public Works is directly involved in this one asset. We have it accounted for. If Health has other facilities, they would have to account for it there. Education would have some, it would be accounted under Education's appropriation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Minister could get us, I guess I'd like to see a further breakdown of that \$260,000, what it's for and what it covers. The other

side of that, Madam Chair, I'd like to know how maintenance and costs like that are accounted for, as well. Are they under grants and contributions, or are they somewhere else? How do we build in costs like maintenance to some of these buildings that contain charity leases? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It would normally be incorporated in the full value being estimated, but I will get that information and provide that to the Member.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Next, Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a simple question about the details on the increase of a couple of million dollars under asset management, other expenses. Could I just get some detail on that, please? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the total increment for under other expenses incorporates the human resource amalgamation, lease cost for new office space, as well as management of drinking water. That initiative with the Department of Health and Social Services and Municipal and Community Affairs. As well, travel costs for the two positions for Inuvik schools. Forced growth goes into accommodation lease costs, operations maintenance costs for asset inventory, and other increased lease costs for facilities that we deal with, as well as the funding allocated for these costs for the BDIC transferred from ITI. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under details of other expenses on page 5-17 we see the utilities going, being budgeted a lot less than what was actually spent for year 2005-2006 and a lot less than what were the actuals for 2004-2005, and that seems to be going against the common sense trend that we observe. I'd like to have some explanation on that, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is the result of transferring that funding over to Municipal and Community Affairs.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Anything further, Ms. Lee?

**MS. LEE:** No. So it's not really because we're expecting to spend less, it's just moving of money. I thought it was too good to be true, so I wanted to confirm that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was just wondering if we're on 5-17. I don't recall

approving 5-16, but anyways, just with respect to contract services, the increase of \$2 million. Could I get an explanation from the Minister?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. For increased contract services, it would be, again, these would be for office space allocations. So the biggest one again is dealing with the human resources amalgamation, lease costs for office space, \$1.2 million. Lease costs for the BDIC transfer from ITI incremental, \$68,000. Management of drinking water initiative is 90. Does the Member want the rest of the numbers there? They're all about \$30,000. The next big one, again forced growth for office accommodation lease costs, \$726,000. Operations and maintenance for asset inventories, \$238,000. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I see we got increased office space, yet we're reducing utilities. Can the Minister explain how that works?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in the reduction of utilities is because we've transferred it from Public Works and Services over to Municipal and Community Affairs and they distribute it from there. So it's not an actual reduction. It's been transferred out from the department and is offset with the increase in Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Menicoche, you're good? Okay. Mr. Ramsay.

**Committee Motion 20-15(4): Recommendation For Energy Efficient Facilities, Equipment And Employee Rewards Programs, Carried**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that this committee recommends that the government design its facilities to be energy efficient and also use their equipment in an energy efficient manner, and further that the government develop a program to recognize and reward employees for suggesting ways that we might save energy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is in order. To the motion. We're just distributing the motion.

Okay. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question has been called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Activity summary, asset management, operations expenditures summary, \$38.092 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Activity summary, asset management, grants and contributions, total grants, \$260,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Page 5-20, information item, asset management, active positions. That carries over to page 5-21. Agreed? Mr. McLeod.

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's a facility planner and a project officer for the school projects up in Inuvik. I don't see it reflected here in the active positions for Beaufort-Delta, yet I see an increase of two in Yellowknife headquarters. I hope these two positions aren't going to Yellowknife. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll have Mr. Aumond give the actual title. One is going to Inuvik and one is in Yellowknife, but for the actual titles, Mr. Aumond can provide that information.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Aumond.

**MR. AUMOND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One position, the facility planning position for a one-year term, that's in Yellowknife. The project officer for the school position, which is an indeterminate position, is in Inuvik.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Five...Oh, Mr. McLeod.

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the facility planner is for the schools in Inuvik, or is it just a facility planner for across the Northwest Territories? If it's for the schools in Inuvik, then why would it be in Yellowknife? I'm just curious there, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That position is a one-year term and it will work with the other position that will be positioned up in Inuvik to deal with the schools, as well as deal with some of our other facilities. But it is tied to the school and it is a one-year term. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Asset management, active positions. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 5-23, activity summary, Technology Service Centre, operations expenditure summary, \$733,000. Mr. Villeneuve.

**Committee Motion 21-15(4): Recommendation That Resources Be Pooled Within The Technology Services Centre, Carried**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Public Works and Services continue to try to pool more

resources, such as information systems, collectively within the Technology Service Centre in order to realize greater cost savings.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. We'll have the motion distributed.

The motion is in order. To the motion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question has been called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Activity summary, Technology Service Centre, operations expenditure summary, \$733,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 5-25, activity summary, petroleum products, operations expenditure summary, \$974,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 5-26, information item, lease commitments, infrastructure.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Information item, Technology Service Centre, chargeback, page 5-27.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 5-28 and 5-29, information item, Technology Service Centre, chargeback, active positions by region and community allocation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Information item, public stores revolving fund.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 5-31, information item, petroleum products revolving fund.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Information item, petroleum products revolving fund, active positions by region and active positions by community allocation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Page 5-34, 5-35 and 36, information item, work performed on behalf of others. Any questions? Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering, it gets back to the questions I had earlier on charity leases and maintenance that Public Works and

Services provides to tenants in these charity leases. It would seem to me that perhaps a more transparent and accountable way of showing those expenses would be to put them under a title like work performed on behalf of others, because really that's what Public Works and Services is doing when they're maintaining buildings that are occupied by folks that are in a charity lease. I was just wondering if the Minister would like to comment on that, and perhaps a way of accounting for those funds would be better under this title than buried in the numbers in the other section. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the work performed on behalf of others is work that we do for others and we are paid the money to do it. So the money that is identified here is money that we are receiving from other groups to do that work. Whereas, when we have to account for a charity lease, that is a grant-in-kind and would fall in the other section. So it wouldn't fit into work performed on behalf of others because that's actual revenue coming in, whereas a grant-in-kind is loss. We're basically accounting the loss of revenue in that sense. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister for that. Perhaps we could come up with a category entitled "work performed for free." Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess we'd be doing the same thing as saying grant-in-kind. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Madam Chair, I just have a question on Tlicho implementation. Where there was a reduction in the O and M budget for assets transferred to Tlicho community governments, \$446,000, I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell me if there's still outstanding, like, assets or O and M to be transferred down the road, or is it the final \$446,000 transferred? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that would be the final amounts that have been transferred now and all the assets transferred so that within Public Works and Services I don't believe we have any other assets out there to be transferred. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick question. I notice there were four PYs, two full-time by region and two full-time by asset management. I'm just wondering if they're the same positions, because there are two positions in the community. But at the same time,

are those programs and also PYs going to be transferred later through the Tlicho Government implementation?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm trying to find the page number that the Member is referring to on those positions for the Tlicho. Under asset management? My understanding of the two positions being identified are the ones that are working for the Rae water and sewer treatment plant. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Just a final note, that implementation of the Tlicho agreement...No, that's fine; sorry. I'll ask that question on a different department. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay. Thank you. Information item, work performed on behalf of others, \$1.442 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Can you please turn back to page 5-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$47.14 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Please turn to infrastructure acquisition on page 4-6. Infrastructure acquisition plan, asset management, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$643,000, total activity, \$643,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Does the committee agree that...Oh. Sorry. Page 4-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, Technology Service Centre, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$1.775 million, total activity, \$1.775 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 4-10, infrastructure acquisition plan, petroleum products division, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$6.835 million, total activity, \$6.835 million, and total department, \$9.253 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Does committee agree that that concludes our consideration of the budget for the Department of Public Works and Services?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Roland, Mr. Gable, Mr. Aumond. At this time we will take a 15-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, committee. I'll call the committee to order. First off, I will ask the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment to provide his opening comments on his department's estimates.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Speaker, the 2006-07 Main Estimates we bring forward today for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment total over \$259 million for operations and maintenance and amortization of our capital assets. These estimates represent a net increase of \$14.2 million, or six percent, over the 2005-2006 Main Estimates. This covers program growth and Collective Agreement increases. The main estimates also include additional funding for full-time kindergarten programs, inclusive schooling, community-based distance learning college programs, student financial assistance and senior supplementary benefits.

The main estimates support the broad goals of this government. As well, they were developed to strengthen departmental services and improve program results based on the goals and objectives outlined in the department's new strategic plan, Building on Our Success. The plan was released recently after extensive consultation with members of the public, as well as our departmental partners and this Legislature, and will be used to guide activities over the next decade.

I would like to highlight a few key activities of the department.

#### Education And Culture

First, within the education and culture activity of the department, we propose to spend \$147.2 million on programs and services to residents of the NWT. Spending in this area includes monies for early childhood development programs and schools, as well as cultural and heritage programs.

#### Early Childhood Development

For 2006-2007, we plan to spend \$4.7 million on early childhood development activities. These activities will add to the early learning provided at home to help provide children with a healthy start in life and to give them the learning tools they need to succeed in school and beyond.

As Members know, this government was in negotiations with the Government of Canada to establish a new Early Learning and Childcare Agreement, ELCC, over the course of the past year. Prior to the federal election, negotiations for additional base funding, in addition to the per capita amount, had not lead to an agreement acceptable to the Northwest Territories, leaving \$941,000 in one-time monies available to the ELCC trust fund.

In the budget before you, we have not shown this money from the federal trust or increased the budget for early learning and childhood programs. I intend to bring forward the request for the approval of supplementary funding early in the new fiscal year to add the money available through the trust fund into our early childhood programming.

### School System

For the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the department is budgeting over \$135.6 million to support our schools. Most of this money will go directly to education authorities at the regional and community level.

Over the past decade, we have made steady progress in strengthening the school system. During the next fiscal year, we are planning specific actions to support improved results at all levels of the school system.

The third stream of programming or "Pathways" through second secondary school is now well underway. The emphasis of the Pathways Program is on the development of courses that prepare students for the world of work. It also ties in with other high school offers that are more academically or trades focused. In 2006-2007, we intend to increase funding by \$50,000 and to complete the work begun in previous years.

The 2006-07 Main Estimates include an additional \$1.638 million to fund education authorities so they can offer full-time kindergarten programs. The implementation of full-time kindergarten will help ensure we are giving children the best possible start.

As well, \$1.764 million is being added to increase the budget for inclusive schooling from 15 percent to 17 percent of overall school funding for the 2006-2007 academic year. This initiative will be supported by the introduction of a new inclusive schooling directive and is part of a longer-term plan to increase the budget to 20 percent of school funding by 2008-2009. This increased funding will allow schools to expand assistance to students who require supports such as: program modification, counselling, behavioural intervention, specialized rehabilitation, medical services, personal assistance and specialized equipment.

Mr. Chairman, this government is committed to culture-based education and to supporting education in official languages other than English. The aboriginal languages and culture based education directive promotes the integration of language and culture throughout K to 12 programs. The directive outlines the requirement for culturally appropriate learning and provides direction to education authorities with respect to the \$7.6 million in this budget to support aboriginal language and culture programs.

It is also important to note that the recently signed agreement between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada for minority-language education and second-language instruction will provide an additional \$1.1 million for French language instruction in 2006-07. Although the agreement was not signed in time to show the increase in the 2006-07 estimates now before you, it will be brought in through supplementary estimates.

### Official Languages

Mr. Chairman, the department has continued its work in a number of areas related to official languages. During the past year, and as we look ahead, we are continuing to take actions including:

- revising legislation, policies and regulations to more clearly describe roles and responsibilities related to languages;
- consolidating language functions related to overall government activities;
- reinforcing accountability related to language funding with departments and education authorities; and
- increasing contact with language communities through partnership with the official languages and aboriginal language revitalization boards.

In 2006-07, ECE is proposing to spend \$2.2 million on official languages activities. Most of this funding will be used to support the language plans and activities of the official languages communities. In addition, we are negotiating with the Government of Canada to renew the Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages. Finalization of the renewal of this agreement has been delayed as a result of the recent federal election.

### Advanced Education And Careers

Within the advanced education and careers activity, the department proposes to spend \$42 million. Programs and services in this area provide northerners with access to career development, skills training and post-secondary education needed to successfully participate in our expanding economy.

The department is working with other governments and industry to assist northerners to access training and work in the growing resource sector. Examples of this work include the department's participation in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership agreements, or ASEP, and in socio-economic negotiations on major resource development projects.

Community-based education programs are needed to prepare residents from our small communities to enter post-secondary programs such as teacher education, education assistant and early childhood work. In 2006-07, an additional \$240,000 is budgeted to fund Aurora College to pilot distance learning access programs focused on attracting community residents into education-related careers. If the pilot proves to be successful, the department will bring forward a request for ongoing funding to support the delivery of this program.

As a first step in examining whether we should develop a framework for increasing GNWT involvement in labour, this government has consolidated all employment and labour functions in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Over the next year, ECE will complete the consultation leading to amendments to our Labour Standards Act.

### Income Security Programs

Within the income security activity, the department proposes to spend \$63.9 million during fiscal year 2006-07. Spending in this area includes monies for student financial assistance, income support and public housing subsidy programs. Given limited resources and the requirement that those in the greatest need receive support, it is necessary that we carefully review and adjust our income security activities.

We have started this process to rationalize our programs under a common policy framework and model. This began with the consolidation of the funding for housing subsidies within income support programs offered by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. On April 1, 2006, one-stop community service centres will begin delivering a range of income security programs. A regional career centre will support each community service centre. Clients will be able to access programs including: senior fuel subsidy, senior supplementary benefits, income assistance and housing subsidies, as well as be able to obtain information on student financial assistance and a number of federal income security programs.

These actions are part of a process that is expected to take several years, as it will involve extensive discussion and review. This is difficult work that will involve a lot of consultation and careful planning. In the end, it should result in GNWT programs that are clearly targeted to increase self-reliance, a critical foundation of our government's strategic plan.

ECE will assume administration of the \$32.6 million Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program on April 1, 2006. The department is budgeting \$1.3 million to support the transfer of this responsibility from the NWT Housing Corporation. Savings in administration costs in the corporation will offset the increase.

In recent years, student financial assistance benefit levels have not kept up with the increasing cost of post-secondary education in Canada. In 2006-07, ECE is budgeting an additional \$573,000 to increase the tuition and textbook supports under the basic grant from \$1,750 and \$300 per semester to \$1,925 and \$400 respectively. At these levels, aboriginal and northern-schooled students will find it less necessary to access repayable loans to meet their basic expenses.

Payments to seniors also need to be adjusted for inflation. To assist low-income seniors with the high cost of living in the Northwest Territories, the main estimates include an additional \$326,000 to increase their monthly benefit allowance that seniors receive under the Northwest Territories Senior Citizens' Supplementary Benefit Program by \$25, from \$135 to \$160 per month.

### Infrastructure - Capital Expenditures

Finally, the departmental budget is supported with a request for continued investment in suitable education facilities over the plan period. With more than 70 educational facilities across the Northwest Territories, a number of which are nearing the end of their operational life, it is not surprising that we need to continue to make investments in educational facilities.

The 2006-07 infrastructure acquisition plan profiles more than \$120 million of improvements to school and college facilities over the three years of the plan. New schools will be constructed in Tulita and Ndilo. Schools in Gameti and Yellowknife will be renovated. We are currently examining whether the Chief T'Selehye School in Fort Good Hope should be renovated or replaced. The current plan indicates that the school is to be renovated, but we have been monitoring the building and an adjustment to the current plan may be necessary. As well, the addition of a new modular classroom in Colville Lake is being advanced so that it can be available for use during the

2006-07 school year. Finally, new student housing will be built at college campuses in Fort Smith and Inuvik.

This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. I would now like to go to Ms. Lee, chair of the Standing Committee on Social Programs for the standing committee's comments on the main estimates. Thank you. Ms. Lee.

### Introduction

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, as Members of the Accountability and Oversight committee, were involved in the new pre-budget consultation process with the people of the Northwest Territories in late August of 2005. Hearings were held north and south of the lake and gave northerners and non-governmental organizations the opportunity to provide input to MLAs on the priorities that the budget should focus on.

The committee then met with the Minister and his officials on Monday, September 26, 2005, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Members also received a briefing from the Minister of Finance on January 17, 2006, outlining the changes to the budget of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment since the committee reviewed the business plan in September.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$259.205 million in operations expense and \$29.972 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2006-2007.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2006-2007 Draft Main Estimates and budget planning cycle.

### Pre-Budget Consultations

During the pre-budget consultations, committee members took note of the following issues that were mentioned in a majority of the communities we visited: early childhood or day care programs, special needs funding for students in kindergarten to Grade 12, funding for literacy programs aimed at youth who are not in school and, finally, under post-secondary education, the need to increase student financial assistance for tuition and living expenses and increase the number of NWT residents in apprenticeships.

These issues will be commented on later in this report.

### Aboriginal Languages

The committee found the discussion during the business plan review surrounding the revitalization of aboriginal languages to be very interesting. The possibility of the federal government creating a central agency for the revitalization of aboriginal languages is also of concern to the committee.

Members agree with the department's position that it is important to maintain a government-to-government relationship on funding for aboriginal languages. Being lumped in under a central agency could impact on the

amount of funding available for each language group, as territorial aboriginal language groups would be outnumbered by larger southern First Nations.

The standing committee also supports the renegotiation of the languages agreement with the federal government and the linkage of aboriginal languages and French language under one agreement.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would like to ask my colleague, the Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden, to continue with the report.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Braden.

#### **Early Childhood Development (Day Care)**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee had supported the Minister in negotiating base funding in addition to any per capita funding that might flow out of a federal Early Childhood Development Framework Agreement.

However, with the recent change in government, and the uncertainty of federal funding to improve regulated day care in the NWT, it may be necessary to shift focus on our current early childhood programming.

As committee members heard during our pre-budget consultation process, residents are very concerned with the state of early childhood programs in the NWT. The lack of suitable infrastructure in smaller communities coupled with unstable funding and a piecemeal approach to programming is meaning that children are not getting the head start they should, and parents are being forced to use caregivers that may not be able to provide for their children's intellectual stimulation.

Committee members are of the opinion that the current programming related to day care in the Northwest Territories is geared towards larger communities that have the necessary volunteers and infrastructure to get a day care off of the ground.

The committee is aware there is extra funding available for smaller communities to get day care programs up and running but are, nonetheless, of the opinion that this extra funding does not go far enough in addressing the infrastructure needs and shortfalls at the community level. Committee would like to see the department bring forward a plan to improve and revitalize the current program. The committee is also very interested in seeing the outcome of the review of the day care program being undertaken by Alternatives North and would encourage the department to participate in the review process.

Mr. Chairman, it is realized we do not have the funding to deal with the infrastructure needs of a universal day care program in the Northwest Territories regardless of the amount of funding secured from the federal government in the future.

Subsequent to the review of the business plan, the committee did ask that the department consider dedicating one of the early childhood development positions to assisting communities/day care operators in finding suitable, long-term day care facilities in communities. Constituents have told committee members that the day care consultants seem to place a greater

emphasis on the regulation of existing day care operators than on helping new operations get started or helping existing operations to survive and prosper. It was thought by the committee that reprofiling one of the positions to help new operators could be a positive step in increasing the number of licensed day care spaces in the Northwest Territories.

The department's response to this request, Mr. Chairman, was that the four regional early childhood education specialists were expected to offer this kind of assistance as part of their regular duties and that any new position or reprofiling would be redundant. Residents are encouraged to utilize the regional early childhood education specialists in setting up regulated day cares in their communities.

Members would be very interested in discussing any new ideas or initiatives that could address these issues during the review of income security programs and in the next business planning cycle.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to hand this over to my colleague, Mr. McLeod.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. McLeod.

#### **Funding For Student Support Services (Special Needs Funding)**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During the pre-budget consultations we heard from parents and the NWT Teachers' Federation on the need to increase funding for special needs students, and, in particular, for disabled students who require one-on-one assistance to function in a classroom.

The committee notes the department will be increasing funding for student support services to 20 percent from 15 percent of the base funding over the next three school years, starting with an increase to 17 percent in this budget at a cost of \$1.764 million.

The committee is in support of this increased funding for student support services and of the strict enforcement of the ministerial directive on the usage of the funding for the purposes for which it was intended and voted on by the Assembly. Members will be looking for evidence that this funding increase will make a difference in the lives of children who need special supports to succeed.

Members were also pleased to see a mechanism for the involvement of parents in determining the required supports for their children is being developed. Members have spent too much time in the past helping parents access services for their child that should have been provided by the school as a matter of course. It is hoped that the increase to 20 percent of base funding for student support services will result in more children be supported to reach their full potential.

It was also noted that the new health and social services rehabilitation teams will be an important component of a revitalization of the student support services available in our schools. It is important that there be close linkages and cooperation between educational and health care professionals. The committee will be looking for evidence of such cooperation once the rehabilitation teams are staffed and up and running.

### Pupil/Teacher Ratios

One of the significant accomplishments of the 14th Assembly was the reduction of the pupil to teacher ratio (PTR). During the pre-budget consultation we heard from parents and the NWT Teachers' Association on the need to reduce the PTR even further so that we can ensure that each student gets the individual attention and courses that they require to succeed in school.

With all of the opportunities that come with resource development, there is a clear need to expand the exposure of students, particularly at the high school level, to the trades.

Many schools in the NWT lack dedicated physical education teachers and, in the context of the Healthy Living Strategy, this needs to be addressed.

The standing committee will be looking for evidence of a focus on the trades and physical education during the next business planning cycle.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I would like to pass it on to my colleague, Mr. Jackson Lafferty from Monfwi.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Lafferty

### Adult Training And Development And Aurora College

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Chair. There were concerns expressed about the lack of a career counsellor in the Tlicho region. Members understand that the area is currently served by the North Slave Career Centre in Yellowknife and that counsellors travel to the region on an infrequent basis.

Given the fact that the Tlicho region has been accorded regional status, by virtue of the land claim and self-government agreement, and the successes that Tlicho residents have achieved in post-secondary education, the committee is of the opinion that it would be appropriate to staff a career counsellor position in the region. This does not necessarily have to be a new position. A position could be staffed through attrition at the North Slave Career Centre. The department has agreed to examine this request in the 2007-2010 business planning exercise.

Members would also appreciate the opportunity to review and offer comment on the Aurora College corporate plan that is currently under development. The college is very important to the future of all northerners, and Members are anxiously awaiting the results of the college's consultation and the formulation of a corporate plan.

### Income Security Programs

The Standing Committee on Social Programs supports the increases to the Student Financial Assistance Program. Students have been hit hard by tuition increases in the last number of years and our program has not kept pace. The planned increase will allow students to spend more of the money they receive for living expenses on just that, instead of tuition costs.

It is important to note that the \$573,000 increase to the student financial assistance budget will only mean a maximum of \$1,925 per semester for tuition and \$400 for books. Current tuition and fee costs per semester at the University of Alberta range between \$2,647.86 for a

simple undergraduate program to \$9,340.46 for the dentistry program. While we continue to have the best Student Financial Assistance Program in the country, it is clear that we do not cover all costs for tuition and books. These increases will mean that students will have an extra \$325 in their pockets each semester.

The committee also supports increasing the senior citizens' supplementary benefit to \$160 per month from \$135. Seniors, for the most part, are on fixed incomes. Those who rely on the Canada Pension Plan for the bulk of their income are hard pressed to make ends meet in the supercharged economy that is the Northwest Territories today and this increased support is a welcome measure.

Members have also noted that there is a gap that hard-to-house people seem to fall into between the programs that are offered through the NWT Housing Corporation and the local housing authorities and the programs administered by income support. Members are aware of people living in substandard, private accommodations paid for by income support because they are no longer eligible for social housing for one reason or another.

It is hoped with the combining of these two programs under one authority that problems with hard-to-house people can be addressed.

Mr. Chair, at this time I would like to pass it over to Mr. Calvin Pokiak to conclude.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Pokiak.

### Full-Time Kindergarten

**MR. POKIAK:** The committee is pleased to see the inclusion of funding in the amount of \$1.638 million to deliver funded full-time kindergarten programming in the Northwest Territories.

Many district education authorities have already begun offering full-time kindergarten programs and have shown excellent results in preparing a child to learn and succeed in school. It was time to ensure that all kindergarten students in the NWT were afforded the same opportunity to develop the skills to learn.

The committee provided strong support to the Minister to advance this initiative by helping to ensure that the necessary legislative amendments to the Education Act were passed and by making our colleagues aware of the importance, and successes, of full-time kindergarten programs.

The Minister and department are to be commended in securing the funding to provide full-time kindergarten programming. It is hoped that we will see marked improvements in graduation rates and attendance in years to come.

### Funding For Students Over The Age Of 21 Attending High School

The standing committee was made aware of the cuts to funding students over the age of 21 attending high school during the review of the business plans in September. At the time, it seemed reasonable to provide sufficient funding to a student for three additional years to complete

their graduation requirements, and the committee had no serious concerns with the proposed cut at that time.

Subsequent to the review of the business plan, the committee held a public hearing on bills and other matters in the community of Behchoko and heard concerns expressed on the ending of funding for students attending high school over the age of 21 and the efficiency of adult basic education courses being offered through Aurora College. We heard of parents and grandparents, who have decided to go back to high school at the same time as their children or grandchildren, who have ended up being positive role models, and by their attendance alone, a calming influence on all the children, resulting in a more positive learning environment.

The committee now believes it erred in not objecting to the proposed cut to funding for students over the age of 21 who chose to attend high school. The fact is, as a government, we would be expending funding on some of these students to attend Adult Basic Education. So does it really matter which pot of funding pays for their education? It's the results that count.

The committee will be pursuing further discussions with the Minister and affected communities and looking for ways to strike a compromise.

#### Capital Plan

The committee is aware that the results of next summer's piling inspections may require either increased funding or a reprofiling or delay of existing capital projects that are in the infrastructure acquisition plan. The first priority for this government and the department must always be the safety of our children in our schools.

Mr. Chair, the committee would appreciate being kept advised of the results of the piling inspections as they come in. That concludes our comments on Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. I would now like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if he wishes to bring in witnesses.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Does committee agree we entertain witnesses?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. I would like to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses in.

Thank you. Mr. Dent, I would like you to please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me, on my right, I have Mr. Mark Cleveland, who is the deputy minister for the department. On my left, I have Mr. Paul Devitt, who is the director of finance for the department.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Welcome, Mr. Devitt and Mr. Cleveland, to the proceedings this afternoon. I will now open the floor for general comments from committee on Education, Culture and Employment. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a lot of important topics under this department, and we are approving quite a large sum of money for \$259 million, so I think there will be lots of things to talk about. I am going to start with the first one coming out of the Minister's opening statement. It is in regards to special needs funding, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to see that we are, once again, going to be increasing the funding for special needs. I think it might have been as low as about seven percent when I came into this House six years ago. I think we are looking at increasing it to about 15 percent here. There is no question that the amount of dollars will go a long way, but now I am thinking that we need to do a better job. The Minister and the department will have to do a better job of tightening this program to see that we are dealing with what it is that we are trying to deal with, which is, that I think, we have undefined and an almost overwhelming need of special needs issues in our Territories. I think we all have an instinctive feeling that we are probably not addressing as much of that as we would like. We are increasing dollars on that, but I am not sure if we have a clear picture about what the scope is of the challenge that we are dealing with. I have to tell you that I was quite surprised to hear from someone speaking in local media from one of the school boards saying now that we have more money for kindergarten funding, which is a good thing, we are finally funding kindergarten. We have made it legal with the passage of the legislation a couple of months ago. Now that we are going to be putting money in there for full time kindergarten. I guess we have always suspected that school systems were finding money from within to pay for the kindergarten that the school boards were...school boards made the decision to provide for, but were not being funded for. I had no idea that some of the special needs money might have been spent to fund kindergarten. I have no idea of knowing if that is true or not. I want to give the Minister a chance to explain that. What is it that he is doing now to make sure that, in fact, the money that we are allocating for special needs are going to special needs? What sort of picture does he have as to the needs for special needs in school?

I know that the NWT Teachers' Association, when they came and spoke before the committee, they spoke about the need for additional resources for special needs, but especially for those who need one-on-one care. In listening to the Minister's statement, there is a vast spectrum of special needs that we need to deal with. It could be from someone whose English is not the first language or someone who just has learning difficulties, right up to those who need one-on-one care. I think there is also a question about where do the special needs, from an educational perspective, start and end, and when do the medical special needs for any child start and end. I think there is so much there.

It is surprising to learn that the last directive on inclusive schooling from the Minister was back in 1996. It is almost 10 years old, especially in light of the fact that, for every year for the last six years, we have been increasing funding on special needs and to know that that was actually done in sort of a vacuum, that is a surprise, too. There are lots of things on the workload there on the special needs file. This is something that I am very interested in. I would like to see this really tightened up in the not-too-distant future, hopefully by this summer. I will

just ask the Minister to respond to that and then move on from there. Thank you.

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

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of the special needs, I would agree with the Member that this is an area that is critically important to ensuring the success of as many of our children as possible in the North. It is an area that I have long wanted to see some increase in funding. I think the last government did a pretty good job of getting the funding increased from where it was to get it up to a level that we have it at today, but that is only part way.

We note from studies that have been done in the past, the student survey that was done several years ago told us what was needed in the classroom. It told us that most teachers saw students who needed more support than what they could get in the classroom, so we knew that we had a ways to go. We are ready to undertake a second study in the course of this year to ensure that we are up to date on what the needs are in the classroom, that we can follow through on them. We are going to also be completing the new directive on inclusive schooling. That has involved all of the divisional educational councils as well as the NWTTA and other stakeholders as we have gone through it. It has gone through a number of drafts. We are in the final draft right now. We expect to have the final version of it out by April so that it can be brought into the course this year.

The Member also raised an interesting situation where we know that there are some people who are going to need assistance through Health and Social Services. We don't necessarily have in our schools the people who are trained to deal with some of the situations that present. Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment are working together to see some teams implemented. These are being funded through Health. I think that there has been some discussion about those when Minister Miltenberger was here as a witness. There will be some collaboration between those teams and the schools to make sure that the services are better delivered within our schools for those students who need services like audiology and some of the more medically oriented assessments. We are hoping that, by bringing some more of that work into the schools, we will also be able to provide some assistance in coaching and training to our special needs assistants so that they can deal with individuals better who present with some of the issues that Health and Social Services will be addressing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could just zero in on the inclusive schooling funding, Mr. Chair. In the answers that the Minister gave to my questions about access to special needs support, Written Question 8-15, I learned that we approved \$9 million in 2001-02 and \$11.3 million in 2001-02, \$15, \$266,000 in 2002-03. We approved \$15.9 million in 2003-04 and then we approved \$16.8 million in 2004-05. That is an increase of over \$7.8 million within a span of five years. When you are starting from \$9 million, that is almost an 80 percent increase in five years. I would like to think that, when I'm sitting in this House and approving that much additional money, I would really like

to see some difference on the ground. In the exact same period that I have attended the Range Lake North School PAG, just because it happens to be the only school in my riding and it is a way for me to get to know what is happening on the ground. I cannot tell you. I don't want to identify one school board or one school. I am just saying that as an example, and I am assuming that is happening everywhere. In those five years, when we keep increasing the money here in this House, I cannot say that I have had too many parents and teachers coming up to me and saying the needs are a lot less, or the kids who need special needs assistance or full-time assistance are getting those special needs help, or that there has been any more rational process through which parents with special needs would be required to go through. It could be that I am not just seeing that. I would like to know if the Minister could give us the information as to do they have any objective analysis and data as to how much they have been able to go in terms of improving and serving the needs of children with special needs with this extra money. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Minister Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The amount of money that we have increased in the system over the years has certainly gone up. It is true. In terms of from 2001-02 to what is funded in 2005-06 for Yellowknife 1, which is the board that has the school the Member is talking about, the increase has been about \$1 million for their system in funding. But most of that increase has happened in the very recent past. It is a situation where, with the spreading out of the money through all the boards, not one board has seen a dramatic increase in any one year. One of the things we have done, too, is tighten up on the amount of money that...or the way the money is reported back to us, how it is being spent. We did find, when I became Minister and started looking into what was happening to the money, that there were some school boards that were using special needs funding for things like funding whole-day kindergarten. I directed with the directive that I sent out that that not happen any further and that we really tightened up on the accountability.

The new directive that we are proposing that will be out within the next two months will tighten up on that even more by ensuring that everybody uses a common code of accounts and that the activities are better reported to us so that we can confirm that the money that was being voted by this Assembly now is actually for special needs, is actually going into special needs. It appears that that wasn't always the case in the past, but I am quite comfortable that, in the last couple of years, that has been the case. We also know that we are nowhere near dealing with the problems that we are faced with in the classroom. There are a tremendous number of youngsters who are coming into the system with a lot of needs. There are problems that we are aware of now that, 10 years ago, we weren't even aware of as issues. For instance, I don't think 10 years ago that an auditory processing disorder was ever caught, where that is now becoming something that is much more commonly found in our system and in our schools. The schools have to deal with those issues. While it may not seem, when you look at one school, that you are seeing a big difference. I think that the amount of money that has gone in has been important in letting schools deal with issues. What we are

talking about over the next three years will help schools deal even better with some of the issues that they are faced. One of the key things is going to be the coordination between Health and Social Services and Education that we are trying to get with these teams that will visit schools so that we can, we hope, dramatically improve the services to kids who present with really serious problems.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. General comments, committee? Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To help set a little bit of context, I would like to open up with a couple of questions, statistical kind of questions that would give us a bit of a basis here on some of the really broad indicators, Mr. Chair, how our success, progress or more of a status in areas such as literacy, graduation levels, or post-secondary enrolments. If we take a look at how we are doing today compared to five or 10 years ago. I am not looking for great levels of detail, but on some of these principal indicators, and I would offer that literacy, levels of literacy ability, graduation rates for Grade 12 and post-secondary enrolment would be three indicators of just our level of success or progress in education. What could the Minister tell us there, Mr. Chair?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Last year, we achieved about a 50 percent graduation rate for the first time ever in the Northwest Territories. In 2001-02, the graduation rate was 36 percent, just for comparison sake. The other interesting note with our graduation rate was that it was almost evenly split 50 percent aboriginal and 50 percent non-aboriginal. It was a 49/51 split, but it was very close to being evenly split. Our participation rates are very close to those that are found across Canada. The participation rate means the number of students participating in high school in that age group that should be in high school. Our participation rates in the Northwest Territories now are very close to the Canadian average. Ten years ago, we were only about 40 percent participation rate. So we have seen a fairly dramatic growth there.

In terms of literacy, there was an international assessment of literacy that was recently released just a couple of weeks ago. That was the first time that the Northwest Territories has participated in that survey. What it found was that the Northwest Territories compared on par with Canada for literacy rates, but it found a significant difference between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal performance. So we clearly have challenges still. In terms of the population, we know that those who are older now tend to have lower rates of literacy because they didn't have access to programs years ago. The years of schooling have gone up very significantly since 1990. A lot of what we are seeing is age related. People who are younger are tending to perform more like their peers across Canada, but we have a large segment of our population that didn't have that opportunity, for one reason or other, to access literacy training or education. So we have a lot of work still to do in adult literacy.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to see if the Minister could offer some similar information. Some of the principal indicators on the social services side of the mandate have to do with income support. Perhaps it is too early to ask about housing. Again, in terms of where the income support service is vested or mandated in the department, it has a frontline responsibility. Are there some indicators, for instance, like the number of families or individuals in crisis that are core housing need? The levels of demand, Mr. Chair, say in emergency shelters, this kind of thing. I guess I'm looking for things that would indicate, if you will, the social health of our society, or at least to the areas where this department is involved in a level of social caregiving. Can the Minister give us some broad indicators there? Thank you.

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

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Since 2001-02 through to this year, the unique cases on income assistance annually has dropped by 300. Individual cases could mean an individual; it could mean a family. That is an individual case. I don't have it divided out by that proportion here easily although I think I can calculate it from what I have. The caseload has stayed almost exactly the same on a monthly basis for workers. The number of residents who are between the ages of 19 to 29 who are on income support each year has dropped quite substantially from 700 to 600. The number of senior citizens receiving the supplementary benefit has stayed almost exactly the same. The numbers of students who are accessing student financial assistance has increased only slightly from just over 1,400 to 1,500 a year now over that same period of time, so that is a five-year stand.

In terms of the shelters that ECE funds for emergency housing, there has been some small increase in demand, but it hasn't been significant. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Okay. Looking for any correlation here, Mr. Chair, between the relative strength is a mild word for our economy. We are in a boom economy here and trying to relate that to some of these indicators. If graduation rates are up 50 percent, is it fair to suggest that maybe more people see more opportunity or more chances of actually getting a job here in the North, so they are working harder in attaining some graduation? If the number of income support files is down by what percentage, Mr. Chair?

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

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is down about 10 percent over that five-year period. I should point out that there was, before the 2001 period, I believe, an even bigger drop, because that was the time when the economy really started to take off. So the biggest drop took place in the late 1990s and going into 2001. We have, since that time, seen a continued decrease, down about 10 percent in that same period of time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Among some of these very broad general indicators, are there any trends that stand out for the Minister or the department in terms of things getting better, or maybe getting worse, on any particular area in his mandate, Mr. Chair?

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

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the good news is that the economy continues to be strong. The graduation rate is improving and we have an awful lot of opportunities for young people. I think young people are hearing that. That is helping us to ensure that young people stay in school, make sure that they are ready to get into a trade, ready to move into a college education or go to university. I think, for us, the news is good. The uptake on SFA has gone up by 10 percent over that same period of time. We know that that sort of growth is good. We know that there has been a big growth in the numbers of apprentices over that period of time, as well. Those are good news issues. It puts more strain on the department in a way that we are expected to find more money for student financial assistance, or we need to find more money to subsidize apprenticeship, but that is really good news. That is not something that I am going to whine about having to find more money for.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. I have Ms. Lee on the list for general comments. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few more questions on the special needs question. I would like to, first of all, ask the Minister to meet with the Social Programs committee on the new directive for special needs, because I think there is a lot of interest among the Members here about what he plans to do to tighten up that program further.

Another thing that I want to say about this is, I think we should take our time to revisit our special needs policy, special needs inclusive schooling here, because we have it as a stated policy that all students are supposed to be in the mainstream and they should get the help they need to be able to do their schooling mainstream. I know that we may sit back and think that we're doing a good job, we're increasing our funding to special needs, we're doing more and more and more, but, like I stated before, I have no idea of knowing whether I'm meeting the needs of those students with special needs or not.

On the ground, the Minister has acknowledged that some of the funding that was meant to be allocated for special needs might not have gone all to special needs and such, and he's hoping to address that with the directive. But that's just one issue in relation to this program. I think to me, it seems it's carried out too much like a first-come, first-served basis and it's like we almost don't want to know what the needs are. It's like you have a pot of a hundred bucks and whoever needs special needs, they all have to come and they're going to get as much help as what that money would support, and that's not the way...I mean, I understand why we have to do it this way, but I'd like to see us try to change that because I don't think we do it that way for health care. If somebody has cancer and needs cancer treatment, I guess we have a universal Health Care Program and so anybody who needs treatment like that will get treated. But in the schools we have, I think there should be a standard and some kind of criteria where the students who have such severe needs

that they are not able to move ahead unless they have one-on-one help or more intensive help, that they should be covered. We should have basic items; whether it's autism or cystic fibrosis, I don't know. I don't know if we could start naming conditions where students with special needs...I don't know why I mentioned cystic fibrosis. But some learning difficulties. You know?

I don't know if there are any other jurisdictions that do it this way. I think that, you know, there are, whether it's FAS needs or I don't know. We, I think, need to, we're not going to be able to make headway into dealing with our students with severe needs and helping them get incorporated into the main learning environment if we continue to say we don't really know what their needs are. I don't think we do. I mean, if the Minister knows, maybe he could tell me.

But we're just going to be giving 10 percent or 15 percent of the main pot and hope that will deal with that. I don't think that's going to get us any further ahead and I don't think there's anything more important in terms of dealing with the needs of our population and getting them ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and getting them ready for the high-tech jobs that are coming forward or any of the economic opportunities if we do not jump in there and really look at our kids to say and be able to say, okay, what are the needs here and we are going to cover the top. We have to do it by need, not by, well, we can only do it by dollars. I'd like to know if the Minister will be willing to look at something like that in the way he sends out his directive. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be very happy to meet with the committee. I believe we actually have a date set for meeting with the committee to talk about the directive on March 30<sup>th</sup>. I'm looking forward to that opportunity. I know I've written to the committee requesting a time to meet with them to discuss the directive. We can certainly talk at that time about the different approaches.

There are two different approaches used in Canada. The one that Ms. Lee talks about is used in some jurisdictions where an individual is identified as having a certain need because they are in a category. I think we used to use categories here at one time, category one, two, three, four, and then you wind up though...That was often seen by people, though, as a way of labelling and is not considered sort of the appropriate way in which to handle the issue. So we switched, probably in the mid-'90s, from that sort of method to the one that's used now, which recognizes that almost every student at some point needs some level of support and leaving it to the schools, the boards themselves, the schools and the school boards to determine how to appropriately deal with the students that they have to provide the services to.

So there are the two different ways that you can do it. We've tried both ways now. This way seems to be working. I mean, I think it works better than the other way, because you also then wind up perhaps running out of money after you've dealt with all the level ones or the level fours and you have to say that's it for services, I guess.

So I'd be happy to discuss a different approach, though, with the committee and the different options that we have.

I think that knowing that we have worked with every single divisional education council, school body, with the Teachers' Association and other stakeholders, that we are also embarking on a very close collaboration with Health and Social Services and that we're going to see more of their teams in our schools in the course of the next little while here, that I think we are on the right track to make sure that we can deal better with the issues that are presenting in our classrooms. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask the Minister, on what basis can he conclude that this system is working better? What information does he have that tells him first-come, first-served and just allocating a certain amount of money? I'm assuming that there is no uniform policy that is out there for all the school boards in terms of how they determine who's going to get what and for how much. Because the way I see it working, it's like one of those cakewalks, you know? You go round and round until the music stops and then whoever gets the cake gets the cake, but there will be some who don't get it. It won't be necessarily on the needs of students; it will be on whatever money is in the pot and whoever could argue the strongest. We have to be able to come up with a better system of determining exactly what the needs are of our students, whether they be health needs, educational needs, learning needs, behavioural needs, whether they are FASE, FASD, or any number of other cognitive issues, whatever. I think to say that we can't know this and we can't know the scope of this because we don't want to label anyone who is not addressing the full issue, I believe that you're not going to know. I just can't sit here and keep approving money and hope that giving more money and asking them to look at a problem would just somehow deal with the problem. Not problem, but deal with this very important issue or it'll just go away. I need information from the Minister on what basis he believes that what he's doing for special needs situations in the North are working, and how that compares better to other systems that are in play. I think if the Minister is going to have really substantive discussions with the Social Programs committee later this month about this policy, then I need to know that he will have looked into all these questions before we have that sort of...We need to rely on the department to give us the resources to have the debates in. Could I have that information from the Minister, please? Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can certainly provide a report on what other jurisdictions are doing and how they do it. We know that in conversations with our stakeholders, the boards and the educators, they tell us that this is, in their opinion, the best way to deal with it. I think it's important to remember that although we had been putting a large amount of money into the system over the past few years, it was only when I became aware that this money might not all be going into special needs that last year, I issued a directive that you didn't get the money unless it was actually being spent on special needs. We tightened up the requirements for how it would be spent. So that, along with the new special needs directive that we're planning to send out or issue later this year, should ensure that we are seeing the sort of supports that are needed.

I'd be quite happy to make sure the committee has information from other jurisdictions where the process might be handled differently. The biggest problem that I hear from people who have this system in their jurisdiction is that it doesn't deal with all of the kids. Only those kids who've been able to have an assessment are the ones who get the funding then. Because unless you're labelled as having a special need, there is no allocation of funds if you're in that kind of system. We are, right now, unable to ensure that we can get all of our students assessed. We don't have the health care professionals in the North or in the system that we can make sure that's happening. So we have, to date, been relying on the schools to tell us who needs to get that sort of assistance.

You know, it would cost this government I don't know how many millions of dollars, to do an assessment of all of the kids in the North to find out how many are affected with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. I doubt that Health and Social Services has the money for it and I don't think we're going to get the money for it, so if we wait for an assessment to say that this child needs some assistance because of that medical problem, then I think we're failing those kids. Whereas the system we've got now, if it's recognized that the child needs some support, then it's expressly stated in the act that every child shall get an education that is appropriate in the classroom. That's a requirement that each of our divisional education councils has to live up to. It's our obligation, then, to try and make sure that we can provide the funding so that they can do that. They were telling me consistently that they weren't getting enough money. I looked into it and said, well, part of the problem is I don't think you're spending, not all of you are spending it where it should be spent. Then when we got that straightened out, they still said they're not getting enough money. I know that I've talked to parents who say that they know the schools aren't getting enough money. So we've moved forward to try and improve that situation. I think that now it's going to take us a little while to get the money into the system and to demonstrate that we can better deal with the problems that we're facing out there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next on the list I have Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I just want to highlight the full-time kindergarten program; the \$1.638 million that's been funded through education authorities. During our December consultation process and also meeting with various parties in the communities, it has been stressed that this education directive, there was going to be some cuts in funding. There's been some different approaches to this particular issue, how to fund the full-time kindergarten programs.

So during our tour of the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, we heard on the social committee program, Social Programs committee heard from the resource people on what kind of impact it has in our region, the amount of dollars that we're talking about and the students that will be impacted.

So from there I presented to the social committee and then presented to the Minister, met with the Minister with my resources, the Tlilcho Community Services Agency resource people, and we had a really productive meeting, I must say. But, at the same time, I'd like to know from the Minister if...We talked about different options at that level. The Minister with the chief executive officer, with the chairperson, and also there was a letter that went to the

Minister outlining our position as the Tlicho Community Service Agency and what kind of impact it would have on us. I see this 1.6 and our impact alone is half a million in the Tlicho riding.

So a question to the Minister is, since our last meeting we've initiated our letter that's been requested by your department. I'm just wondering what the next step is at that level where we threw an option of us pursuing as status quo, where there is no full-time kindergarten on our part. There was a letter clearly outlining that from the Tlicho leadership that we want to stay as it is, except 22 plus students to attend high school. Because even in our high school, we've had since 1994 over 60 students who are 22 years and older that successfully graduated from high school. Mezi School in Whati alone has 18 successfully graduated from high school that are 22 plus. So I guess he can look at it as a model for the North in graduating aboriginal students in the Tlicho; not Tlicho community, but aboriginal communities.

So I'd just like to highlight that to the group here that there is a huge impact on the Tlicho region and we threw around an option. We're just wondering if the Minister is still working on the option of us having a status quo and leaving it as it is for Tlicho riding and allowing that option to other communities, like Deh Cho or Sahtu or Inuvialuit, if they feel that there's a need to be a status quo or if they want to continue with this new initiative of full-time kindergarten program.

So if the Minister could reply back on the status of what they've been working on in that area. Mahsi.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate Mr. Lafferty having brought this issue to my attention with the leadership from the region. We certainly want to celebrate the success that we've seen in the Tlicho region and if they're finding that it's more productive to extend schooling to those who are past the typical age for attending school, we're prepared to take a look at what we can do to accommodate that.

My plan is to have a paper to FMB here within the next two to three weeks to seek approval to allow the Tlicho Community Services Agency, as well as other DEC's in the Northwest Territories that want to do it, the option of either choosing full-day kindergarten or choosing to continue funding for full time for those students who are over 22. So we're hoping to do this and it probably is a transitional, on a transitional basis, so for a period of years we'll offer that opportunity for that sort of flexibility. There may be somebody else who finds they're in a similar situation, but certainly we take a look at the success in the Tlicho region and we're prepared to agree to try and move forward with them in concert.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Lafferty. Thank you. I've got Mr. Hawkins next. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 3 of the Minister's opening notes here, we have an acknowledgement of the Pathways Program and if the Minister could explain to me sort of in a brief way, is the Pathways designed for students that are unable to fit in the regular stream of academia through their grade or kindergarten through 12 process? Could the Minister sort

of give me a one or two sentence encapsulation of what the Pathways Program provides? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a high school curriculum only, so it's only in high school. It's really not something that's aimed at somebody who wouldn't achieve, perhaps, in one of those streams that Mr. Hawkins has mentioned. It's aimed more at helping prepare kids for the world of work, as I said in my opening comments. It's for those who find it challenging to be in a regular classroom, perhaps, and a curriculum. This curriculum is more, for instance, in science experiential or application-based. In the English language arts, it would be one that the literature perhaps wouldn't be Shakespeare, but something more contemporary. So while you're still learning the same skills, the curriculum is designed around experience, or application, or something that many kids will find more interesting; the object being to keep young people interested and, therefore, in attendance.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Minister keeping a short definition in there. That's what I sort of thought it was, but I just want to make sure. Just in keeping with this Pathways Program, do the kids get a regular diploma when they're finished the Pathways Program that they could proceed to maybe college in a year or two, whenever they decide to, whatever the case may be? Do they get some type of diploma certificate that they can take forward if they so wish, to choose, to go on and seek further education? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's going to come down to what the prerequisites are for the college program that the student might choose. Some students will be able to take these courses and move directly to college. They're not considered a lower calibre or anything. They'll fully articulate with the rest of our offerings. What it is, it's just a different approach to science. For instance, a couple of weeks ago, I met with a group of elders who were brought in by the department to work with the curriculum people to try and relate our curriculum to more of the aboriginal culture. So it's to try and bring more relevance to a lot of the programming that we're offering. It doesn't change the level of the programming, but it's to make it apply more to what students from the North might find relevant.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the colourful answer the Minister gave me, but as I understand it, typically, if you want to go to college or such as like Mount Royal or Grant McEwan, you would need some type of math or science or English in order to qualify to get in there and I'm just trying to understand. Does Pathways provide those types of skills? I'm happy to hear that we've got some elders who want to make sure that the Pathways Program is sort of relevant to the environment, but I'm sure to get into Grant McEwan, one

of the requirements is not learning how to skin a beaver or anything along that line. They're going to want real, in the sense of academia skills such as math, science and English. I appreciate the cultural content because to a lot of people that is it and that's very important to proceed forward. Does Pathways prepare students to go on to college in the context of, for example, Mount Royal? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish there was a simple one-word answer that I could give Mr. Hawkins, but, in fact, the answer is, "it depends." If you want to become an engineer, you're going to have to have pure math. All of these courses, by the way, will end in a zero. So we're talking about 30s. So it'll be Language Arts, it'll be a 30-level course; the same with Experiential Science, it'll be a 30-level course. It will depend what field you're going into at college whether or not this course will help you get there. So for instance, rather than dissecting a frog, the course may involve dissecting a muskrat or something that's much more relevant to those of us in the North here. That's the sort of thing that we're doing.

We're trying to make sure that the Pathways Program is also designed to be a little more flexible in terms of exit points. It will allow somebody to exit to go on to college. It will allow somebody to exit to go into an apprenticeship, or it will allow somebody to exit directly into the world of work. That's one of the ways we're trying to make things more flexible.

We're also, at this point, distributing the course outline, the curriculum, to post-secondary institutions to get their take on it, just to make sure that what we're doing will be accepted by post-secondary institutions in the prerequisites for the courses that they set out. But again, it's going to come down to the actual course of study at the post-secondary institution whether or not each of these courses will be relevant. It's gotten to the point where when you move into the post-secondary education field now, it's gotten so specialized that you have to have taken exactly the right courses in order to get into a lot of fields of study. So students are going to have to be more and more aware of that requirement as they move through high school, as well.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Minister is now proceeding in the direction that I was concerned about, which is that Pathways seems to be an alternative stream to get kids still active and learning, but yet I'm concerned that it's a vehicle that may not get them, in the end, to where maybe either parents may want to see them go or maybe where their dreams may eventually want to take them. I'm concerned from the perspective of a parent that felt that their child was being pushed into Pathways because they were failing certain elements of the typical academia elements.

So their math and science weren't doing so well, yet they saw themselves as being nudged into Pathways as the alternative program and from the perspective of the parent, which I've encouraged to speak to the school board, felt that this was a dead end for them.

In speaking to the school board, like, I'm just trying to get a sense on what options are left for these students being pushed in this direction because if we're pushing them into a dead-end direction to one extent, they still have to continue to upgrade their skills. I guess I'm going to take the perspective I'm concerned about because if a student at Grade 9 level can't pass Grade 9 level math and then is pushed into Grade 10 and then they start to reach the age where their next option outside of the multiple levels of how difficult school you want to take, whether it's metric or what, but one of the options presented to them is quitting. I don't want to see that as an option due to frustration if they can't get somewhere.

The fact if they're falling behind, for example, like you say, in math, and they reach the age and finish school, the system seems to keep nudging them forward and the only way for them to get high school level to qualify for a college level program, like high school level...Sorry, my apologies. I'm tripping over the words. High school level math in order to qualify for a college or university to proceed forward is, after they get through the typical system, they're going to have to go back and pay for it themselves. So nudging them through the education system onto the Pathways system causes some concern from a parent perspective that the kids were falling behind in particular areas and the solution was to nudge them over to Pathways and hopefully they'll fit into some type of groove and life will turn out.

I guess it's the limiting factor that has been the issue being brought forward. Are the choices limited if the kids are falling behind in a particular subject, like math, or English, or whatever the case may be? Are they being moved forward to Pathways as the system to keep them, as a way, I should say, that keeps them moving in the system and further gets them out of the system? I want to ensure that they're still having productive choices before then, if they wish to go forward to college or maybe to trade school. Because I'll say, you know, even the military nowadays is expecting a high school graduation level, I believe. I don't know the details, but years ago they used to take people once you were 16 and you had your Grade 10, but they don't take people anymore at 16 with their Grade 10. They want a high school diploma. Colleges, they want a high school diploma as a minimum. The world's moved forward.

I guess really all this process of questions I've been asking for and trying to get the details before I step forward is with the ultimate question of are we limiting our kids by putting them in Pathways? Are they really set up for grocery clerk jobs or whatnot? Do they still have the option to go forward to college if they wish? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, as I said, there's no yes or no answer to that question. It really does depend on what course of study the person wants to take in college whether or not what they're taking in high school will qualify them to get there.

Right now, the curriculum is not out there. So I'm not sure about people being referred into it yet because we only have draft curricula that will be piloted this fall for most of the courses. We're not in a situation where this is out there right now.

There are two streams right now. This will add a third. What's really critical is that the student, the school and the parents all be involved in discussing which of those courses the student should be following because there has to be an understanding of where you want to wind up at the end of Grade 12, where you want to go from there. Because that really does colour the courses you need to take and be successful at in order to move forward. So that's the big thing. It's going to take involvement with kids, families and schools all working together to make sure that people can get into college, if that's where they want to go. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Dent. I've got Mr. Menicoche next. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I've been listening with some interest to the Minister's remarks and I'm looking through his other opening remarks, as well, and I'm pleased to see that he's been quite responsive to a lot of committee work that's happening, as well as concerns from the Members. Once again, Education, Culture and Employment, our department plays a large role in the constituents I represent. I've got six communities and, for the most part, every part of the Minister's ministry kind of impacts how I do business in the Nahendeh riding.

Firstly, with early childhood development, we've got to spend as much resources as we can, and some of that federal money the sooner we get her into the system, the better we can address the needs of our new and young population and their children as they start to begin their journey through our school system.

Part of my job, as a legislator, is to help the ministry identify some problems with the schooling system and help them design systems that will work. In my communities we've got small schools and in 2002 there was a small schools report issued. As I read through it, there are lots of considerations that our department should be leaning towards when addressing our schooling system. In larger centres, you've got many, many teachers that are teaching different courses, but in the smaller schools you basically have a man and wife team running all ages in the schooling system. In fact, the funding for the small schools is quite unique, too. Like, you offer somebody like a .25 janitor, what does that mean? So just to bear in mind those difficulties. I'm not quite sure how much work the ministry has done with the small schools report in order to address some of its recommendations and improving the system with that respect.

Early in my term, too, I approached the Minister in the House and lobbied him, as well, to encourage and to allow our teachers to learn an aboriginal second language; in fact, to be skilled enough to learn and to teach it in the schools. We use lots of local people in our school system and the Minister told me that when the teachers go for secondary training or else for upgrading their skills, that it was based on 80 percent of their pay. I also indicated to the Minister that when there's a lack or when there's a gap, in order to fulfill that gap we offer more of an incentive and, in fact, I think just about at that time we wanted more lawyers in the north and I think anybody that wanted to do that, we offered, like, 100 percent of their pay to attend school to become lawyers. Yet when we're asking for aboriginal second language teachers, we only offered them 80 percent of pay when they went to school.

So I was saying, well, it's a huge gap. I see there are some new initiatives now in the newspapers to have teachers of Dene as a second language, and I'd like to say that's a good thing and that's the kind of thing that we need in our education system, as well. We have to bend over backwards for aboriginal teachers, fund them and allow them to learn and become teachers of Dene as a second language. That's an identified gap in the schools. So that's something that I really am supportive of and I still want to press that, because, recently, I was back home and talking about this very subject, and again, it was pointed out that the gaps there. I said, well, I've done some work on it, but I forgot one of the tenants or one of the rules, as an MLA, is that I have to keep talking about it. Just because I stopped talking about it doesn't mean that the problem went away. So I just thought I would revive that with the Minister and say, look, it's still a priority for my teachers in my region to have one of our official languages endorsed in our union system, or whatever it is, to allow training in our official languages.

Another thing that's going to have a big impact is a reduction of the students' age for funding when they're attending our school system. It doesn't really affect the student, but it affects the programming that our schools are able to, and the resources that they give towards teaching older students, I guess, adult learners as it were, Mr. Chair. So I'm not quite sure of the impact, but I know that anyone over the age of, I think, 21 years old, our schools aren't going to be funded for them. I'm just not quite sure if the Minister found another way in order to fill that gap, as well, to provide the resources to our teachers and to our schools to allow more adult learners in our schools, because it's a good thing that they're doing to allow that to happen and I'd like to see it encouraged, but I'm just not quite sure in what direction our ECE is spending in order to allow this to continue.

One other great area of concern for me is I know the Minister and the government has moved the Public Housing Subsidy Program over to ECE starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, but I still have grave concerns about that. I know that they've been actively advertising and trying to get public discussion on it in getting the rental clients open to meetings to explain the new program for them, but I think my fear is that a lot of them, for whatever reason right now, are eligible for the subsidies from the LHOs, but I'm not entirely convinced, Mr. Chair, that moving it over to ECE...I don't know what kind of guidelines they have for providing rent scale subsidies, if they're going to use the current system, which for other income support programs, I'm not quite sure. Perhaps if the Minister can respond to me exactly how the application process is going to be. Let's say client A who makes \$1,200 a month, exactly how that person would fit or benefit from moving the public housing subsidy over to ECE. I'm thinking that somebody in the \$1,200 to \$1,800 range will not benefit from this, because given the old income support guidelines, they're making, I think, the poverty level. They're making enough that they don't need assistance from the corporation or from ECE, but I know for sure that they're out there, they're single parents, they have one or two children and they're just struggling as it is. So I don't want to further burden them. I'm not quite sure what kind of phone calls I'll be getting after April 1<sup>st</sup> when they start filling out their applications and getting it into a system for public housing subsidy.

So those are my initial concerns, Mr. Chair, and I'll be pleased if the Minister can comment on some of the important areas that I covered. Mahsi.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department is very much aware of the importance of aboriginal language and culture in seeing success in school. So that is something that is very much encouraged. In fact, it would be marvellous if we could see immersion in the language of the community, particularly the first few grades of school. So it is an area that the department is very supportive of. We have, as the Member has noticed or mentioned in his comments, there's been some advertising from the college seeking people who would like to improve their ability by taking courses that the college is offering for the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program. We're hoping to see that program beefed up. I am hoping that, in the next year or so, we'll be able to fund the college to offer that as a base program so that we can offer it more often in more locations throughout the Northwest Territories.

We are also working with stakeholders to develop an aboriginal language curriculum to help teachers who are fluent in the language have a curriculum to work with in the classroom so that they can teach the aboriginal language. That process has been underway for a while, but most recently the group met in January of this year to review where they were. They've agreed to hire an independent reviewer to take a look at the process to date to make some comments, and then they're going to come back together in April to review that again, expand the group even further and see if they can't move towards finalizing this curriculum, which should be an important step. The first thing is we have to find people who are fluent in the language in order to be able to teach it, but this will be a tool, then, that those people who are fluent will be able to use in the classroom so that they know how to deliver that course subject. So we're trying to make sure that we can provide the assistance that's needed to make sure that we can improve aboriginal languages in our schools.

In terms of the funding for students who are over 22, as I indicated to the Member for Monfwi, I am planning to seek approval to offer divisional educational councils the option of either taking the funding for full-day kindergarten or for those students who are over 22. I think it's important to understand that we're not proposing to completely stop the funding for 22-year-olds plus. What we're proposing is that we reduce that funding to 50 percent. So it would be kind of like phasing out of funding. We'll fully fund students through the age of 21, but once they hit 22, we think the DEC's can take a reduced level of funding because, in part, throughout the North, we're funding education for people in that age group through the college. So it's like a duplication, in effect. Now we've heard that in some regions the delivery system, the college isn't as well represented and, therefore, the schools want to keep on doing it and we think we can accommodate that. So we're going to take a look at how we can do that.

In terms of public housing, it's our goal to make sure that the Member doesn't receive any extra phone calls after April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Ohhh.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** I know that the Member gets phone calls now and he will continue to get phone calls on the issue, but we want to try and make sure that you're not getting any extra phone calls as a result of the transfer. On April 1<sup>st</sup> there will be no change in the assessment for the delivery of the subsidy. There may be a change in the place for the application, but there won't be a change in the assessments. At some future time it may be the will of this Legislature that there is some change, but then that's something we'll have to discuss at a future date. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I've got Ms. Lee next. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is my third time going around on special needs and I'm not sure if I'm getting much further ahead. There's a nine-page opening statement by the Minister. There's a lot of items that I need to cover, and I don't know if I'm just not asking the right questions or what, but I'm going to try one more time. The last go around the Minister suggested that to say that to be able to assess and diagnose, or labelling it as sometimes it's put, the Minister indicated that we couldn't wait for that long and that would somehow preclude providing special needs services to the children who need them. I don't think that that was in any way what I was trying to get at. I know that there's going to be a number of briefings booked by not only this department, but other departments for Social Programs at the end of March. I'm interested in making sure that the Minister does the kind of legwork beforehand so that we could have, you know, a substantively meaningful discussion about how to improve this special needs funding and special needs programming.

So I wasn't looking for, I guess, some of the diagnosis or assessments for the children of special needs have to be medical or whatever, but I just want to be able to know that we are hitting the mark with the money we are giving. The Minister indicates in the information we have here is the needs assessment of our children show that almost six out of 10 needed some kind of special needs assistance. We are funding at 15 percent now and we're trying to increase it to 17 with the hope of making it to 20. That is still a lot less than 40 percent, granted that not every one of those 40 percent need full-time funding or full-time aid, but it's entirely possible that we fund special needs at 20 percent, we just top it at 20 percent to whatever we're funding to schools. It could be that one person or the top five percent of needed students who could take up the entire 20 percent, and then what do we do with the 90 percent of kids? I just need to be able to get from the Minister that there's some kind of system in place that tells him, or tells us, how far we are meeting the mark. Is there any kind of system there? Is there any kind of a consistent policy you're applying to all the districts? I understand he talks to the district heads and blah, blah, blah and he must be getting some kind of information, but he used to sit as a Regular Member on this side of the floor and we used to talk about the need for special needs funding and I cannot believe he didn't discover until last year, after two years of being a Minister,

that actually the money was not being spent on special needs like he thought it was.

So you've got to sit here and wonder, like, what do we have to do to make sure that money we're spending on special needs are going to the kids who need special needs, and that we have some kind of idea about what the needs are out there without all that distraction about labelling or whatever. I mean how do we do that? Like, I need better information from the Minister as to how we are meeting the mark and how we are improving this situation. So I want the Minister to give me another round on what his plan is. Hopefully I'll get ahead there.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I said, and I'll commit again, when we meet with the committee, we'll be happy to share with the committee what other jurisdictions are doing and how they meet the requirements for providing people or for providing for an education program for people with special needs. We set out in the act that every child deserves an opportunity to have their educational needs met in the classroom. That's the way our system is based. The expectation is that if a child needs support it will be given. It is up to each individual divisional education council to make sure that that's being delivered. Because we don't have in existence an assessment of what the needs are across the Northwest Territories. There's nobody in the Territories who can tell me how many kids we have that have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or who may have other challenges, whether it's autism or audio processing problems. There are a whole range of needs and most kids don't fit neatly into a little square over here that says they just need special needs all the time.

Most kids range on a continuum so that they may need some assistance at some times for literacy. They may need some assistance at some times for numeracy, or they may need some other special assistance at some times. It is up to the classroom teacher, the administration in the school and school boards to take the funding that we deliver and put it into appropriate programming for all of those kids.

Most kids don't need a full-time aid. We have a number of kids that do. I think it is also important to remember that this funding is supposed to address those kids who need challenge education, as well. This isn't just for kids with problems of getting through school or problems meeting the regular academic program. This is also intended to assist schools to provide funding for those kids who may need a challenge.

In terms of why I didn't know that it wasn't all being spent, I don't know how anybody outside of the ministry could have known this sort of information beforehand. It wasn't made available to us when I was a Regular Member, but I am quite happy to make it available to the Regular Members now what happened in the past. When I became aware of the issue, Madam Chair, I very quickly issued a directive that said this shall change. I insisted that the school boards report on how they are spending their money so that I am now comfortable in saying that we aren't putting out \$3 million more for special needs than what is being spent. I am comfortable with our current directive and the requirement that I have made for reporting that the money is being spent appropriately. I

have no doubt that we will be able to demonstrate that we need to spend more.

The Member is quite right; 20 percent may not do it. I have never made any claim that that is going to be the magic number. What I have said is that we are clearly not where we need to be. We need to spend more, so we have embarked on a three-year program to increase the amount of spending that we are going to put into the system to try and achieve the improved outcomes for kids who need to see that. If it takes more funding than that, Madam Chair, then I would hope that the Legislative Assembly will agree that we need to put more money in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Well, Madam Chair, I have to tell you that I have listened to every word the Minister said. I don't think this round was really any clearer, or more enlightening, than the last three rounds. I have to tell you that this is just not good enough. Madam Chair, he used to ask questions in this House about the need to spend inclusive money. Even in the first two years of him being a Minister, every time we asked questions about is the money for special needs spent the way they are supposed to be, every time we mentioned it, he'd flaunt this long piece of document that says accountability framework or something. I'm sure I'm going to have to get research to go back and do research on how many promises made about how every dollar we are approving is going to special needs funding. Now he is telling me that there are people in schools who are supposed to know what the needs are. We are going to do it the way we are. We don't know what the needs are. We don't know if the 20 percent is going to meet it. We don't know if the 20 percent is meeting 100 percent or 40 percent who need this help. Are we meeting 90 percent of it? Are we meeting 10 percent of it? Do we know who needs full-time aid? If we don't know, what kind of tests should we do to figure out who needs a full-time aid? Why is it that when a child needs a full-time aid one year with the same condition next year, that child doesn't need a full-time aid but nobody there it's their objective qualified to tell me why that changed? If you listen to him, he makes it sound like it's not my fault that I didn't know a school board was spending special needs money on kindergarten. Holy cow! Where is the accountability here, Madam Chair?

We know that school boards are elected, as well. I know that we are dealing with teachers. Teachers have a say on how these programs should be managed. In the interest of getting something done on this very important area that I am determined to clarify, I would like to know if he would engage with the district and come up with the best ideas about how to figure out what the needs are, and how do we know that every penny we are spending and the amount of money that we are spending is making a difference. If it is not, why not? What are the possible options we could look at, as legislators, to make sure that we are making some difference with the extra money that we are adding? The Minister cannot just come back and say more money will do it if he has no idea what difference it is making. I would like to know what the possibility is of some kind of system policy that we could think of with the help of heads of DEAs, education boards and whatever professionals he wants to refer to. We need to have a package that really addresses how we are going

to do this better. Could I ask the Minister to bring that to us in the next Social Programs committee? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have said this already today; what Ms. Lee is asking is exactly what we have done. It is done. This is the process that was undertaken to develop the accountability or the directive that is going out in April. Every single DEA has been involved in it. The NWTTA has been involved in the development of it. We have involved stakeholders throughout to make sure that we are moving the yardsticks. I have also said that we are going to be undertaking a survey this year to find out just how closely we are coming now to meet the requirements that we find in the classroom.

I am not sure, Madam Chair, if Ms. Lee is recommending that we take some money to do medical assessments in the classroom. I guess that is the only thing that I can assume that she is asking, because we have said that, absent that, all we have to work with, not all we have to work with, but we think is good to work with, is the educators, the administrators, the school systems and the parents. That is what we think right now is telling us whether or not we are meeting the needs in the classroom. We don't have an assessment of what we have across the North right now in terms of needs that may be medically related. That is one of the reasons we have worked with Health and Social Services to make sure that we have the teams going into the schools so that we can improve on that. So we are going to do what we can to improve on our assessments, but, right now, we have worked with stakeholders and everybody to try and improve the accountability system. Each of the boards has to report to us specifically in this area how they are spending their money, so we know exactly what they are spending their money on. We know that, under the directive, what is considered an acceptable expenditure. We know what is being done in that way. I don't know what more accountability is going to satisfy. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with the standing committee and we will see if we can move the yardsticks even further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. General comments. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister is right. I would like to know the detail on this question. On page 4 of the Minister's opening comments, the government is committed to culture-based education. Could the Minister point to where in our policy and programming we meet this commitment? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If you refer to our strategic plan, you will find that aboriginal language and culture is shown as one of the key parts of our departmental operation. In this budget, just in schools alone, we have over \$7 million, the same that aboriginal language and culture. Again, this is an area that we have insisted that the funding must be spent in this area exclusively. A directive has been issued to ensure that the funding is spent only for aboriginal language and culture or else the funding isn't provided to the DECs. We

have developed Dene Kede and Inuuqgatigii which are aboriginal language curricula that are available for use in the schools. We are supporting the college to provide Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program training across the Northwest Territories. There has been a significant increase in uptake in the last year. I know that, for instance, here in Yellowknife, the DEC or the Yellowknife 1 sponsored an Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program in part, because they were anxious to make sure that they could access the money that we make available for aboriginal language and culture here in the schools.

I think there are a number of various other things that are undertaken, Madam Chair, but I think that highlights the biggest categories.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. How is this being filtered down to the education board level? Are we building a culture-based education to the components of the Education Act where it is being delivered in each classroom under a context not unlike Canadian history would be a critical element in one of the east coast provinces for their history and education programs? Do we have culture-based education that is delivered to every classroom that is delivered as a component of the history class in every grade throughout the NWT? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It probably isn't delivered in every single grade, but grades 4 through 9 and then in high school, I know that there are components of social studies that relate to the aboriginal cultures of the Northwest Territories, yes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Minister be able to give me an update on the planning or the long-term planning of moving Aurora College out into a stand-alone building? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We just recently had a 10-year facilities plan completed in Yellowknife in the past few months. That plan did recommend that we take a look at options for housing the college. Just recently, within the last two weeks, we have started the ongoing planning committee that the report recommended. Membership on that includes a representative from the college. That is one of the issues that they will be addressing. I would expect that we will be able to look at, within the next year or two, working at some kind of change to the campus here into our capital plan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that the Minister pointed out that the facilities committee will be looking at something like that. As a strong

supporter of us having a stand-alone college, it was my understanding that we had some type of discussion early on about the college building; a strategic plan to move in that direction. Like I say, it was my understanding that we were moving in that direction. That shouldn't be neglected or overlooked because we now have a facilities committee. Was there a strategic plan done, or proposed, to look at and evaluate the needs of having a stand-alone college? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I had a discussion with the previous chair of the college board of governors about a college campus in Yellowknife. I know that he was quite supportive of the recommendations that came out of our 10-year facilities plan. The college itself is in the process of developing its own corporate plan. I don't know where that will go, but we are unlikely to be in a position to look at anything before 2012 in Yellowknife because of the lease at the present site. This isn't something that we need to be moving on immediately. We do have some time, so I am hoping that the committee will have a chance to do some of its work, make some recommendations to me. There were some options for locations that were proposed in the 10-year facility plan. This committee will now have some time to have a look at those options and then make some recommendations. That will give us some time to then work something into our capital planning process over the next couple of years.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, to be clear, as a very big supporter of a stand-alone college, if we could only set aside a facilities planning committee just for a moment, where is the Department of Education's position on a stand-alone facility for Aurora College? Noting those dates of 2012, it is six years away. A facility that would be appropriate needs ample planning. Six years is one of those nice windows. It is not tomorrow, but it is not forever. So that is a good window to do some solid planning. Where is the Department of Education's position, again, outside of the facility planning committee? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd agree that we have a good window. Now is the time to start looking at it, but, given the recommendations that came out of that facilities plan, I think the department has to follow it. We will be looking to the committee to make a recommendation as to site, size and scope of the project and working from that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Recognizing the facilities committee, the educational committee, I guess taking into perspective of if they feel the college is not necessary, I would like to hear the Minister's position from the Department of Education point of view. What is the department's point of view of supporting this idea? I do know that the facilities plan does look in the direction of

a college, but where is the department's position on this? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not sure that the department would have a position. As Minister, I could say I have a position that I would agree that we need to deal with space problems. The facilities report that came out showed that the college's current campus only meets 50 percent of the current demands, so they are already leasing an awful lot of space outside of the current campus in order to meet the program needs. I would agree that it is something that we need to work on. I will be looking forward to the recommendations from the committee.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that is all I will do on this subject. I will pass it on to another Member and come back if I feel necessary. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. General comments. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have questions on the Minister's opening statement about the performance of schools. But before I go to that, I want to just follow up on the discussions about the separate campus for Aurora College. Madam Chair, the educational facilities review that the Minister is referring to made a number of recommendations including the one about the new school that was in the books that was recommended to be taken out. The Minister has taken that step to do that. Now that school is out. That facility report also recommended that there be renovations at Sissons in Yellowknife, as well as St. Joseph's School, and the Minister has put that into action. It is in the books, so, obviously, the department and the Minister have taken steps of actions on those areas without a problem, even though the catholic school is 97 percent full and there is no conclusion, action or plan as to what to do about the Catholic School Board or what to do with the other renovation needs of YK 1. The Minister saw no problem in acting on those but, in the same report, there was a very strong assessment about the fact that Aurora College in Yellowknife is completely overcrowded. It is completely inadequate and it needs extra facilities. The Minister is saying now that nothing is going to be done on it until 2012. How is that justified? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The reasoning for that is that there is no way for us to have a new campus completed in time for the time we would have to look at renewing the lease for the current site, which is, I believe, 2007. Given that, it is unlikely that we will get anything less than a five-year renewal, so we are expecting that 2012 would be the day to which we could be looking at possibly a new site.

The report that the Member refers to, that I have been talking about, also suggests that there are three different options for locating the campus here. That is one of the things that I am hoping that we will see from the

committee in their first report, because it is my goal to come forward and see if we can't find a way to work the new campus into the capital plan or into our business plan for the next year.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That might be construed as a convenient kind of justification on lack of action on Aurora College, but I don't think I would be prepared to accept that. Madam Chair, the Minister has almost every section in his department under study or review, or everything is on a 10-year plan. It is either task avoidance or exercise in dithering, or it is a masterful plan to build his legacy. There would be something left for 10 year increments of everything, whether it is income security or Labour Standards Board. Everything is in the works, so I am very surprised that he has no 10-year plan with respect to Aurora College. We know that a campus like that will take a lot of work and building up. Everything he is telling me now says basically he's not going to take any action on that part of the recommendation that he has conveniently chosen to accept with respect to the other sides with YK 1 and YK 2 issue. We know that the lease is up in 2007, I guess, as the Minister has already stated, that he would renew that for another five years.

I know it would be welcome news for those who are very interested in hearing that news, but six years is just the kind of time frame where the Minister has to put something in the works. I would like to know if there has been any direction, because I know he has also appointed a 10-year committee for the facilities review plan. I would like to know what kind of work he is doing to put this on the move, this Aurora College issue, because it has been outstanding for many years. Any college, separate campus or anything like that in the place like Yellowknife would take many years to see it come to fruition, whether any kind of feasibility study or getting it on the books or figuring out where it should go, how much it would cost, what would the needs be, the master plan for Aurora College as to what they want to do with the Yellowknife campus as opposed to Fort Smith and Inuvik campuses. I don't think that I am prepared to sit here and accept that, because the lease doesn't run out until 2012, he is just going to shelf that. I would like to hear a clearer indication from the Minister that he and his department support that aspect of the report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If I have to choose between dithering and legacy, I hope it is legacy. Maybe you will name it after me when it gets completed in 2012. I had met with the college board several weeks ago and discussed this with them at that meeting. The board and I agreed that I would work to get this college campus into the next business plan that the Members will see. That is where we are with this right now. The board, I believe, agrees with me. I know the former chair of the board thought that the report was good in recommending that we move forward at getting a campus in place. I assume that the new chair will agree with that, and that I will hear that sort of support from the board. The challenge will be for the facilities planning committee to get back to me before we get into the business plan process with a location, because that will help to determine the scope of the project.

I know that one of the other recommendations that was in the report was the demolition of Akaitcho Hall. We have that in the plan, so that space will be open as the other options that are available. It is my intention to move forward to see this in the business plan that goes before the Members next. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you. I want to leave that for now and deal with the statement that the Minister made on page 3 in regards to their planning. It says here, during the next fiscal year, we are planning specific action to support improved results at all levels of the school system, and that got me thinking about how is the Minister planning on doing this and just give us an idea about what he has in mind. Also, I would like to know; there have been some discussions in the city about the Alberta achievement test for the grade schools. In talking to some of the parents in my riding, there have been many discussions about that. There are some parents who do not agree with the department and the school boards and the Teachers' Association all agreeing that it is better not to release the results of Alberta achievement test. I have heard the arguments for not doing that, but the parents that I talked to are very keen and aware. They are very involved with their children at school. They want to know how their children are doing. I know that they are allowed to get the results of their own kids, but they do want to know how their kids are compared to others, how their school is doing or how the school system is doing in Yellowknife in terms of how they compare with Alberta, other schools, and what are the areas that they are doing really well at and what sort of areas they need to improve on. I would like to ask the Minister whether he would reconsider that decision and go some distance to make that information available? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is our intention to make sure that that information is available for the residents of the North for the school districts. Basically on a regional basis, we will make the information available to allow people to see what the results are.

To compare how a school is doing or how a school isn't doing, there are, I think, compelling arguments for not getting into that level of comparison. I don't think that the tests are necessarily something that you should use to rate a school in how it is performing. I think that, at their best, the test helps us get a snapshot of how kids are performing on a given day. You have to take that information on a much broader basis. That is why we have said to schools, if they want them to share the information with individual parents, but I have said that the information on an aggregate level is to go out only division-wide.

Perhaps it would be useful to have Mr. Cleveland outline some of the specific areas that we are talking about for improving results over the next year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Cleveland.

**MR. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A series of areas that I think have been our particular focus and in the strategic plan document, we have identified a number of those. I do think that some of the areas will evolve, as well. I would mention a couple of primary areas. One is the strengthening of the skills of the staff in our schools. We have a number of very strong individuals, but I think many of them would say that continuing to increase their skills will help them deliver the program more effectively. So we are working with the divisional education councils, the Teachers' Association, on development on enhanced training for staff right across the system.

Secondary of attention is the ongoing efforts to improve the curriculum. We have a developed and planned process for renewal of curriculum within the schools. That is taking place on an ongoing basis. A third area the Minister has mentioned specifically with respect to inclusive schooling, but is also being enhanced more broadly, is that of accountability. A number of our divisions provide accountability reports at this present time. We have implemented this year, as well, a process whereby ministry officials go out and meet with the staff of divisional education councils and districts to review those accountability reports and identify with the divisions how they plan to strengthen the performance within their schools.

Those are three specific areas, Madam Chair, where we are taking action. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. General comments. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for your indulgence here, but I do have a couple of follow-up questions here. I have to tell you, Madam Chair, that I know everybody here are parents, too, but I happen to spend lots of time with parents who are involved in a number of parents' advisory groups in Yellowknife, not just in my riding but in other schools. Those are parents who are quite fair minded. They are very keen. They are very aware of what is going on in their schools, in their children's schools. They know what the strengths and weaknesses of the school systems are. They know how to compare our city and our schools to big cities like Edmonton or Alberta. Many of them have been serving in parents advisory groups for many years. They understand the trend. They know that, usually, the kids here do much better in Grade 3 than in Grade 6, and maybe not as well in Grade 9. They understand that the way the tests are implemented and tested in Alberta are quite different than up here. They are very fair minded, rational and intelligent people. I think the Minister and the department is missing out by choosing not to reveal this because, as the deputy minister suggested, you are looking at some people who are really strong, some who are not. You are looking at training the teachers, or improving curriculum or enhancing the inclusive schooling. All those are ideas that these parents can handle, let me assure you. I think that you would go a lot further and make it a better educational system by including them, and talking to them, and making this information available. That is my take from talking to them. I don't think there is anything here that they are not going to be able to handle. I think, though, in talking to them -- and they have asked me to bring this up in this House -- by not releasing it or by saying you could get your information about your child, about your school privately, but we are not going to announce a wide assessment, it just gets them feeling that that information is not being revealed because it is not

very good. We have no idea if it is or not. I have no idea. I have no reason to assume that. I think Yellowknife has an excellent school system and I am a product of the school system here. I think it meets the challenges everywhere they face. If there are weaknesses or things to improve, I think they would be prepared to work on that with the school, teachers and everyone.

Another thing is, I don't understand this thing about how we can't rely on this test because it is a snapshot of any given time and day. You could say that about anything. The Olympic athlete who may not have a good day on that day, but scores are scores and we live in a society where we would like to have some kind of objective study about where things are at, not to label, categorize and reprimand anybody, but just as a way of having one more check about how we are doing, what we can do better, or where we are falling short. There are all sorts of positive ways to spin this thing. I don't know. I would like to urge the Minister and the department to revisit that issue because I could tell you that I had the occasion to again go up and down the street this weekend canvassing for the heart and stroke foundation. I have had some parents raising that issue with me. I don't know if it is going to be an ongoing issue, but just looking at it from my own objective point of view, I just think there could be a lot more gains to be had by revisiting that. I would like to ask the Minister if he would consider reconsidering that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When we got into this kind of testing, it was in order to try and improve accountability for what we are doing with educational funding to try and get a rough idea on how the system was performing. We do already publish, every two years, a document called Towards Excellence, which reports on education in the Northwest Territories and educational achievements, educational levels. What we were looking for was something that we could use that would help us study in a little more detail what was happening in grades 3, 6 and 9.

When we proposed doing this, we discussed it with stakeholders in the system. Most of the divisional educational councils were extremely worried about what might happen. The last thing we want to do is see comparisons between communities, and particularly the smaller communities in the North, because they were worried that that might stigmatize some of the schools in the regions. So we agreed with the point of view and said, no, we won't be releasing that information to allow those kinds of comparisons. It is not just to stop a comparison between Range Lake School and NJ McPherson, but it is to say that we don't think that it is valid to compare schools in our communities across the North. If you want an objective test, it would cost us millions of dollars to set one up because this test is not objective. It is not normed for our population in the Northwest Territories. It is designed for a different population. It doesn't reflect the realities of the situation where many kids come into our schools as English as a second language, and it is really not something that you could point to with any sense of reliability for how students across the North are performing. It gives us a snapshot that we can say, okay, based on this, we know that we need to put more of an emphasis on literacy, or more of an emphasis on numeracy, and we can colour our responses according to that.

Even more than that, the first year's test doesn't really give us much at all. We need to look for the first time that we have the test given to the kids for the second time, to look for a measure of improvement. If we are seeing that, then it tells us that what we have been doing this right. If we don't, then we know that we have to change our strategies.

The position is that we will continue to publish Towards Excellence. We will put out the information that we get from the Alberta achievement tests on a regional basis. We will be accountable to the people in the North that way. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think anybody could argue that Yellowknife or the Northwest Territories are the only jurisdictions with overwhelming population of students whose English is not a first language. Canada is changing. Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton or anywhere in Alberta, I am sure they have as much challenge as we do. I don't think we are really that different. I don't have a study to show that, but that is just one more argument that I am not prepared to accept there.

I have to ask the question about why are we doing the test then? I have been sitting in a parents' advisory group for at least six years. It was an issue when I got there in 1999-2000. They were talking about Alberta achievement tests. There is a controversy about it every time they take it. If the Minister feels that this is not an objective study for the North, you can't do a fair comparison of any kind that is worth anything, and you don't want to reveal it, why do we do it? Why don't we come up with a better system of figuring out how our kids are doing and how we could improve the system and use another tool to do it? Why do it? Why doesn't he just stop it, then? Could I ask that, please?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically because it was the least expensive way for us to get this sort of snapshot, but the same reason that we don't develop our own departmental examinations or develop our own individual curricula. We have to work with other jurisdictions. It is extremely expensive to develop something that would be normed to our population. An instrument that we could test our population would cost us millions of dollars to develop, and then we would then have to also incur the cost of setting up the marking.

This test, because it is being used by another jurisdiction, while it is imperfect, does offer us at least a rough indicator of how the system is performing in areas of literacy and numeracy. That was our object, was to get that rough indication for a relatively economic price. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Madam Chair, I would like to move a motion. I move that we report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The motion is in order. It is not debatable. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, committee. Thank you, Mr. Dent, Mr. Devitt and Mr. Cleveland.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Mrs. Groenewegen.

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

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007, and Committee Report 6-15(4) and 7-15(4), and would like to report progress with two motions being adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Is there a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

#### ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Caucus at 6:30 p.m. in the Caucus room. Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 14, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Petitions
10. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
11. Tabling of Documents
12. Notices of Motion
13. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2005-2006
15. Second Reading of Bills

16. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act
- Bill 15, Court Security Act
- Bill 16, Tobacco Control Act
- Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act
- Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007
- Committee Report 5-15(4), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process
- Committee Report 6-15(4), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process
- Committee Report 7-15(4), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

17. Report of Committee of the Whole

18. Third Reading of Bills

19. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 14, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 17:53 p.m.

