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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 24, 2006****Members Present**

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister for Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 81-15(4): Implementation Of New Digital Drivers' Licences**

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, since the events of September 11, 2001, the Department of Transportation and all North American jurisdictions have participated with the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators to development new national standards with respect to drivers' licences and identification cards.

Mr. Speaker, the current NWT driver's licence was developed 15 years ago and does not meet the current standards for document security. I am pleased to advise that the Department of Transportation will be introducing a new secure digital driver's licence this year. We are working with Canadian Bank Note, a world-renowned company, to develop an NWT digital driver's licence. This licence will be fully compliant with the new national standards and will feature the latest advancements in security measures.

We are developing a plan to introduce this licence in a seamless and effective manner. It is our intent to ensure everyone needing a licence is given the opportunity to obtain one, even prior to the expiry of old licences. The routine of obtaining a new licence will change in that a temporary licence will be issued and then the new one will be sent in the mail. Written reminders of licence renewal dates will also be sent to drivers in the mail, in advance of licence expiry. We will be visiting every issuing agency to ensure the proper training and equipment is made available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Financial Management Board, Mr. Roland.

Minister's Statement 82-15(4): Human Resource Services Amalgamation Update

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide an update on the amalgamation of human resource services.

The decision to amalgamate human resource services into regional service centres was made in August 2004. The actual implementation commenced in May 2005 and continues today as office relocations, recruitment and training proceed. We anticipate that it will be at least another year before implementation activities are completed and we have the staff, organization, business processes and systems operating at the level of efficiency and effectiveness we need. This time frame for full transition was anticipated and is much more ambitious than what other jurisdictions have indicated as their experience with the establishment of service centres.

The amalgamation of human resource services has resulted in the creation of seven full service centres in all regions. Service centres are located in Inuvik, Norman Wells, Behchoko, Fort Simpson, Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith. These service centres are supported by two corporate units, employee relations and corporate human resources. Services that were provided to employees from Yellowknife are now available from the regional service centres in each region.

There were many reasons why we amalgamated human resource functions:

1. to improve consistency and fairness of staffing processes;
2. to improve the quality of service being provided to existing staff;
3. to improve our human resource planning and recruitment and retention strategies in light of national and international labour shortages;
4. to increase our efforts in achieving a representative public service; and
5. to improve our ability to effectively respond to rapid changes driven by globalization, resource development, self-government and technological change.

We knew at the outset that addressing these issues would not be easy and we expected that the change process would be difficult and it would take time to achieve the efficient and effective level of service employees and the public expect.

Staff have worked very hard and faced many challenges and after nine months in operation, we believe we are starting to see progress in the quality and consistency of the human resource services we are providing in following government-wide policies and procedures. Human resources staff are collaborating with managers to meet each department's organizational need while maintaining a consistent GNWT approach. I would like to thank our human resources employees for their efforts to date, and

encourage them to continue striving for excellence as we proceed with full implementation.

The human resource amalgamation has had to cope with additional issues over the last nine months:

1. the challenge in recruiting qualified northern human resource practitioners;
2. the long timelines in obtaining the office space necessary to house the service centres;
3. the backlog of pay and benefits transactions that the new organization took over; and
4. the volume of other changes that arose over the year, such as negotiating and implementing two collective agreements, integrating six pay offices into one location, implementing a relief worker system, the conversion of employees to the Tlicho Community Services Agency and many others.

Although there were many highly qualified human resource practitioners who became part of the consolidated human resources, there were also many vacancies to fill. With these new employees comes a correspondingly large learning curve for the first year or two and a slower move to a full level of service in all locations. In keeping with our policies and practices, as many northerners as possible have been recruited for those positions. There has been an intensive effort to provide all human resources staff a common base of knowledge and then build on that base.

Mr. Speaker, while we often focus on the problems that arise when we go through change, it is important to recognize the positive things that are happening. Because of the amalgamation, we have been able to dedicate positions to conduct workplace investigations and to address employee health and wellness. Investigations into workplace issues are now dealt with in a more timely and consistent manner, with better support to managers and employees in these situations. Because of the employee health and wellness position, there is now a resource available to assist managers and employees with difficult situations, such as employees who return to work after an extended absence due to illness. Finding ways to address workplace accommodations to deal with disabilities has also improved. Individuals interested in GNWT employment can now find information about jobs, including job descriptions and tips on how to apply, in one location on the GNWT web site.

There has also been a significant improvement in the clarity regarding employee entitlements to different types of leave. The amount of GNWT-wide staff training has also gone up. These are not changes obvious to most individuals, but they begin to address the basic concerns which lead to the amalgamation in the first place.

Employees in human resources are committed to achieving service excellence. The amalgamation of human resources is still in its early stages. There has been significant progress, but we also recognize the need to continue to improve service levels to better support excellence in human resource management. I look forward to reporting further at our next session in May-June on this important shift in our approach to human resource management in the government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Recognition Of The Mangilaluk School Boys Basketball Team's Participation At Cager Basketball Tournament

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the cager basketball tournament being held this week in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report, for the first time in history, the Mangilaluk School senior boys have entered a team to compete in the high school basketball tournament.

---Applause

The team and coaches left Tuktoyaktuk this morning at 7:00 a.m. and their first game is at 6:00 p.m. tonight. It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, they will not be in the gallery today because of the team's schedule.

Mr. Speaker, during the regional trials for Arctic Winter Games, the Mangilaluk School boys made the Tuktoyaktuk residents proud by taking top spot. I should add that some of these young athletes made it to the territorial trials, but did not make the team to represent the Northwest Territories. I am proud of their accomplishments. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to recognize these young athletes who will be competing this weekend in the tournament. These athletes are Codey Felix, Carl Klengenber, Joshua Teddy, Logan Gruben, Noah Gruben, Darren Pokiak, Derrick Felix and Amos Teddy. They are accompanied by their coaches, Mr. Joshua Mackenzie and Skip Wilson. Mr. Speaker, I know they will be good sportsmen but, most of all, good ambassadors for the residents of the Tuktoyaktuk. I wish the team all the luck and I will be cheering them on this weekend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Northern Leadership Must Be United On Resource Revenue Sharing Issues

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard many times before, the Northwest Territories is at a very important time in our history. Leadership of today have an opportunity to ensure that future generations will be looked after. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to that leadership, and that includes us and the Assembly. We should be deeply concerned that money flows out of our territory to Ottawa. Last year alone, \$270 million left the NWT in royalties and we didn't get a nickel.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame!

MR. MCLEOD: Yesterday, my AOC colleagues and I spoke of the need for regional treatment centres. Think of the services, Mr. Speaker, we could provide with even half of that \$270 million, but we want more of it.

With the chance of a pipeline being built increasing, there will be even more money in royalties. Mr. Speaker, depending on the flow of gas, Ottawa stands to gain 12 of \$15 billion in the next 21 years. We, as leaders, can't allow this to happen. Are the people of the NWT not the rightful owners of this land? Even the new Conservative government agrees with the principle that northerners should be the primary beneficiaries of development of our resources. We should hold them to that.

Mr. Speaker, leaders in the NWT have a duty to represent those who elected them. If they get a good deal for their region, we should be glad for them. But we, as leadership of the NWT, have to look at the big picture, put our differences aside, go to battle with Ottawa's united front and get what's rightfully ours, then we can go back to squabbling amongst each other.

Royalties that should be ours continue to go south and we get next to nothing. Mr. Speaker, we are elected leaders; let's start acting like it and let's do what's best for the whole of the NWT. That way, Mr. Speaker, that will ensure that my little niece Kelly, up in the gallery, and her generation will be well looked after. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation For Dedicated Health Care Staff In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in many of my Member's statements, I include the triple A description regarding programs and services; adequate, accountable and accessible. Today I would like to add one more, appreciation for our dedicated and committed health care staff all over this territory.

In the recent federal election, health was the number one issue for most Canadians. So what puzzles me is why our health care system is so poorly funded and the staff not recognized. While many organizations and governments review, discuss and resolve various health care related issues in the Northwest Territories, it is equally important to commend the hard work and dedication of our health care staff. Whether in small communities or regional centres, health care providers are working very hard, day after day, in very stressful and under-funded environments.

Long wait times and waiting lists compound the patients' and families' anxiety creating an often stressful work environment for our health care staff. Having a shortage of qualified nurses is nation-wide, and difficulty in recruitment also adds to the already strained health care system. I believe health care staff appreciation must not be only a once-a-year function or special event, but must be practiced and highlighted by the people of our community and government continuously.

Additional resources to the small and regional centres for health care service and infrastructure must be addressed. These additional funding initiatives would dramatically alleviate the enormous stress currently placed on our communities' health care staff.

I commend the commitment of all health care staff and service providers throughout the territory, whether in Yellowknife or the small communities, with their tireless efforts to bring comfort to our sick and healing to our wounded.

Difficulties exist in the Northwest Territories with the implementation of equitable and accessible health care as increasing costs and complexities of our northern geography and medical coverage must comply with national medical standards. I am adamant in the overall improvements of health care services and funding increases while remembering the hard work of our health care staff, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Progress On NWT Action Plan For Persons With Disabilities

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, two years ago, almost two years ago to the day, the NWT Department of Health and Social Services introduced the NWT action plan for persons with disabilities. In talking to some disabled persons and NGOs, I am told that there is work, there is progress on this file. It has not been all that visible or all that high profile, Mr. Speaker. One part of this framework was that there would be a review and a monitoring program undertaken, which we have yet to see any action on, Mr. Speaker, or any sort of reporting back on the progress or the status of implementing this framework. It's in quite a contrast, Mr. Speaker, as one of my discussions brought out, especially with the accent on big development, on big pipeline, on big money in the Northwest Territories, that the interests of the, shall we say, the little people or the citizens of the Northwest Territories tend to be taking a back seat, Mr. Speaker. This is especially the case in the area of our social safety net, the consequences and the impacts of big development on our societies and communities, especially in the social services area.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Health and Social Services is also the lead Minister for carrying our government's message to the Joint Pipeline Review Panel last week. The question that's coming up now, Mr. Speaker, is, while our government is making a very serious, concerted, heavily funded and highly resourced move to make sure our development and our environmental word is heard at these hearings, where, Mr. Speaker, is the word of the social services for the disabled, for the people who can't look after themselves? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Laurie-Anne Fabien, Page At The Legislative Assembly

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Laurie-Anne Fabien who has been working with us this week as a Page here at the Legislative Assembly.

---Applause

Laurie-Anne is a member of the K'atlodeeche First Nations from the Hay River Reserve. She is a college graduate with two certificates from Fairview College in Alberta...

---Applause

...one in transition/vocation and another in disabilities. Laurie likes to keep very busy in the community of Hay River Reserve. She works as a classroom assistant at the Chief Sunrise Education Centre. I would like to thank Laurie for all her hard work this week and the excellent job that she has done for us. I also hope that she enjoyed the experience. We certainly enjoyed having her here.

I would also like to thank her mother, Georgina, and also Walter Brown, my constituency assistant, for his efforts and all the people here at the Legislative Assembly who have been so accommodating and helped us out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Indeed, Laurie has been doing an excellent job for us this week. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Member's Statement On Funding Levels For Community Justice Committees

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about the funding levels for community justice committees, many of which do a lot of exceptional work in addressing community justice concerns, tackling youth crime head on, and diligently working with community and government organizations to make the Community Justice Program work. But the funding levels which the government provides to the 32 communities are seriously out of balance, Mr. Speaker.

Out of the \$652,000 that this government provides to these 32 communities, 14 percent, or almost \$100,000, goes to eight communities which have not had any directly related justice activities. Four other communities which handle approximately 45 percent of the 1,275 justice committee activities here in the NWT received only 18 percent, or \$122,000, of the total justice committee budget.

To me, Mr. Speaker, it does not seem fair for the communities which are fully engaged and participated in the justice committee programs but are seriously under-resourced by this government. I am curious if the Department of Justice is aware of how the communities that receive funding and do not take on any activities are spending these so-called limited resources. I feel that these limited resources should be redirected or reallocated to other communities that have active committees that take on 100 or more activities per year but operations are seriously under-funded, therefore, jeopardizing the success of the justice program.

The Department of Justice must gather the historical data which clearly shows that local justice committees work in the activities that they carry out. I think that the funding arrangement should reflect that information. Mr. Speaker,

I will have some questions to the Justice Minister at the appropriate time about these funding levels. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Recommendations Of The Final Report On The Liquor Act Review

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement is about the Liquor Act review. It is with great anticipation, Mr. Speaker, that I have awaited the release of the final report of the Liquor Act review. This review has been long overdue. The last time the GNWT took a look at this legislation was back in 1994, but, at that time, nothing was changed. I had an opportunity to look through the report. I wanted to take this opportunity to share some initial thoughts on things that I saw.

Mr. Speaker, I am very much in support of this proposal where we increase maximum fines for bootlegging individuals up to \$25,000 or 12 months in jail, and \$50,000 or two years in jail for subsequent offences. For corporations, the proposed fines are even higher: \$50,000 for first offence and \$100,000 if caught again. Bootlegging is a serious concern across the NWT. I agree with these findings in this review. It is time to get tough. Let's give this legislation some teeth. What we are missing here, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, is clear minimums to make sure people know we truly do mean business.

Mr. Speaker, from a constituent point of view, I do have some reservations about Sundays and holiday openings. The concern, Mr. Speaker, is the disruption of intoxicated people spilling out of the bars that are in my residential areas of downtown. Mr. Speaker, I tabled a document in the House last October which outlined concerns of some constituents about the proposed Sunday openings. The residents of Northern Heights already contend with negative factors such as noise and public drunkenness. Sunday openings would only add to this concern. Mr. Speaker, what about the day of rest also known as Sunday?

Mr. Speaker, I was glad to see that the recommendations of Sunday openings, though, also note a strong support that stakeholders should be consulted through the bylaw process. So I am in extremely strong support of that recommendation because this is a decision that could be made by the city realizing that they truly know what their community is like and how these effects will spill out into the details. Speaking of details, Mr. Speaker, the devil is in the details. I would like to hear more about recommendation 19 which talks about the peace officers and the three-strike rule, or recommendation 22. It says non-beverage liquor. I am not sure if this is forward thinking or creative writing by this liquor review, but I look forward, again, to those details.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for bringing forward this work that has been called for by the Accountability and Oversight committee on several occasions. Again, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to reviewing this legislative proposal when it does come before review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement On Elders' Senior Facility In Behchoko

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) My Member's statement will be on the elders' senior home in Behchoko regarding the back-up generator. When the power is out, they have a back-up generator. (Translation ends)

...operates at Jimmy Erasmus Seniors' Home in Behchoko. It is a residential facility that accommodates eight elders whose needs are classified as level two and level three care. This means that, although they are considered to be somewhat independent and mobile in walkers or wheelchairs, they can still be very fragile requiring 24 hours of medical care.

The facility is owned by the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, which is responsible for maintenance of the building. There is no accelerated power source or generator in the elders' home in the event of an emergency, Mr. Speaker. During the past month, ice damage to power transmission lines affected power to both Yellowknife and Behchoko. In Behchoko, the power disruption was potentially very serious, with one disruption lasting over 10 hours, Mr. Speaker. Other disruptions followed almost on a daily basis and there is a significant uncertainty over whether this disruption would be of a shorter or longer duration; consequently whether it would be necessary to evacuate the elders, Mr. Speaker.

Actions taken during the last incident to keep the home warm have been vetoed by the fire marshal for future occurrence, and the elders' home will need to be evacuated for the safety of the elders in the event of any extended power outage.

Opportunities for evacuation in Behchoko are the health centres, the Elizabeth Elementary School, the Chief Jimmy Bruneau regional high school in Edzo and the residents, all which have back-up power generators. However, none of these are appropriate for a number of fragile elders requiring oxygen and 24-hour medical services.

Mr. Speaker, Tlicho Community Services Agency staff have expressed concerns for the NWT Housing Corporation that the home does not have a back-up generator.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi, colleagues. The response today from the NWT Housing Corporation has been that the Tlicho Community Services Agency should transfer the elders to facilities in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker. This is not an option at all, Mr. Speaker. Stress on mental and physical capability of elders during evacuation could be worse than an initial power failure, potentially resulting in fatalities, Mr.

Speaker. In storms, transportation to Yellowknife is always problematic and there is never any guarantee that Stanton and other elders' facilities in Yellowknife, which operate at full capacity, could handle an influx of elders from Behchoko, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, facilities for elders in Hay River and Fort Simpson are equipped with emergency back-up generators for safety of their patients and elders, Mr. Speaker. Later, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Maximizing The Benefits Of Northern Strategy Funding For Communities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to raise the issue of the community capacity building fund. Last August 16th, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs announced this one-time funding with the emphasis on community level control and priorities. In some communities, the expenditure of the money and the projects proposed need to be agreed upon by more than one community government body. This has caused considerable debate and comment from communities as this is a new approach to decision-making. Some of the concerns raised related to whether or not this would set a new precedent for financial resources and funding received by communities from the GNWT and whether consensus could be reached on what the priorities in the community actually were.

This one-time funding in the case of Hay River is \$1.964 million. It is intended to be spent on projects that benefit the community and would not result or require ongoing O and M support from this government. I am sure every community, including Hay River, would have no problem coming up with a wish list of projects that are above and beyond what the community or the GNWT normally funds.

To date, I have heard a number of suggestions as to how Hay River could put this money to good use; everything from upgraded equipment for Hay River's public parks and playgrounds, to extension of the sidewalk infrastructure, to alternative schooling options for youth not currently attending school.

Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of the Hay River MLAs to convene a meeting in March to bring the Hay River town council, the Métis local government and the West Point First Nation to a common meeting to discuss prospective projects to benefit our community and its residents. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage people of Hay River to turn their thoughts to how this money could be best put to use. We will be in communication with the leadership to set a time and place for this meeting. We very much look forward to the ideas and input that will come forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On The Perpetual Planning Department Of Health And Social Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today again about addictions, especially services that should be provided to our youth. How important is the issue of youth addiction services to this government? Judging by its actions to date, I would have to say the record is absolutely abysmal. Prior to becoming the Minister of Health and Social Services, the current Minister referred to the Department of Health and Social Services as a department of perpetual planning. Mr. Speaker, he loved to call it that. I guess he doesn't like to rock the boat much as under his leadership the department continues down the road of the "study it to death" attitude. Meanwhile, our residents and youth continue to demand action. No question, Mr. Speaker, our youth need help.

In 1998, the Department of Health and Social Services shut down the NWT Youth Addictions Program that was operated by Northern Addictions Services, which at the time had a budget of \$584,000. The department stated that by April 1, 1999, it was going to develop a new, more effective, they liked to call it, program. Here we are, Mr. Speaker, seven years later. Where is this program? How many youth have we lost from your perpetual planning department? Every Member of this House is well aware of the problems and addictions our youth face on a day-to-day basis. With more resource development, more money, there are more problems today in the Northwest Territories than in 1999. The Minister is really good at saying he'll look at it or it is being dealt with, but his department is very short on action.

This government has to wake up to the issue of mental health and addictions for our youth. They are the next generation and we must have the programs and resources in place to give our youth every possible chance at leading a well-rounded and productive life.

When Regular Members are speaking about addiction services, we mean it. Is it too much to ask for the Minister and Cabinet to actually pay attention to what we are saying?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. RAMSAY: It seems the only time they do pay attention, Mr. Speaker, is when someone over here is asking for their job. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Member's Statement On Addictions And Mental Wellness Needs In The NWT

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with the statement made by the honourable colleague Mr. Ramsay in terms of the support that we need in our small communities. Mr. Speaker, I want to say something from my heart in terms of the help that our people need in terms of addictions, mental wellness and, basically, effective programs.

Mr. Speaker, our communities are suffering. Mr. McLeod indicated that it takes leadership from us, as MLAs, who are sometimes on the constant standby on the phone, as the Minister indicated numerous times, as a job as an MLA is 24/7. Mr. Speaker, I didn't really get it until after a couple of months in terms of my role as MLA. I think all of us here are all truly affected by things that are happening in our small communities. We have such large families. Sometimes it even hits really close to home in terms of things that are happening. We get to really see how the programs are administrated and how they are dealt with. Sometimes it causes us to wonder if we are making any difference.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of our role as MLAs, I say again, sometimes we get so caught up with all the things that are happening, sometimes we just want to deal with them and get them out of the way. Sometimes things get really hard. Sometimes it is hard trying to wonder if you really are making a difference in the life of the people that we represent. I think we are, Mr. Speaker.

All the MLAs here know the disease of alcohol and how it affects not only the person but the families, the whole communities are affected. People are always saying take the people to the land. Mr. Speaker, it can't get any simpler than that. The elders are saying this for a reason. We want to talk about alcoholism or addictions. Bring the people out there. They know. They survived on the land for thousands of years. For anybody to do those types of programs on the land will be wonderful. I am not too sure if enough studies have been done to work with people who have issues that can work on the land.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to really see the government take this approach and get towards a better society for everybody in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On WCB Assessment Rates And Franchises In The NWT

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity today to draw attention to the need of the Minister and the governance council of WCB to take a strong leadership role. Mr. Speaker, the latest issue to hit the public attention is the plight of the franchises in Yellowknife who are in the maximum 25 percent assessment rate increase for the last four years in a row and are still looking for much needed reprieve prior to the deadline of February 28th, Mr. Speaker. This is just one big issue, but there are a lot more that needs attention of the leadership. Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the annual reports of the corporation over the last 10 years, it really shows a very alarming picture.

Mr. Speaker, we see that the assessment revenue has been steadily going up, but their investment revenue is going down drastically. We need to know why. We see that the assessment's steady decrease. Even the subsidy had to go up, Mr. Speaker, and the rates going up, the profit and loss statement shows a loss in 2003 and 2004 for the first time in the last 10 years, this coming from an over \$20 million profit in 1997. Now, they saw a loss of \$10 million in 2003, or I think it is more than that. They

are still showing a loss. Mr. Speaker, this is not because there have been more claims than before. In fact, the claim numbers have been going down. The costs of claims have been going down, but the rejected numbers of claims have been going up. There is a very alarming picture here because it appears that the employers are being asked to pay the cost of something that is not going right in this corporation, in my view, by looking at the annual reports. We need to find out from the Minister and governance council why it is that the WCB is in such a terrible financial situation. If they don't fix this, they are going to see that the employers are going to be continued to ask to pay for this. I would like to see the action on that front immediately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to recognize the senior management team from Aurora World Corporation, present Daryl Dolynny, as well as Kaz Morita, and Chris Johnson who are here with us today. Most importantly, I am very proud to recognize a special guest, Mr. Tatsua Tanaka, who is a world-famous Aurora photographer who has taken over 100,000 photos of the Aurora.

---Applause

Mr. Tanaka was gracious enough to accompany us at NWT Week in Aichi, Japan at the recent Expo. Members Ramsay, Villeneuve and Menicoche were also in attendance. We had a wonderful time. We are very thankful of the great work that Mr. Tanaka does. I am very proud to have him visit us. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to recognize my sister-in-law, Esmerelda; her husband, Danny, and, Mr. Speaker, after seeing her sister be a Page back in October, my little niece Kellie just can't wait for her turn.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like Minister Bell, I have a couple of people to introduce. I have a very small description on each of those two people. First, I would like to, as well, introduce Mr. Tanaka and say thank you for attending our Assembly. Mr. Tanaka is a very famous photographer in Japan. He is extremely well known for his photography. To make it quite short, Mr. Speaker, to call Mr. Tanaka an aurora ambassador would truly be an understatement for what he does for the Northwest Territories, but I think it is well suited. The

other person I would like to mention is Mr. Kaz Morita. I would personally like to say that his reputation throughout Japan is second to none. I have had a chance to meet with him and have dinner with both him and Mr. Tanaka while I was in Japan. I quickly realized that these were top-notch gentlemen who certainly know their business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize a person from Tulita, Danny Horassi. He is also with his wife and his child. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Indeed, welcome to everyone in the gallery today. It is always nice to have an audience viewing our proceedings. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) My questions will be directed....We are talking about a back-up generator for Behchoko...(Translation ends)

...responsible for maintenance of seniors' home, as I indicated in my opening statement.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he believes that the elders in Behchoko deserve the same consideration for their safety as elders in Hay River and Fort Simpson. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary To Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I was expecting that answer. Good. For the record, it was the right answer.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, from my recent experience in Behchoko, the loss of power in a community for 10 hours, a back-up generator in the elders' home is definitely required now. It is absolutely important to ensure elders to continue to live in the comfort of their home. Will the Minister commit to the safety of the elders in the Jimmy Erasmus Seniors' Home in Behchoko by ensuring that a

back-up generator is installed as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Krutko.

Further Return To Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will definitely look into it, but we also have to realize that communities do have emergency measure plans for these types of incidents. We have to work with the municipal government of Behchoko to also ensure that we are working with the MLA. We have to see exactly what happened here and exactly how we comply with the emergency measures plan that is in place. Again, I will work with my colleague from MACA, the MLA and the community to resolve this problem. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary To Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given our recent experience with the elders' home in Behchoko, will the Minister commit to meeting with myself and a community representative to discuss the overall maintenance of the building and the safety of the residents? It is not just a generator, Mr. Speaker, it is the overall maintenance of the building. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Krutko.

Further Return To Question 459-15(4): Elders' Facility In Behchoko

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will commit to the Member to do that. I believe we are going to be doing a tour of the Member's riding at the end of March, so we can maybe add this to our agenda for discussions while we are on the tour. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 460-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation just with respect to the new home concept from ABC Company. I have been getting inquiries from constituents. They are concerned about their previous experiences with trailer-type homes, the quality of construction and just the life expectancy of trailers in general. They are saying if the government is going to be supportive of an industry that has previously poor workmanship, how are our constituents going to know what these homes look like without having a show home for them to look at? Does the Housing Corporation have a plan in order to display or show these homes in more of the public of the NWT other than what was depicted in the news media? They showed quite a concept there. Is it different?

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

Return To Question 460-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are developing a promotion plan where we are looking at establishing these units in different communities. We are looking at putting one unit in Inuvik, Norman Wells and Fort Simpson. We are hoping to deliver these over the summer months; so we are hoping to have them in place by this fall. Again, it is all dependent on where we go with our proposal and exactly if it's acceptable or not. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 460-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that is all we can ask the Housing Corporation, is that you are embarking on a very good initiative that is supported by many people in the communities and the regions, but they are not going to know more unless we show them more. Once again, what was the timing, again, of displaying this product in the North? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 460-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are hoping to have them in place this summer. Again, the company we are working with will be the one putting these in place. It is their dime that is going to be spent on this. So it is their schedule. They are looking at where we are going to locate these in the different communities and work with communities on where they would like them to be located. Again, we will be consulting those communities on exactly how we are going to lay out these three units.

I also want to mention that we are also looking at Fort Providence in conjunction with the Deh Cho Bridge as part of the pilot. We were looking at there and also have one of these show homes in Fort Providence, also. Thank you.

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

Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I received an e-mail from what could be described as the Yellowknife quick QSR food group services and the concern that some of the responses are not going to be returned by the president of the WCB. I know Minister Dent, who is the Minister of WCB, has received the e-mail because it was directed to him. Can the Minister tell us today that the WCB will be responding fully to the questions raised at that meeting held with the president of the WCB? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this morning the chairman of the governance council has responded to that e-mail offering to meet with the people who are on the e-mail list this coming Thursday afternoon or evening at their choice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I didn't say clearly, I didn't say meet, I said answer the question. So, Mr. Speaker, I was at that meeting, I think it was two weeks ago. That was the one that I was late to attend the start of session, but I thought it was important to be there while all those questions were asked, and there was a promise to respond to the questions that were asked and that's what I'm asking. Will the WCB, through the president or the chair, be responding, as promised, to the concerns raised by this Yellowknife QSR group? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The chair of the governance council has, in his e-mail, offered to meet with the group to respond to their questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're getting really close and I like this. I guess, Mr. Speaker, all I need really is a yes or a no, not a meet to discuss to see about responding. Will the WCB, as agreed upon at that meeting that I was at, they agreed to respond fully to the questions raised. So would the Minister confirm today that the WCB will be fully responding to the concerns raised that day at that public meeting? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 461-15(4): WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll quote from the e-mail from the chair in which he says I will be happy to share the results of that discussion with the group. So I think that the question has been answered. Yes, the chair is going to meet to answer their questions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. The honourable Member from Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is for Mr. Miltenberger as the Minister for Health and Social Services and, coincidentally, as the Minister for Energy and Natural Resources and the function that he carried out a few weeks ago, or a few days ago, presenting the GNWT's position on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline project to the Joint Review Panel. Mr. Speaker, the message that he carried was very much one of the business and environmental and regulatory flow, but the position of our government on how the pipeline project is going to relate to social services, and the impact and the delivery of good programs of care and support among the social service community is something that has not received very much profile. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister advise what position was expressed or outlined to the Joint Review Panel in relation to the social impact of the pipeline on the NWT, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the document, the general submission contains 73 recommendations that we've made to the panel that we would like addressed and offering our suggestions and raising our concerns in a host of areas. The ones on the social envelope side covered the whole range of issues from the training issues, to the social impact issues, to the potential health issues. It's fairly comprehensive and I have a copy here and, if the Member hasn't received a copy, I would be happy to share it with him. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Among the listing of social priority or social program issues, Mr. Speaker, what would the Minister say are the top two or three priorities, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clearly we have infrastructure in place in all of the communities already. We are the biggest service provider, along with the authorities and boards, where we have a \$260 million budget. The immediate concern, of course, is if the pipeline or when the pipeline moves forward, there's going to be an immediate impact with a lot of traffic increase, work camps, people coming into the North and putting possible

pressure on communities in a number of ways, both on infrastructure and in terms of the social infrastructure be it with the added incomes or with new people coming to town. So getting a good sense of what that particular impact will be, how fast it will move and making sure that we are ready to address that impact as it moves through the territory from the north and south is going to be probably the most important initial piece. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do we have an effective program or plan laid out for monitoring and reporting back on how these impacts are being realized and how they're being measured? There's a correlation here, Mr. Speaker, to the program outlined in the disability framework, which called for a review and a reporting mechanism. So is there something that we can count on, as well, to keep pace with the impact and how we're managing it, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working with communities. We've held some initial workshops, in anticipation of the pipeline moving forward, to look at what are some of the concerns and recommendations. There was an agreement reached with the previous federal government for \$500 million that would flow to the aboriginal governments and communities up and down the valley in the affected areas to help offset social impacts that could come, and it's through that process that we were anticipating dealing with the issues of social impact, and the monitoring, and being able to respond to what pressure may come to bear as a result of the pipeline going ahead. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Your final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, that, too, has been an area of interest and of some concern. A lot of significance has been put on this \$500 million socio-economic impact fund, but it is still really only a concept; a good one. I'm wondering if the Minister could report on what his next step is going to be to make this \$500 million impact fund a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 462-15(4): Social Issues - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$500 million was, in fact, agreed to by the previous federal government. What we have now is a new federal government that is taking the time to step back and look at that particular pot of money and what was agreed to, and give us their political read on that.

The most immediate step, of course, as the Member knows, the Premier is now down in Ottawa and is meeting with the Prime Minister and will be meeting again with him tomorrow. A number of issues like this are on the agenda to have initial discussions with the Prime Minister to get a sense of what the new federal government sees in terms of that issue and many others. Thank you.

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

Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister responsible for perpetual planning, the Minister of Health and Social Services. I'd like to ask the Minister, first of all, about the NWT Youth Addictions Program that existed in 1998 and was taken away and had a budget of \$584,000. The Department of Health and Social Services had promised a new program to be up and running by April 1st of 1999. I'd like to ask the Minister, what happened to that promise? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my colleague is prone of late it seems to political hyperbole and sweeping generalizations where he has now quite routinely denigrated and devalued the work of the hundreds of people that work in the addictions field, and in the communities, and on the planning that's been done over the last years that laid out a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, that sees us working with Education and MACA with youth initiatives and in the schools with Get Active campaigns, training northerners. So we have done a lot of work since 2002. We have an action plan that has laid out 40-some recommendations that have been acted on and are critical to the development of the health and social services system.

Addictions has had its own plan. We've laid out clearly our investments, the strategy, the direction based on significant feedback across the North, based on the State of Emergency document back in 2001. We've added 77 positions; we've trained northerners; we've taken the alcohol and drug program that was clearly identified as sitting in the shadows and not being properly attended to and made it an integral part of how we do business in the Northwest Territories. So I think the Member is inaccurate in his characterization of what's been done here, unfair to the people doing the work and I'd be happy to have the discussion and I'm very happy to stand here and defend and hold up, for clear scrutiny, the work that has been done because I think what we've done with the resources is we have done a good job. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm denigrating the job the addictions workers are doing out there in the field. Mr. Speaker, what I'm doing here today is standing up and questioning the Minister on what, exactly, actions have been taken by his government. I know he's been the Minister of Health and Social Services for the past five years. Why are our constituents still screaming for addictions programming for youth? Why do they keep knocking on our door asking where is the action? He talks about the action plan. What replaced, and specifically, Mr. Speaker, what replaced this NWT Youth Addictions Program? What replaced it and why are we here today questioning the Minister again on what programs are out there for youth with addictions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. There are a couple of questions there. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have taken what we think is a comprehensive approach to try to deal with addictions. We're focusing on the community level. We've put our resources in with wellness workers, mental health workers and clinical supervisors. We have some services available through Nats'ejee K'e for treatment facilities. We also have connections and facilities available down south that we have and make access for and to. We're working on a proposal to bring and repatriate some services back to the North that we think can be delivered in the North by northerners with some assistance through some local consulting groups and for service providers that now exist up here. So we are doing a number of things. We've invested millions of dollars. We've broadened our approach to include setting up a ministry responsible for youth, our involvement in the schools, the education programs that we've delivered for healthy living, active living in a whole number of areas, Mr. Speaker. We are working and it always comes back to the fundamental issue of personal choice and of working with the families, as well. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, what does that have to do with addictions? I'm talking about real addictions that families are faced with. What programming is available for youth that are addicted to drugs, alcohol and other things? What programs are available? Back in...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. We'll let the Minister answer that question. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's clear from the work and the research that now exists that addictions is no longer seen as a single presenting problem, that it is only one of many of often concurrent presenting problems, and that's the way it's being treated. Addictions by themselves are not the only problem. They come with other presenting problems that tie into maybe FASD, maybe family situations, maybe behavioural. So we have to look at all those and we're trying to do that. You can't look at the youth separate from the community and the family and we do have facilities down south when it comes to residential treatment. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Your final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for that. Back in 1998 when the program was shelved and shut down, the deputy minister at the time, or the assistant deputy minister, said it's expected that youth would have to be referred to programs or that were referred to the program would either be sent down south for treatment or offered services in the NWT on a case-by-case basis. This new program was supposed to be up and running on April 1st of 1999 and it wasn't. So we're still following the same edict from the Department of Health and Social Services seven years later, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable and I think we need some type of residential program to treat youth addictions here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 463-15(4): Youth Addictions Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2002 we came out with an action plan, very shortly after that we came out with a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. The Member seems to see residential treatment as a panacea for all the issues related to addictions and I'm saying it's not the only issue, it's not a panacea, its one piece of a service delivery system. We have access to it, but it's clearly tied to the communities first and that's where we've invested our resources to date. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Oral questions. The honourable Member from the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the honourable Minister Miltenberger regarding the situation with Colville Lake with little Ashley Kochon. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister what type of plans is he putting together with his department to let the good people of Colville Lake know that this type of meningitis is under control? The people are fearful. So what are his plans to deal with a situation like this in

Colville Lake so they know that the health care of them is being taken care of in their small community? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can speak in general about our approach to dealing with circumstances where we want to inform communities, and I'd be happy to do that. I'm not at liberty, in this House, to speak to a particular case or a particular patient as referred to by the Member and, unfortunately, I can't do that. But very clearly, when there's general circumstances where we have to inform the public, we work with our chief medical officer and the deputy and the communities to make sure that we can take the steps necessary to inform all the people that need to be informed about what is happening and how it's going to be dealt with, and to provide them the knowledge and information and reassurance they need to deal with whatever situation we may be dealing with at the time. I'm not at liberty to speak specifically about a particular patient. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for putting the Minister in that situation. So what can he tell small communities in the Northwest Territories that have similar situations such as meningitis, that the communities can be assured that they can sleep at night and not worry about any type of situations that may call into question of the health service that we have in the Northwest Territories? Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Member that in terms of dealing with the community of Colville Lake and making sure that they are properly informed and are apprised of what's happening and are reassured in terms of the circumstances, that I have met with the deputy, I've met with the chief medical officer and the acting CEO this morning at 7:30 to go over the circumstances, to talk about what needs to be done and to lay out a plan to, in fact, do that. When the Member has time, I'd be more than willing to have him fully briefed, as well, on that particular circumstance and we're going to make sure that the family is contacted, as well as the community, and get the necessary information given to them. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do, in fact, look forward to sitting down with the honourable Minister and going through some of the finer details in Colville Lake. I wanted to ask the Minister in regards to the authorization or some authority given in Colville Lake in terms of the medevac situation because of situations where communities do not have health centres that really they rely on the lay dispenser who has to call another community who has nurses in that situation. It's really hard, Mr. Speaker, to say who do you believe, the nurse, or do you believe the community members with a situation right there in terms of asking for help? Is that going to be changed in the future? Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in the process of doing a step-by-step review of the process, what happened, the time frames and sequences so that it's very clear to everybody. That information will be looked at and reviewed, and I'd be happy to share it, once again, with the Member so that we can collectively take a look at what happened, how it happened and ensure that the system worked appropriately, and if there's areas where it didn't, then we will look at taking the steps to address that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I look forward to the Minister in seeing that hopefully we could see some things that are changed. It may be different in other regions and other situations, maybe it's working for them, good for them, but I wanted to look at our region in terms of our whole health care system in terms of the department or the government looking at investing some real dollars into our health care system or any other region that has a similar situation like Colville Lake. Put the money into the health care system and then other things will take care of themselves. We've got to do first things first, Mr. Speaker. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 464-15(4): Medical Services In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to note, for the record, I appreciate the Member's concern and comments, but in fact we are pouring millions of dollars into the communities in the Sahtu. We've spent millions setting up a board; we're putting in rehab teams; public health units; we've put in doctors; we're adding nurse practitioners. So there is a commitment. We have a circumstance where there is a situation that happened. We're going to review it and we'll take the steps necessary where required and indicated to

remedy that situation, and I look forward to keeping the Member involved. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance and it's in regards to the new housing concept from the ABCD Company.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, during the Committee of the Whole, I asked the Minister about this beast of, okay, I won't call it a beast, but there is a document, a MOA/MOU, and I understand that this is confidential. I don't know, though, what's in it, but, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know still, it's still not clear to me what that document commits us to. I do understand the Minister of Finance and Minister of Housing Corporation have stated numerous times that there's no funding commitment to that, but the Minister stated yesterday that it does, and I quote on page 2953, "It does lock us down to the fact that we are working with the one company with a design." Could I ask the Minister what that means? Does that mean that we are locked into using this specific product? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the MOU doesn't tie us down to a contract; it doesn't make any commitments for funding. What it does do is on this concept, on this model, the company has invested millions of dollars coming up with a method of converting workforce housing. It ties us to the fact that if we're going to use that system, it is their system. So we're obviously going to be tied to that company if it is successful in securing the workforce housing project for the pipeline. Thank you

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

Supplementary To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Businesses and big companies, it's their regular practice to invest in different product design. There's nothing new about that and there's nothing that should tie us to what we are doing. The Minister stated in his answer just now, he said if we are going to use this product, we are tied to that. I'm still not clear. If we get the funding from the federal government, and if CMHC approves this, and if the pipeline goes, does this mean that we are legally bound to buy this product from this company? Are we excluded from looking at anything else?

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of who we're tied to ultimately comes down to if the Mackenzie gas project uses this concept. We are not going to buy this concept and put it out there. The Mackenzie gas project is going to purchase workforce housing. Are they going to buy the typical traditional workforce housing that was pictured in one of the media papers here in Yellowknife, or are they going to work with us in going for this new concept that can be converted at a cost savings than the traditional systems and, if that's the case, then, yes, we will be tied to this one concept that we have been working with. Thank you

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

Supplementary To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there's lots of ifs there, but it's not clear to me whether this document is committing us to make some of those ifs go away. So let me just ask the Minister, is it the government's intention to make it part of its socio-economic impact benefit agreement package with Imperial if the pipeline goes? Is it the government's intention to ask them to buy this product from ABCD Company?

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the initial intention we were looking at was looking at some form of conversion of workforce housing for housing in the Northwest Territories. Since then, we have dropped that. It is not part of the negotiations right now. It is seen as a business deal and the Mackenzie gas project has to go out and purchase workforce housing. We're hoping that as they're done with the workforce housing, we can then take that and convert it to housing for NWT residents. But as I stated earlier, the traditional type of workforce housing is not affordable to convert. So if we're going to use this concept, work has to be done upfront to incorporate some features that make these units applicable for residences in the Northwest Territories. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Your final supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously there are lots of partners involved in this project and there are lots of milestones that have to be met, but one of the things that concerns me is the fact that the federal government has refused to come to this project with their funding at the front end, and even if they're going to have a written agreement, that's still risky. So I would like to ask the Minister if he would commit to making sure that he would work to make the federal government come in at the front end of this project, not at the back end, because I think that really speaks to the liability we're assuming, and unnecessarily. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(4): New Home Concept - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, both myself and the Minister of the Housing Corporation did present a proposal to the then-Minister of the CMHC and put the option on the table in our preference for upfront funding. We've got to see where the new federal government, new Minister for Housing will take this, and we'll work around that initiative. Obviously, getting the funds upfront means it's a lower cost to the federal government. We've made that known that if their preference is to fund this at the tail end when the units become available, there is going to be an additional and initial indication that they were accepting that that would be the case, but we've still got to get back to the new government and find out if that commitment is still there. Mr. Speaker, as stated, there are many ifs out there, large ones that will stop this from proceeding. One, ultimately, a decision is needed in the favourable of a pipeline proceeding; two is to have the Mackenzie gas project use this concept and, ultimately, without the federal funding, this does not go. Thank you

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

Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I talked about the community capacity building fund that was announced last August. I would like to get an update from the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs on a few things, because I am trying to raise the profile and draw attention to this because I believe there is a deadline coming. What is the deadline for a community to submit projects to the GNWT, to MACA, for approval? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've set the deadline of November 1st, 2006, as the date we'd like to have all the proposals in by from the communities. However, we have established a three-year period of drawdown for those projects for the following three years. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories that were eligible for this funding, how many of them have already submitted their proposals, have had

their projects approved and are on their way to receiving funds? Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have approved, to date, five communities. There are a number of other communities that have requested some assistance to develop their proposals. Others are requesting information and we continue to work with them. There are a number of communities I've indicated that they're going to take the time that's required to have the meetings or have the discussion with the other governments, the local governments in the community, to come forward with something that everybody supports. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister what assistance is his department prepared to provide to communities like Hay River in developing their proposals and coming to a consensus on their projects? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have indicated to all our communities that our regional staff are available to assist in developing the proposals or working on some of the project detail. We've also indicated to the communities that if there is some concern about building consensus, that we would provide some money to hire facilitators or other people who may be necessary to work out some of the complications that may be coming forward. Those are the areas we are committed to assist in. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister, because there was quite a bit of concern about this because it was a new process and people hadn't taken this approach to finding consensus in the communities before, I would like to ask, how many communities have come back and said they are going to let the territorial government make those decisions on behalf of their community, they do not want to propose the projects? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 466-15(4): Community Capacity Building Fund

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been one community where there were two community governments that came forward and requested that we consider taking back the money. We responded to that community by indicating to them that there is a lot of time yet for the community to work things out. I am hoping that they will come back with a proposal, where everybody supports it, by November. So we are hoping that the communities will make the effort to work together and that's the basis of this whole concept, to have community projects, not individual community government projects. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that the ABC concept can't go away, I guess.

---Laughter

In response to Members posed by my honourable colleague from Hay River South on February 21st, the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation stated that as part of the human resource strategy attached to the Novel proposal, NWT residents could be eligible for apprenticeships while working at the ATCO facility in Calgary. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Does the GNWT fund southern companies to hire northern apprentices? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT funds only northern registered businesses for apprenticeship positions, but we have northern registered businesses who have apprentices working in southern locations, even internationally on occasion. So these situations are somewhat unusual, but on occasion they've helped to strengthen the skills and experience apprentices receive. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

Supplementary To Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that case, would ATCO Structures in Calgary be eligible for a rate subsidy for each northerner that apprentices in Calgary? Can the Minister confirm this for the Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If ATCO was successful in getting the housing part of this project, they would have to register in the NWT to do business in order to be considered. I am not sure if they are registered already; they could be, Mr. Speaker. As long as they are registered, they would be eligible to receive rate subsidies for apprentices. I think the Minister of Finance has indicated there are a number of factors that would have to be met before we would be involved in developing a human resource plan for this project.

At the present time, the GNWT is monitoring all of the opportunities that might come from a Mackenzie gas project and we would certainly be prepared to ramp up our planning if the project takes off. In particular, I am confident we could take advantage of opportunities that might develop as this project proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should point out, though, with our training on-the-job funding, we need to make sure that we are targeting it properly. There has to be a balance between smaller companies and big companies and, to their credit, we have a number of large companies in the North, like the diamond mines, that are taking on apprentices right now. While they could qualify for subsidies, they are paying for the entire cost themselves. So we want to take a look at what would be the right approach. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

Supplementary To Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell this Assembly what he is prepared to do to prepare northerners to take advantage of any and all training opportunities associated with the proposed Novel project, whether those opportunities are north or not? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 467-15(4): Training Opportunities - Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline Project

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly. Currently, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment spends over \$2 million on apprenticeship and occupational certification programming. We offer the programming at Aurora College, training on-the-job, technical training, as well as we offer tuition for the theory courses when those have to be taken outside of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I think Members are also aware that we are developing new high school curriculum that will assist to get kids into, and be aware of, more opportunities in the trades, and we will continue to develop more and more opportunities and watch this project to see where opportunities might present for us to develop better training for northerners to take advantage of economic opportunity. Thank you.

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

Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for Mr. McLeod, as the Minister for Transportation, and it relates to some of the information he told us earlier today about the new digital drivers' licences. Mr. Speaker, my technological prowess in this neighbourhood...

---Laughter

...has been taken to task on occasion in this Assembly and I need to do a little bit of proving here on this idea of digital drivers' licences. Just what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? To be a bit more specific, how does having a digital driver's licence, what kind of difference are we going to see from the old style of drivers' licences, Mr. Speaker?

AN HON. MEMBER: Long live the dinosaurs!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This new driver's licence is something we have been working on for some time with other jurisdictions. It was a document that we felt had to be upgraded. The previous driver's licence was proven to be very vulnerable to being tampered with. With the new technology that's out there, it was easy to be reproduced. We wanted to move towards something that was more secure. Along with this document, we will be providing information on different drivers' licences that can be shared with other jurisdictions. It's also something that can be utilized as identification when travelling to other jurisdictions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The area of security is one of, I think, significant interest here. Now that we have a digital system of issuing drivers' licences, I am assuming that that means we have an emerging new database. Just what kinds of personal information is captured within this digital -- and again that's an assumption on my part -- database covering all our driver's licence information, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The information that will be captured in this database will be in relation to driving history and any infractions from other jurisdictions. So this information can be shared across the borders, so we can do follow-up. That is the rationale for having a waiting period when a driver comes in for a renewal from a different jurisdiction, or comes to apply for a driver's licence. There is waiting period. There is a temporary assignment of a driver's licence and then once we do all the checks and balances, the driver's

licence is mailed to that person. This is so we can do a follow-up and make sure that this person has a clean driving record, or has no requirement for us not to issue a permit. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

MR. BRADEN: So, Mr. Speaker, this information is shared with other jurisdictions and that makes perfectly good sense, but I also understand, Mr. Speaker, that at least one jurisdiction in Canada sells the information from these databases to private sector companies. The exchange of this kind of database is extremely valuable for demographics, planning and marketing purposes. What is our government's approach on selling or making this kind of data available to outside agencies or organizations, or the private sector, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have, at this point, not had that discussion and have not made a firm decision. We are in a position where we have to comply with our privacy legislation. We have not come forward with any decision whether we are going to move into the area that the Member is referring to. That decision has to be further discussed and we will make that information available as we make those decisions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I think this is an area that is very significant, should not be underscored. I do not want something as revealing, and open, and personal, and as significant as information contained within my driver's licence. I guess I am still curious about what kind of information is going to be captured. I am going to be seeking an assurance from my government that it is not going to be making it available at all, outside of other licensing or law enforcement agencies. Could the Minister give me some assurance on that point this morning, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 468-15(4): New Digital Drivers' Licences

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, if it will give any comfort to the Member, at this point we are not intending to provide that information outside of what is required for our use. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the honourable chairman of the Financial Management Board with regard to the human resource amalgamation update, I am just wondering what kind of stats are being currently kept in terms of turn-around for responses to applications. There are still lots of concern about people applying for jobs and not even getting an acknowledgement letter. So that has a bearing on the availability of our health care workers. We desperately need nurses and if they are not getting at least an acknowledgement letter within a month, then that hampers our ability to attract professionals. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for Financial Management Board, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, the tracking we've been doing since going to the service centre model is looking at the workload around payroll and backlog and tracking those to see if we are starting to make a difference in that area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, it's people who should be the concern here, not paper.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: People!

MR. MENICOCHÉ: So we've got nurses that want to work for us, but they aren't even getting acknowledgement letters and so they are probably moving on to other opportunities, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to know, what has the department done in order to speed up the process? I know there are a lot of growing pains in this new system, but we've got to get on top of this specific sector and attract the nurses and professionals that we do need, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there are particular situations where we have nurses wanting to work in the Northwest Territories and have not been offered employment or not been responded to, I would be particularly interested in getting that information, so we can try to work this through. In speaking to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, he hasn't brought this to my attention. If there are these situations, then definitely we need to have them looked at and fixed. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concern is that, yes, there are instances of this happening. In fact, some are, as well, making the interview stage, Mr. Speaker, but there again they are not being responded to that they have been a successful client and there is a huge delay even after that stage of another month. The ministry is probably aware of that and what are they going to do about it? Are there stats they are tracking with respect to turnaround and dialogue with the people who want to work for us? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated, it's news to me that we have potential nurses out there who are not getting some feedback as to whether they were successful or not. I am happy to work with the Member and try to work with each specific case. I will work with the authorities and with my deputy in the sense of where these issues are and come up with some corrective action. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought all applications were going to your department. Just with that, I would be glad to share a couple of incidents that have come to my attention with the ministry. My initial question is, can we start tracking that, because it's very important that people at least get acknowledgement letters. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 469-15(4): Human Resources Amalgamation

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Member in a specific area and the tracking area. For example, we are tracking areas of terminations, retirements, pensions, records of employment, leaves, pension recoveries and a number of those other areas, as well as audits. We can look at adding this situation or this reporting mechanism in, as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. Written questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS**Written Question 33-15(4): Manufacturing, Training And Housing Opportunities**

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my written question is to the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

1. Will the Minister outline specific plans to implement any northern regional mobile manufacturing plants for the Novel manufactured homes in the North?
2. Can the Minister outline specific trade training programs in the regions and a communication plan to notify the communities regarding trade training programs supported by Education, Culture and Employment?
3. Will the Minister notify this House should any alterations to the Novel manufactured homes concept be made prior to the sign-off of the final deal with the parties involved?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Petitions. Reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 8-15(4): Report On The Review Of The Report Of The Auditor General To The NWT Assembly For The Fiscal Years Ended March 31, 2002, And March 31, 2003

Introduction

MR. MENICOCHÉ: The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, the committee, met to review the Report of the Auditor General to the NWT Legislative Assembly for the fiscal years ended March 31, 2002, and March 31, 2003, on November 23 to 25, 2005.

The first day involved briefings and discussions with officials from the Office of the Auditor General, on issues raised in its report. Officials from the Auditor General's office included: Mr. Andrew Lennox, assistant auditor general, Office of the Auditor General of Canada; Ron Thompson, assistant auditor general, Office of the Auditor General of Canada; Mr. Roger Simpson, principal, Edmonton branch, Office of the Auditor General of Canada; and Mr. Dan Stadlweiser, director, Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Public meetings were held November 24 to 25, 2005, during which committee members had the opportunity to hear from witnesses. The list of witnesses included: Mr. Lew Voytilla, comptroller general, Financial Management Board Secretariat, FMBS; Ms. Louise Lavoie, assistant comptroller general, FMBS; Ms. Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister, Department of Finance; Mr. Peter Vician, deputy minister, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment; Mr. Fred Koe, president, NWT Housing Corporation; and Mr. Marsh Wilson, director, operations, NWT Housing Corporation.

General Comments

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight considers the review of auditor's reports to be of utmost importance. Public accountability is the foundation of good governance. In this day and age, the public demands and deserves to know their tax dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently. The concerted efforts and

the participation of all who are involved is an essential part of the process that ensures government accountability.

The auditor reports on issues that arise from the review of government accounts and provides recommendations for improvements. However, it is the forum for public review that provides an opportunity for further exploration of issues identified by auditors to find the root cause where problems exist and to ensure that improvements are brought about. An effective public forum requires that all parties come prepared.

Great importance is placed upon the public review process. The committee was, therefore, disturbed about lack of preparation. The committee feels that the laissez-faire attitude on the part of some of the witnesses indicates a lack of concern and respect for accountability towards taxpayers' dollars.

The committee reminds government officials of their accountability to the people of the Northwest Territories. All departments and corporations that are publicly funded are accountable to elected officials who are, in turn, accountable to their constituents for effective and efficient public spending.

Notably, the Housing Corporation was ill prepared to answer what the committee considered to be basic questions, taking them instead on notice.

Finally, during the course of the public review, the committee was presented with new information about a change to the funding agreement for the provision of Indian and Inuit medical care. Although the committee is always interested in being advised of any new developments, a public hearing on the review of the Auditor General's Report on Other Matters was not the appropriate place for such discussions. In future, committee members would request that if new information becomes available about an issue contained in the Auditor's report, it be provided in advance. If it is of sufficient importance, a separate briefing can be scheduled, so that time allocated on the public review can be used to discuss the specifics of the report.

NWT Housing Corporation - Shipment Of Unassembled Housing Units To Alaska

The Auditor General's report raised the issue of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's venture to sell housing units to Alaska. The report made recommendations about the corporation's exposure to loss and unnecessary risk when they shipped nine unassembled housing units to Barrow, Alaska, with only a verbal agreement in place, no signed contract and no insurance. The auditor also questioned the corporation's authority to undertake this venture and the ongoing issue of the interpretation of their mandate.

The committee had an opportunity to question the Housing Corporation about the venture. Members asked if changes to business policies, guidelines and practices had been made subsequently to ensure that the Housing Corporation would not be exposed to such risk and loss again.

On the whole, the committee was not at all satisfied with the ability of the Housing Corporation to adequately respond to the committee's questions and concerns.

Inquiries were frequently met with vague responses or with a commitment to provide details at a later date.

Given that the corporation had been in possession of the auditor's report for over a year, Members consider it an affront to the institution of the Legislative Assembly that the Housing Corporation would appear unprepared to answer questions relating to historic events. The committee was taken aback by the lack of detailed information the Housing Corporation was able, or willing, to provide.

The Housing Corporation was not prepared to answer the following questions and will provide details about:

- the sequence of events and transactions involved in all sales of unassembled housing units to Alaska, including when contracts were signed;
- the value of each of the eight remaining units today;
- the profitability/profit margin for all sales of unassembled housing units in Alaska, including:
 - the exact values for all shipping, including the shipment of the units from Tuktoyaktuk to their final destination;
 - all legal fees involved;
 - ministerial travel to Alaska; and
 - administrative overhead, including staff time.

Ultimately, committee members do not feel confident that any specific actions were taken in response to the failed venture to ensure something similar will not happen again. More importantly, they are not convinced that policies and procedures intended to guard against exposure to risk will be consistently implemented with rigorous due diligence. Committee members are concerned with the Housing Corporation's past performance in the efficient and effective management of public funds.

Finally, some Members feel that in light of mismanagement in the Housing Corporation's venture in Alaska, the GNWT should examine the means by which employees are held accountable in such instances.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends the Office of the Auditor General of Canada undertake a performance audit on the Housing Corporation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will turn over the conclusion of the report to deputy Robert Hawkins.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Hawkins.

Diamond Loan Guarantees

MR. HAWKINS: The Auditor General's report addressed the issue of government loan guarantees to companies in the diamond manufacturing industry. Specifically, the report dealt with the default on the loan guarantee for Deton'Cho Diamonds Incorporated.

The GNWT originally provided loan guarantees to three companies in the diamond industry: Deton'Cho Diamonds Incorporated, Sirius Diamonds Ltd. and Arslanian Cutting Works (NWT) Ltd., to allow businesses to obtain private financing that might not otherwise be available at a total of \$24.2 million dollars. The intent of the loan guarantees was to encourage economic development by supporting business ventures that banks would consider too risky without government backing.

At the time the auditor's report was written, only Deton'Cho Diamonds had defaulted on their loan. The report notes that although a deal was ultimately reached to sell Deton'Cho Diamonds to Deton'Cho Corporation, and the \$2.6 million principal will be paid to the government in twenty equal, interest-free, yearly instalments, the foregone interest using a modest discount rate of four percent would amount to \$800,000 over 10 years. The committee notes, however, that it remains to be seen exactly what the total cost to taxpayers will be for the Deton'Cho loan guarantee.

Subsequent to the auditor's report, the remaining two loan guarantees went into receivership. The net loss for Sirius Diamonds Ltd. is estimated at over \$6.5 million.

Members had an opportunity to question the comptroller general about the events leading up to the default on the Deton'Cho Diamonds. The comptroller general's position was unequivocally that the global diamond industry is inherently risky and no amount of due diligence can change that.

The committee understands that loan guarantees are inherently risky. The inherent risk is not what was at issue. Of concern to Members is if the Diamond Review Committee and the Financial Management Board did everything within their power to minimize the loss of public funds. In other words, was due diligence adequate? Ultimately, the committee did not find the witnesses' testimony to be persuasive. Members remain uneasy that the due diligence process and the monitoring was not as rigorous as necessary.

In light of what has been learned from the loan guarantees for the diamond manufacturing industry in the NWT, some Members are hesitant to endorse the use of public funds to back high-risk experimental industries. Some Members feel government investment would be better put towards ventures with demonstrated markets and viability; for example, strategic infrastructure projects. They are of proven benefit to NWT residents, are less vulnerable to volatile global markets and, therefore, risks can be more accurately assessed.

Consolidated Budgets

A consolidated financial statement is one in which all the revenues and spending for a government department or agency is recorded together in the same document. A consolidated financial statement includes all like items of assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses from a government department, including any revolving funds and corporations that fall under its mandate.

The auditor noted a number of reasons consolidated budgets can be helpful to managers and Members of the Assembly. For one, it's easier to compare budgets to year-end financial statements when both are consolidated. It also focuses attention on the broader activities of

government; for example, consolidated accounts would more easily reveal how much is spent on salaries and administration. Consolidated budgets would also provide more detailed information on housing and post-secondary education spending.

The GNWT bases its accounting standards on recommendations of the Public Sector Accounting Board, PSAB. So far, these rules require consolidated financial statements but not consolidated budgets. However, the trend appears to be increasingly towards consolidated financial documents. The committee notes that PSAB has changed their guidelines so that, as of April 1, 2005, a government's 'reporting entity' includes all entities that are controlled by the government. This change means that, for the first time, the 2005-2006 public accounts will be consolidated, including government boards and agencies. The committee is of the opinion that this change makes it all the more pressing for the GNWT to move towards consolidated budgeting.

The standing committee understands that the government is opposed to providing consolidated budgets, including the concern that it could potentially render budgets so complicated they would no longer be of use to anyone outside of the accounting profession, notably decision-makers and the public at large. The committee points out that there are ways of ensuring this concern is addressed. For instance, in addition to consolidated budgets, more detailed information could also be needed, such as a breakdown of component parts, in order to facilitate understanding.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the GNWT prepare consolidated budgets for the 2008-2009 budget cycle.

Conclusion

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight requests the Executive Council table a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days in accordance with Rule 93(5) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly.

Motion To Receive And Move Committee Report 8-15(4) Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Tu Nedhe, that Committee Report 8-15(4) be received by the Legislative Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 8-15(4) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 98-15(4): NWT Health And Social Services System 2004-2005 Annual Report

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled NWT Health and Social Services System 2004-2005 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for 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. By the authority given the Speaker by Motion 9-15(4), the Committee of the Whole may sit beyond the hour of adjournment until it's prepared to report, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order today. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider the new Department of Human Resources.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We will do that right after lunch.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Committee, we are about to start with Human Resources' main estimates. I would like to ask Minister Floyd Roland if he could please provide his department's opening comments.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present the Department of Human Resources' main estimates for the fiscal year 2006-2007. This department will be created effective April 1, 2006.

The department's 2006-2007 main estimates propose O and M expenditures of \$29.237 million which represents a \$120,000, or about .5 percent, increase over the revised 2005-2006 Main Estimates. We are using the revised estimates for comparison purpose as the human resources amalgamation was not reflected in the government's original 2005-2006 budget. The net increase primarily results from Collective Agreement adjustments offset by the sunset of some equal pay activities.

The proposed capital expenditure of \$500,000 will support the first year of a two-year upgrade of the human resources information system. Based on the experiences of the past year, it has become clear that one of the steps required to improve human resource service is to make better, more efficient use of the PeopleSoft system. This upgrade to version 8.9 will involve conversion of

processes and approaches to increase the functionality of the system and reduce duplicate manual processes.

The Department of Human Resources' main estimates includes 188 positions: 54 in regional service centres and 134 in Yellowknife. There is no net increase in positions for fiscal year 2006-2007, although some positions have been deleted and some added as we continue to fine tune our organizational structure through the implementation period.

After nine months of operation, human resources has made significant progress in identifying issues around the people, processes and systems needed to provide a consistent human resource service to assist managers in effective management of the government's human resources. However, it is clear that there is still work to do. To assist in moving forward towards best practices, human resources is currently engaged in a full review, lead by a firm that specializes in supporting business and organization transformation to achieve excellence in service.

This review is very intensive and will be complete by early April. The results of the review will help guide revisions and adjustments to the processes, staff competencies and systems for human resources in the years to come.

In addition to taking action on the results of the current review, there are initiatives the department plans to continue working on in 2006-2007:

1. the action plan to implement the future management and direction of the public service;
2. strategies and policies on a northern public service for consideration by Cabinet and the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight;
3. the GNWT's compensation policy;
4. specific approaches to better support the promotion of northerners and the disabled in all sectors of government;
5. a GNWT statement of ethics for employees; and
6. a GNWT human resource plan.

Fair and consistent GNWT recruitment and retention practices are critical to the success of our programs and services. This needs to be driven by effective human resource planning that looks beyond today. With the amalgamation of human resources, we have made significant strides towards creating the environment for effective management of the public service and will continue this work in 2006-2007.

That concludes my opening comments. I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will now ask if Mr. Menicoche could please bring up committee's comments with respect to the Department of Human Resources. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Members of the Accountability and Oversight committee had an opportunity to meet with the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board on September 28, 2005, to

review the draft business plan for the centralized human resource unit, prior to the creation of the new stand-alone Department of Human Resources.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met with the Finance Minister on January 17th to be briefed on major changes within the new stand-alone department.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$29.237 million in operations expense in fiscal year 2006-2007, and \$500,000 on capital projects in fiscal year 2006-2007.

Members note that consolidation of human resources is finalized with the creation of the stand-alone Department of Human Resources. Important policy issues relating to human resources and the future direction of the public service had previously been put on the backburner while the prerequisite organizational change took place. Now that reorganization is complete, Members look forward to turning their attention to this matter. Some of the priorities Members look forward to discussing with the Minister responsible for the Human Resource department include: employment equity and the importance of attaining a public service that is representative of the population it serves; the changing demographic of the public service and the need for secession planning; and attaining increased efficiency and effectiveness in government administration. That concludes my comments, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I would now like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. I will ask Mr. Edjericon if he would please escort the witnesses to the table.

Mr. Roland, for the record, could you please introduce your witnesses?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. With me, I have Carl Bird, from the Department of Executive; as well, I will have the soon-to-be deputy minister for Human Resources, Ms. Lynn Elkin.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will now turn to the committee members and ask if you have any general comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to say to the Minister and his officials that this is a new department. It's going through its growing pains, formalizing this new department. Certainly, I would like to see some improvements in terms of the measurements in terms of our regional office being supported much more than they have received in the past.

This human resources direction that was taken, I understand and I will give some of the issues being brought forward some time. It has to go through this

process here in terms of making an effective department for the people in the North here. I am not too sure what type of measurements will have in terms of putting it in place. This should be in place by this certain date. Our staff is being relied upon to make this happen for the government and also for the Minister and department so that he can come back with some good news in terms of how well this Human Resources department is moving along.

Madam Chair, the other part I want to see, and I am not too sure, again, in terms of the measurements or the end results in terms of what type of provisions are in place, what type of goals are in place to improve the senior management for people who are qualified to move forward in different career paths in their life and the affirmative action policy is adhered to and followed. Is there some type of benchmark or percentage that senior management in Human Resources within this whole territorial government is being supported and approved? I am not seeing too much of senior management under the affirmative action or haven't had aboriginal people fill those types of positions. I am a little bit concerned in that area. Basically, we'll see what type of avenues that we can play a part in developing this new Human Resources department, looking at the type of support that it is giving to the regional bodies that are having these service centres in our communities and also at the headquarters here. I guess I will be looking for that in terms of what type of avenue that we have, as MLAs, to make suggestions to the Minister on certain parts of this overall role of the Human Resources department.

Madam Chair, the direction that I hope this department is taking in terms of supporting our communities, workers, and the employees of the GNWT, we talk about the proposed Mackenzie gas project. Is there any type of action plan to keep our good employees? We have some high paying companies come up here to swipe some of our good employees that are in government because we put the pressure on the oil companies to start paying our people good wages to get them on board on their ship. I am not too sure how much ship jumping there will be in this department. I guess I am looking somewhere to that. I know it is going to be a challenge for our government because sometimes these oil companies have some pretty fantastic benefits, such as Imperial Oil. They have some pretty good benefits. That is our competition with our government. We are also putting pressure on the Minister and his department to hire people and retain them. Our population in the North is well over half aboriginal people. We are also putting pressure on them to start seeing some senior management who fall under the affirmative action policy. We certainly want to see our own people in the small communities for role modeling for whatever purpose. I am a little biased in that sense, Madam Chair, in terms of ensuring that we have a good percentage of senior management that have aboriginal ancestry, but also that can do the job and are qualified to do the job. How do we support them in the system that we don't continue hiring from outside the North here in terms of consulting work that has been done in the Northwest Territories? I hear a lot that it is done outside the North by firms in Alberta or somewhere else. We have good people, so I think I want to leave it at that, Madam Chair.

I know it is going to be a difficult choice on some of the Minister's part because of limited funding and the

pressure that we have on him to measure up to good results. I am going to give some support to the Minister and some grace time for the Minister to take over this new department and really work with it. I want to give him as much support as possible to make sure that we have a really good direction and strong support for him to improve the human resources. It is a brand-new department that is being looked at. I know there are a lot of people out there that would give us their opinion on how it should be done. I don't really know everything, so I am speaking without very much evidence or knowledge on this whole human resource.

I know, if we treat people well, we treat them good with decency and respect, they are going to work good for you. That is the basic law of working with people and gives them the leverage. There are some people that you really need to encourage in terms of doing good work. These are basic working principles of having good people work for you, and support them. I am going to leave it at that, my opening comments, Madam Chair, that the Minister certainly has my support in working on this issue here in hoping that he comes back with some good results that would be beneficial to not only our department, but also for the people of the Northwest Territories to say, yes, the Northwest Territories government is a good place to work with. They treat us well, and they do have a great attitude towards their people they are employing. So there is no ship jumping when they have the Mackenzie gas project or any other type of exploration activities coming to the North that they may be in competition with. I am going to leave it at that, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I have on the list Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Lee. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister and his staff for being with us here this afternoon to go over the new Department of Human Resources. April 1st is a big day. I just wanted to state again, for the record, I do remain a big supporter of this initiative to get human resources all under one roof and try to get to work on, for me, what is very important. That is a comprehensive human resource plan for the workforce that we have here in the Northwest Territories with our government. I think the sooner we can get to work on that, the better off we will be. I have mentioned that a number of times.

I wanted to ask a number of questions as we go through the detail, but I will just give the Minister a bit of a heads up on what I would like to get into. In the Minister's opening comments, he mentioned the fact that there is still a lot of work to do. April 1st is coming fairly quickly. By the time April 1st rolls around, it will be over a year that we have amalgamated human resources. He also talks about a review that is underway. Of course, I am in full support of a review being done, given the issues that have been raised to me from constituents, and other Members of this House have raised issues with the public service here in the NWT and how it is hard to get in and it is even harder to get out.

Just as an example, a constituent of mine, after seven months, can finally rest easy and is retired from the public service. For that, I am very grateful, but it took her seven months after she left work to get some finality to the experience. Those seven months were very stressful for this individual and others that have had similar stories

trying to retire from the government. It shouldn't be the case. People should walk out with their head held high, be stress-free and not have to worry about when their severance is going to be paid, or when they are going to get a meeting with human resources to actually even go over the paperwork that is required for them to retire. I think we still have some work to do there. There are a number of employees that will be retiring in the next little while. It is important that we do that for them.

I also wanted to talk about following our own policies. Another issue that was brought to my attention by some constituents of mine was the fact that corporate human resources wasn't following their own policies in creating positions, hiring people, and there was no competition for newly created positions. I find that really hard to imagine how Human Resources could actually do something like that when they are supposed to be there to try to make sure that all the other departments and the hiring for the government is conducted in a fair, open and transparent manner. When I have constituents phoning me up and telling me what is happening, I take some very serious issue with that and how things happen there. Specific to that, when I do get a chance to ask some questions, I will ask some questions about that.

Of course, I understand that there are growing pains and we have to move forward. I have a number of questions in regard to the review that is being done. Like I said, I am supportive of that review taking place, but I would like to know exactly maybe the terms of reference for it, what specifically this review is going to accomplish and how it is going to set out to accomplish these things. I think it is important that we know that. I have a number of questions on who is doing the work, where the money is coming from to do that work and things like that. I will certainly ask those questions, but, for general comments, I think I will leave it at that, Madam Chair, and look forward to the detail. Again, I just want to say, for the record, I know we are moving down the right road. I want to try to help as much as I can get toward where we need to go to. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next I have Mr. Menicoche. General comments.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just with respect to the Human Resources new department, it is something that I supported at its inception upon becoming an MLA. However, it did raise a lot of concerns in the regions about people losing positions and jobs because it was centralizing. It created lots to do. In fact, a couple of new residents that were working with HR at that time kind of let the community know, because we are reading the old Deloitte and Touche reports which kind of initially recommended it, they are saying they are already implementing it, we are moving out of here, we like Simpson, we are not going to get transferred to Yellowknife. So they actually left the North. Since then, it hasn't been a great big centralization beast that people were expecting. However, we still have our trying times. I am not too sure how many people we actually did lose because I know it happened in other regions and not just the one I am representative of.

With that, I can imagine some of the trying times because of the lack of experience and expertise. When people move on from an organization, they take corporate knowledge with them, the corporate history. It is huge.

Any length of time is huge for any organization, so that means other people have to try to keep up, or take two people to do that same job, or it took one guy effortlessly. You have to correct that one person effortlessly. For the most part, I would like to maintain that, yes, centralize it, but that doesn't mean that all the positions have to be central. I kind of like the effort that the department is putting into maintaining a regional presence as much as they can.

Some of that confusion is because it is new and it is working itself out. For instance, during question period, I was talking with the Minister about some of the difficulties in responding to job applications in the health sector. They were telling me that in the health sector previously, that department had the responsibility of doing the interviews and they had a little bit of a method in which to handle their professions. They have their particular way of doing things and their own little protocols, but once you move into a central agency, somehow that gets lost in the mix and you lose some of your protocol and the flow. You are usually used to dealing with the health sector. You are applying for a health job, but now it is a centralized GNWT. It loses something there. I don't know what the department is looking at, or maybe it is just going to take people to get used to that as well, Madam Chair. That is one of the indicators. It is kind of like a surprise to hear that the Minister wasn't aware that there was a bit of a gap, as it were, in terms of following up with people's applications. Just a simple acknowledgement letter, yes, I got your application. Following up on post-interview, as well, is another little gap there.

I think, getting specific, some of barriers after interview was if the candidate said, hey, that seems like a good candidate for us, I think another thing that moved at a crawling pace was indicated to me was doing the record checks, doing reference checks, as well. That was taking longer than usual. It creates a barrier because someone who is interested with us to provide health care services for our health departments, it is a window of opportunity. It is a really right market for nurses. If something doesn't happen within a month, chances are they fired off five or six applications and a chance of them getting their skills being taken up by another jurisdiction, field or sector, greatly increases. Probably if we have identified needs sector, we should be more efficient in trying to keep the people that apply more interested, keep them up to date, and keep them informed as to their status. Maybe they do want to work for us, but if it is taking too long, then they will just move on. Quite often it is like that. People look for the opportunity to live and work in smaller communities. They don't mind doing that. If it is going to take too long, they are like everybody else. They probably have families, mortgages and children to take care of and they need that income coming in. They have bills; so the longer they wait, then the less chance we have. Just within the health sector alone, I would kind of urge the ministry to keep better tabs on it, be more responsive, just the simple little things of keeping the clients informed and let them know that, yes, we are interested.

Even when I do my work, if I don't respond to somebody, it is like I am not interested in them or their concerns. They reflect that to other people that they deal with. It is the same probably in the health sector, even the smaller circle of friends say how did your application go with the GNWT? The word of mouth goes a lot quicker in that sector.

As for tracking changes and that, I think that is one of the things to look at. I am not too sure how many jobs remain unfilled too in our new HR. I know changes are on a continuing basis, so I don't know what is acceptable or if they're out of balance in terms of active positions held, if there is a gap and how they are intending on fixing it, because even skills in this sector are kind of hard to get, as well, because everybody is screaming for human resource professionals.

With that, just summing up, Madam Chair, I urge the ministry to continue keeping as many people in the communities as they can. I urge the ministry to be more responsive and interested in people that are applying to be GNWT employees or Health and Social Services employees. Let them know that we are interested and even the simple fact of letting them know that we are going through changes and we are trying to be as expeditious as possible. We value their interest and we will do everything to recruit and retain you. If they don't even hear that, then I don't know. We kind of stay the status quo where we are always clamouring and looking for people using the nursing agency. I don't know the term of that organization to fly in nurses and that. I am kind of glad they are there, but it is expensive. There is another way of doing it. It is just being friendly and informative and stay in touch with that. With that, Madam Chair, I conclude my opening remarks,

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I shouldn't be very long. I will stay clearly out front. I am still extremely supportive of this process, how we have come about where we are today. When I came to this Assembly about two-and-a-half years ago, I saw the creation of the Human Resources department priority. I am glad to see that we are going there. It wasn't initially on the radar but, through our Assembly process, we were able to bring it to fruition. I am extremely pleased that we are still going in a very strong direction.

I know, like anything, whenever there is change, of course there are highs and lows. Change certainly isn't easy. It is a challenge I can only imagine. I certainly see that the highs and lows, the peaks and the bottoms, are probably levelling off. I often tease my fellow colleagues here about how they are afraid of change. I tease them by calling them dinosaurs and how changes are difficult to handle, but, all joking aside, it truly is when it comes to people's jobs, their lives and the realities they have to live in. We always have to be very sensitive. I am glad that we are focussing in a direction that I think can truly be sensitive to people's needs.

I have always believed that a Human Resources department would be better suited to adjusting to the policies that this government sets out. I have often heard in the past, and I don't want to make it sound like the recent past but more so the distant past, in a sense of where our government doesn't practise its policies. The effectiveness of this is often described as we had much autonomy everywhere sort of acting and doing what they wanted to. The interpretation of our policies that are set out in this Assembly, lead by this Assembly, and should be followed on the directives, weren't being understood properly. I don't necessarily blame the autonomy function. I think it is just individual areas sort of grow and aspire on their own. Like I say, interpretation can happen being

separated. I think corralling the organization together makes us a stronger government as a whole. I see it in time, and I would like to see it in a short time when I say in time, that we start working towards a comprehensive review of all of our policies. I don't suspect that would be easy, but I think, in time, we can truly work to become very progressive in many ways. I say that because I would like the GNWT, to some extent, work very hard towards becoming yet again the employer of choice that it used to be known for many years. That does mean money, but that road doesn't need to be crossed today, but it needs to be thought of.

I really see the human resource section as almost the nucleus of government. It is where you get hired. Unfortunately, sometimes, that is where you also get fired, too. Through the process, it even had growth, development and learning. It is a resource for getting help if you need it. If you want to go learn, you can contact your Human Resources department. I really see it is as a critical element to our government to be able to have a strong nucleus in order to go forward.

Through this coordination process, we have established a new human resource section. I know that the frustration of applications in the past I think may continue in the future. But I think it is certainly being minimized by being able to focus proper attention that it deserves, and the creation of this department is where I think we are solving some of the problems. I have often heard the challenges of interpretation of policy, but I think these are the types of steps that will help minimize this for the future.

Madam Chair, I only have a little more to say which is, I really think that the growing pains will continue but I see them as short. I am pleased with the direction they are heading in. I am very supportive of the fact that it needs a bit of time to continue to sort of solidify that foundation that they have already established. We have to keep in mind if we don't allow them to create that solid foundation, I guess it causes me to think why even bother. We have to give them the chance to sort of give them the opportunity to set up, start learning, coordinating in an efficient manner, which I think that they are.

At this point, I think I am just going to close by saying that I am happy that this government is meeting that challenge by creation of this department. I think, at the end of the day, we will be able to suit the specific needs of our people through our hiring practice and growth more efficiently. Thank you, Madam Chair. That is all at this time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to also make a few statements on the general comments. I would like to, first of all, begin by congratulating the deputy minister-designate. I guess she is not official until April 1st. I know she brings to this job a lot of skills and experience. I would like to congratulate the Minister for appointing a good candidate who happens to be a woman. I would like to see more women deputy ministers in months to come.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: Madam Chair, I would like to say that, I guess with this budget, we are getting much closer to seeing this

department be completely independent and a full functioning section of the department. I believe that this is a very important thing. I like seeing this happening at the rate that it is. I have been here long enough to remember when there used to be a Department of Personnel on the fifth floor of the Courthouse where everybody went to get jobs. I guess they were much simpler days then. I don't know what the rationale was for splitting them up, but I think that having gone through separated personnel and human resource functions, we were able to see the downside of all these things being split up. I am hoping that, with this amalgamation and more focussed work on the part of the management of this new department, we will be able to make some inroads into addressing some of those shortfalls. Some of the areas that we are aware of are the areas of benefits and pension specialists. Those are very complex fields. I think that those are areas probably there are very few people in the country who could be really centralizing that. We need to make sure that we start having our own workforce who can be very well trained. I am sure there are people out there. It is just that there are so many spread around and there have been lots of grievance from employees who've had the documents being delayed. In some cases, something as simple as a record of employment wasn't being handed out. We cannot just make too many mistakes on people's benefits and pensions. These are just too important.

I think that the new department would go a long way in working on the morale of public service. I mean, I think the public service has always been an important and major employer in the North, but it's no longer the number one choice to everybody and it has to become competitive. Human resources are a scarce resource in Canada and in the North. I think we live in a very good time to have such a demand for human resources. That's more important resources than others; you know, diamonds, oil and gas, none of that. It's the skilled people, no matter what skill it is, is the most important thing and we need to make sure...I think with this new department I would like to, would look forward to seeing what we can do and what this department can do to really focus on how do we develop the human resources, how do we recruit human resources from the South, how do we keep them here, how do we maximize the human resources we have right in our backyard. So I look forward to seeing that.

I look forward to seeing this as a one-stop centre for most needs where people can come to look for jobs, look for training opportunities. It will be very helpful for student employment. It will be very helpful for specialized employment, health care professionals, or any other human resource needs that we're not even aware of right now that would need to be addressed depending on what's happening in our economy. So I expect to see this department being an expert in that field.

One special area that I have much interest in is the area of providing and setting up a program for people with disabilities. I'm pleased to see that it's been mentioned in the opening statement, but I think this is something that we haven't done enough of and we really need to focus on. We are just not doing enough to incorporate and make places and find places and maximize the skills that people with disabilities have, and to address the employer's duty to accommodate. In many cases, they can be accommodated; it's just a matter of priority. So I look forward to seeing what this department will do in that regard.

I think affirmative action, for me, I was quite amused to hear during the last federal campaign from some talks and that really showed me misunderstandings about affirmative action. The fact is, affirmative action is entrenched in our Constitution and Charter. Affirmative action is not a special treatment for any group. It means it's accepting that there are some sections in our society who are not being given a fair chance. When you have a hundred people that are made up of all colours and all backgrounds and all genders, and when you see 90 percent of the people that are getting jobs are of one sector, then, in fact, there is an affirmative action for the dominant class. Affirmative action is not special treatment, but it is about understanding that there are people in society who are not being treated fairly. I think, in this regard, that we need to refine and enhance affirmative action, but also there is a need for communicating what affirmative action is, because I often get calls from people who feel that they didn't get a job because of affirmative action or because they should get a job because of affirmative action. I don't think either is reflective of what it was meant to be. I look forward to seeing this department looking after that complicated area.

I know there are issues with appeals and grievances that need to be also split up and I think all those things, I think having everything pooled where the resources even within Human Resources department can be managed better will go a long way in standardizing and enhancing the training level and performance of everybody that's working in the department. Because I'm sure, I know for a fact that the employees of this department have been really working, you know, flat out to make this happen. I think, in fact they probably are overworked and they need some help, too. But they're working to help the whole government. So I'm looking forward to seeing that area being improved.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the succession planning of this government is. It's funny, because I used to think the deputy ministers were so much older and grey-haired men, but I'm seeing the deputy ministers are getting younger and younger and I think that says that all the old-timers are about to retire. There are great opportunities. We're already seeing a lot of vacancies of deputy ministers, and ADMs, and senior management level. If we are going to be able to provide the services that we need to for the people and become, I mean, stay being the priority employer of the Territories, we need to be competitive and we need to do very good succession planning. Of course, I'd like to see that being reflective and showing the gender balance and regional balance and the balances that we have come to accept and understand and expect in our society.

The last thing that I want to say for the remainder of time is, I'd like to see this department doing a cohesive effort on performance measurement and employee satisfaction, employee morale. I have to tell you that I was very impressed with the work that this deputy minister-designate did on the North Slave Correctional Centre employee situation. I like the questionnaires that went out. I think we got the information that we needed to add it there and I think we got a lot of work done on that.

I'd like to see a similar thing done for Stanton hospital because we are hearing a lot of issues coming out of there, as well. There's always morale issues in any organization and I don't want to just, I'm not saying that Stanton is...I don't want to imply any negative aspect to that, I'm just saying that I think it's a cohesive entity where

we hear pension issues and hiring issues and grievances issues, and especially because of the shortage of health care professionals and use of so many locums. That's one area I'd like to see that happening.

But overall, I would really like to encourage the department to engage in ongoing, some kind of a feedback system, whether it be a questionnaire or employee suggestion. Anything that gives an indication as to where our public servants are and our civil service is, because they are the engine of the work we do and we need to make sure that we do well in that regard.

But more specifically, I would like to see an established exit interview for employees that leave the government for any reason. It's not to look for trouble, but it is, I think, very important and I think it could be a very useful tool for the human resource management of the government to see where we are as an employer and what can be done. Maybe there could be really good stuff and then some stuff that needs improvement.

So I think that's my general statement for now and I may have some questions later. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister and his deputy minister-designate, for coming out here and giving us the first presentation of the Department of Human Resources, which is great to see that it's coming to some fruition after a lot of moving about, I guess, in the government and lots of issues being dealt with and with the other hiring practices that each department was going through. Just a lot of the issues that I was going to raise on the opening remarks have already been covered by a lot of the other Members already, so I won't repeat many of them.

Just in the opening statement from the Minister, I wanted to know, you know, the lack of control and inconsistent hiring practices that were severely off track with government policies of the day was one of the main reasons why amalgamation of human resources was being reconsidered again. To put it under one roof and make it more consistent, more fair, and unbiased, and to have a greater degree of control over what the government is doing in the human resources management area.

I just wanted to touch base on some of the things that weren't mentioned in the opening remarks with regards to the affirmative action policy that my friend Ms. Lee was just talking about, and the employment equity policy that the government was talking about as a replacement to the affirmative action policy. This is another one of the main reasons why they amalgamated human resources again, was because of the growing number of concerns about some biased hiring practices and unfair treatment of employees and whatnot. I think if the employment equity policy is going to come as a replacement to the affirmative action policy, I would still like to see some kind of internal advisory committee established within the Human Resources department with some objective. Independent people on this committee that can oversee and maybe provide some more control and direction into how the government plans on developing a public service that is actually representative of the population that it serves.

I would like to also see that a lot of the regional positions that are being kind of gravitating into Yellowknife and headquarters positions because of the lack of resources, I guess is what the main reason is being, but I would like to see more people that can, that actually work for the government in the regions have better access to a human resource representative in their region or community than speaking to someone over the phone about a human resource issue in the community which that person might not be aware of or not too familiar with the dynamics of the whole community and social system that it runs by. I think that people out in the regions will have a better, more of a personal contact with those issues because every community, like I say, you know, I'm sure that the Minister is aware that the differences and diversifications of the communities in the NWT is quite diverse and the gaps are pretty wide in some instances. Human Resources has to really fine tune to address a lot of those concerns that are coming out at all, in all areas of the human resource spectrum, I guess.

Again, just to get back to some of the things that the Minister pointed out in here. It's good to see that a lot of approaches and support mechanisms are going to be in place, especially for the disabled and the compensation and benefits issues and appeals and grievances that are going to be brought forward to the Human Resources. But I'm really looking forward to seeing this department really making some concrete, tangible differences in the public service itself. I really look forward to providing my support to the whole department and making sure that, you know, everybody is treated fairly and consistently and that people who have the formal education and the cultural education and the background to be treated in the same fair and consistent manner as anybody else in the NWT. I think that in itself will go a long way to establishing the public's trust in how the public service hires and fires employees.

Just getting back to the firing, I know there's no real people in the government that I know of who have been fired in the last number of years, but I think that's another area where the Human Resources really has to come into play and really, if the government really blunders on something or as an employer really makes a blunder and spends a lot of government money for no good reason, then instead of getting a letter of reprimand, I think the Human Resources has to go a little bit further and get some heads rolling. With a lot of departments sort of going awry on their budgets and spending money without proper authorization, then the practice of the day is to make them do a lateral movement and get them out of the department and get them in somewhere else and maybe even promote them. I think stuff like that we really have to have a better grip on how we handle those situations. The government is always looking at the liability issue, but I think we really have to visit the principles of the matter and put liabilities aside for awhile, or in some cases where it is not an issue of liability but accountability, more or less. I think the Human Resources has to be a spearhead for the government, for the whole government wide, to spearhead issues of accountability and transparency and consistency. With that, if that happens, I'm behind it 100 percent and I hope it transpires that way. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My colleagues have mentioned many areas that deserve highlight. I will mention a couple of them just to underscore their significance with me and my constituents. I have quite a number of GNWT employees in my riding and the management of the civil service has been a fairly common topic when I go door to door, when I meet them for luncheon meetings here, telephone calls. There's a couple areas of expectation in this newly restructured HR shop. As a couple of people have already mentioned, affirmative action. This has been fairly high on my agenda, my constituency agenda, and it's knowing that there are a number of major things that needed to happen first as there's an expectation that this one will stay on the order page and will receive due attention in the course of time.

The transition, I think every one of us has received information of some kind or another about some of the difficulties we have been having and it has not been unexpected. There is obviously room for improvement and I know the folks are on the game and doing their best to bring it in line. We are, as recently as just a couple of weeks ago, though, still missing some significant deadlines in terms of issuing final pay and records of employment; very basic things that an employee should be able to expect of any employer and we have, at least in a couple of instances that I've heard of, fallen down. Please, let's pick up our boots on that area.

Mr. Chairman, there is, I guess, one overriding concern and it's probably a more proper discussion around business planning or some blue sky stuff with the Minister, with other Ministers. That is the very dynamic, very rapid pace in which our whole workforce, work environment, is changing. It's a burning hot economy up here. The competition for skills is enormous. There are demographic shifts happening with aging workforce, with levels of education, with immigration. Many, many things to keep on top of and for the Government of the Northwest Territories to continue delivering the services that we already have a mandate to do, and then factor in the kind of things that we want to do in the future specific to resource development and allocation, a whole other set of skills that need to be developed, grown, nurtured, educated as much as possible, of course, here in the North, but also to know that a turnover and bringing in new ideas and new perspectives and new blood is also healthy for an organization. How are we going to make ourselves a good employer as well as try and fit in some of these very daunting problems that employers have with cost-of-living housing? Especially those areas; and we're going to need to be innovative. I'm ready to be a part of that process, but that, I say, is one that's probably out there for another day to get into more detail, but it is very much a factor in our operating environment and I wanted to put that on the record. That's all, Mr. Chairman. Let's do some detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. General comments. There's no further general comments. Does the committee want to go into detail? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Can we turn to page 2-89? Activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$1.374 million. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess this is where I would like to first of all find out a little bit more about the review that's being conducted right now. The Minister stated that the HR department is currently engaged in a full review lead by a firm that specializes in supporting business and organizational transformation. I'd like the Minister to elaborate a little bit further on what that review is, who's conducting it, and how much it's costing. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the review that we're undergoing is with a firm called the Hackett Group and it will cost us approximately \$150,000.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, \$450,000.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It will just take me a second here to gather myself after hearing a number like \$450,000. That's half a million dollars almost for HR having been amalgamated now for close to a year to have to go and spend that kind of money to find out what's going on. I don't know. I'd have to guess that there are some pretty substantial problems, shall I say, in there and the delivery of services to employees and potential employees and those that are retiring. I'd like the Minister to maybe tell me a little bit about the Hackett Group, if you could, please. I'd like to know if this program was sole-sourced, as well. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member has stated, on a number of occasions, concerns around the human resources and our dealing with employees and a lot of those reasons are shared by the government overall in a sense. That's why we've gone through this process of amalgamation. It's just been approximately eight months. The decision was made to proceed in May. In June we started the process in earnest. Doing this work and finding out what was involved and working with departments. You look at us and there are 13 departments, but in actuality we dealt with 11 of the departments that had their own HR systems established, as well as boards and agencies. We worked with them to identify staff within their organizations and then worked on a process of bringing them into the system.

Once we had that happening, what we also found was there was a huge backlog of files that needed attention. Some weeks old, some months old, and, yes, even some years old. That caused a lot of concern. In pulling the organization together and trying to re-establish a common understanding of the policies that we have in place and bring everybody under the same interpretation of those policies. It was realized that there were more things that needed to be done.

The Hackett Group is an organization that deals with a number of large companies, as well as governments, that deal with a lot of the human resource issues that we deal with and systems. We're undergoing a fairly intensive review about the systems we use, how we do things, why we touch this piece of paper, why is it not done with the existing system; for example, our PeopleSoft system. It's going to be through that that we hope to identify further areas that we need to improve on. It's one thing of pulling your people together and come up with a common understanding, in an environment where departments and boards have gotten used to having independence, as I guess we can say, where they got used to doing things on their own now being told, no, these are the processes that need to be followed. So the environment we work in, too, can affect the timing of how we get things done.

For some of the actual work that's being done, the Hackett Group itself, I did meet with one of the representatives a few days ago on the work that's being undertaken, but I'll have Ms. Elkin provide some detail of some of the work that's going on within the organization and some of the things we're starting to find. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Elkin.

MS. ELKIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hackett Group focuses on it's a best practice world, best practice organization, and we felt we needed to bring them in to get us that extra step and to make sure that our processes, people and systems are the best that they can be, and that we are providing the same kind of top quality service that you should be able to expect from a human resource organization.

The process is incredibly intensive. We spent the first two weeks completing questionnaires in 12 different areas of human resources. Just to give you an example, one of the questionnaires was 80 pages long and one answer to one question on the 80 pages required a 12-page table to respond. So they have a huge team in different locations all across Canada and the U.S. who are now analyzing that data.

Then they sent people on site. We have four gentlemen here. They've been in Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, Simpson and Fort Smith, and they're doing half-day workshops on all of the different areas of human resource practice with our staff. They start with current state. So they examine right down to how every piece of paper moves and how every transaction happens and how we're doing it now. That took two weeks.

Then they move into a best practices comparison to your current practice. Then we go into a final stage, which they call future state, which is where can we go, what do we need to do to get with our people, our processes and our systems to the kind of work that we need.

We were dealing with a tremendous backlog. We were dealing with systems that we knew didn't work and we had ideas about what we thought needed to be done, but we thought it was appropriate to bring in people who this is what they do. They are experts in the field. They are experts in payroll, in all areas of benefits administration, and they can bring that resource to support us, to help us make sure that the moves and the changes we make are the right ones to serve our clients. So that's all the work that they're doing. We will have the report in early April.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Elkin. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. That sounds like it's really good and that's something that I think a number of us had asked for earlier on. I'm glad to see it happening, I mean, don't get me wrong. I think it is a good exercise and I would have perhaps preferred to see it happen more at the onset of the amalgamation, but better late than never, I suppose. Where in the budget would I find the 450,000 that the Minister referred to that this review is going to cost? Where is that at?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's in the 2005-06 budget. So it's part of the FMBS budget and it's taken from all the little pockets that we could find. So it's not in the 2006-07 budget that you're going to look under for HR. The work is ongoing in 2005-06. So it's money that was identified from different parts of whether we could save some money in the travel area, in some of the training areas, pulling all these things knowing that this was a critical piece. So they pulled money together from the different pockets within FMBS and HR itself and it's been accounted for in the 2005-2006 budget, and the contract was sole sourced.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, and if this is the best, the Hackett Group is the best that we can get and we have to pay top dollar to get the best help we can. I know there's a number of issues there that need to be rectified. I wish you the best of luck in doing that. I'll wait for another couple of pages and ask that question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hackett Group who's doing this review, I think it's an appropriate name you call it the Hackett Group. So I'm not sure if that's a coincidence, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if we want to run too far with that issue. I wanted to ask about this whole review and is the department considering using some of these plans or money that could be used in reviewing the offices in the smaller regions? Are they using it to get feedback from the people on the ground, the ones who are using the system right now, who are implementing the human resource direction and that this process will involve an independent group like I think the Hackett Group to go into the regions and say this is how it's going? It may be different in other regions, but people need to have some assurance that in order to improve the system, they need to be forthright and frank about how it's working. They can't get feedback if it's under the species of the department. So I need to hear from the Minister in terms of how we're going to improve the human resource system. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as Ms. Elkin had stated earlier, the Hackett Group, a representative has gone out to every region

where we have the regional service centres. Unfortunately, they couldn't actually make a trip into the Sahtu, but the Sahtu staff were online with them and on the phone with them about the practices in dealing with the questions, the same as it would be in person if they were into Simpson or other communities. So we are working with all the staff in regions, and the representatives from the Hackett Group are meeting with and calling employees without our senior staff there. So employees can be right open and frank about the processes they work under, the faults they're finding, the concerns that have come up. As with every amalgamation process, even in a good move, we always find there are stresses and strains on the system and individuals that work within the organization. So it's incumbent to get the input from our staff in the field, as well as in management positions. So we have worked with communities, community representatives and right down to the clerk levels. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there can be some opinions as how you get effective quality feedback from people either through the e-mail system, or through the telephone, or face to face, and there's different opinions as to what works the best. Unfortunately, the Hackett Group couldn't get into the Sahtu to really talk to the people and they had to go through the e-mail and the telephone. I don't think that's very meaningful or effective. However, the Minister may disagree with me on the type of feedback he's getting from our region. So I wanted to just remind him I guess in terms of I'm not satisfied with the way that feedback is getting from our region in terms of being part of this overall review and lump it together and say, well, the regions feel this way. So it's people, really.

You've got to get the people, you're dealing with the human resource issues and that's how we're dealing with the human resource of our employees in this whole system here. It's people first. Again, I want to stress that this whole human resource concept is about working relationship with people. Sometimes I think that sometimes we tend to look at our employees as machines. So that's getting scary. So that's something that is just my own opinion, Mr. Chairman. It has no reflection as to how I'm communicating this to the Minister, but that's how sometimes I see it.

So is the review, the Hackett Group, is it doing an entire review of the whole human resource right from top to bottom and bottom to top? Is the Hackett Group looking at the whole structure and that we're going to use this once it's finished that this will come to the Assembly or the community and we would look at it in terms of improving the human resource? I think we really need to take this issue very seriously because there have been some complaints from my region in terms of the human resource area. So I'm very concerned that these calls are coming into my office and people are voicing them. So this is a human resource department. I think the Minister is quite aware of my feelings for this. Again, I will support the Minister in terms of how best to work with this department and see where we could improve issues and improve the Human Resources department. I just want to leave it at that. Again, I want to say that to the Minister. He's got a tough job ahead of him. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the tough job is in responding to the Members and concerns, questions that are raised to them. The tougher job is at our staff level of trying to get the job done and try to fulfill what we expect of them in the field. I agree, I mean when we talk about getting information and having discussions, I've been on many conference calls and so on where you would want to be in the room because that's where you get the full amount of feedback as to how people are saying yes to you or dealing with the questions that are being asked. Unfortunately, as a government, we're unable to get into every place that we would like to. Financial constraints do come into the equation.

Within the Sahtu, again, this is dealing with our HR staff in each of the regional centres and headquarters and, at this time, the Sahtu has five employees that are with HR. Two of them are off right now and there are three in the office. So those individuals have been contacted by the Hackett Group and have dealt with the interview process, is my understanding. But preference would be yes, if we had the opportunity to be into every region, that would be our preferable method. Unfortunately, we weren't able to do it in this case. I still do believe, though, with the input from the employees in the field, that will help us overall in coming up with the right actions that are needed to ensure we're delivering human resources in, I guess, the most efficient and effective way, as well as one that can be considered as being in touch with its employees. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Page 2-89, activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$1.374 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-90, 2-91, information item, directorate, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-92, 2-93, skip, skip, skip. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to know what those three extra positions in Yellowknife headquarters are in the directorate. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I guess I'll get Ms. Elkin to respond to that detail. When we were preparing these documents in time for the budget process in setting this up, there are some things that came into play there. But for the detail, I'll have Ms. Elkin provide that information.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Elkin.

MS. ELKIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately, the 2005-2006 numbers that you see for all of the divisions were prior to amalgamation. So that's prior to any of the positions coming into human resources. So those were just the positions that happened to be in FMBS before the amalgamation. So you'll see a jump in

positions in every single division. You're not comparing one year to the next, apples to apples; it's completely different.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Elkin. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that they were going to have whole whack of positions that are going to be added to this department. I'm just wondering, what are these positions? Are they managers, or analysts, or what? Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The overall numbers that we look at, as I stated in my opening comments, the total complement within HR and the whole territory are 188. Fifty-four of those are in the regions and the remaining within headquarters. Again, the majority of those positions are ones that were pulled in from the other departments along with the ones from FMBS prior. So that's why it's going to be very difficult, especially for this first time, we're going back to revise and then to update it. In the directorate portion itself there are five positions and starting with the deputy minister, the secretary, communications, records, and finance planner. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-90 and 2-91, information item, directorate, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-97, activity summary, corporate human resources, there was no money allowed, identified. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Are we on 2-93?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Yes, sorry about that. Can we go back to 2-93?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know there's no allocation in this department yet. Are they planning on making an allocation to this department in the supp, or just give me a little bit of background, I guess, as to why there's no allocation for this year. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What you're going to see here on a couple of the pages is because within the old section of FMBS and human resources, there was an allocation in the past. For example, this one, labour relations and compensation services is going to be highlighted later on in the document under employee relations. So it's transferred over. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: That's fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-94, 2-95. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had a question in 2-92, I had my hand up I believe, but maybe nobody saw me.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Was that 2-93, Ms. Lee?

MS. LEE: Page 2-92, please, 2-92.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Does committee agree to go back to 2-92?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you very much. I just wanted to ask questions about, could I just get a brief analysis about what has been the major problems that have caused so much difficulties in certain files? I mean, is it lack of training on the part of the employees, or there was just too much work? I just want to get a little bit of sense because I'm assuming that with the amalgamation of the new department, you have a handle on what the problem areas are and how you're about to fix them, and also I'd like to ask if, from reading this, if the human resource department is going to take over the pay and benefits area or it will stay within the realm of providing expert advice in a sort of hands-off kind of approach? It's not clear to me from reading this. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as I stated earlier, the labour relations and compensations services portion are now going to be covered under the employee relations section of the budget, but since we're on the subject, it's the same matter. The issues that we've had to deal with from within the amalgamation process, number one, was to work with departments to identify...One of the first stages was to identify all of those that were within the departments and boards that did work in the HR section right down to the quarter position, and that would identify what revenue would have to come and if a person stayed back in a department if the majority of their activities were involved in some other portion of work. But there was a lot of back and forth on that, identifying who actually was involved in HR, what time commitment of a position or a portion of a position, and then setting up the new organization as to where these individuals would now fit within a new organization.

So what we found a lot places was it wasn't a straight slide from where they were doing their work in a department or board. There was, in some cases, a step up that required some work and some further training. So there was a lot of working with individuals, assessing their potential, the level of work they were doing and how they would fit into the new organization and trying to find the best fit. In a lot of cases, we were able to slide people over almost to the same position equivalent in a new organization, or worked with them and came up with a training portion to allow them to move up to a slightly different level within a new organization, and some

individuals would not go up to the step they were, but would take some training and then go up to the step they found themselves in the old departments they found themselves in. To get that underway was one.

The other issue was when these employees were then transferred over to new offices and began the amalgamation process in earnest once we knew who was going to fit into what part of the organization, came along old files, old boxes. As I stated earlier, when this organization came together, approximately 1,000 files in backlog were identified and when we add that to the fact that when we did the amalgamation process there was some slowing down of how we could get back to individuals, the hiring processes, deal with employees and the matters they were dealing with day to day. So there was an additional slowdown in the initial phases.

Once we got people up and running and fitting into the new organization with some tuning, I guess one would say, because not everybody did fit into the place they were put into, there was further changes. Then when we identified the workload that was really required of us, we had to do a further fairly significant shift because initially it was going to be laid out almost equivalent in client services, as well as compensation benefits side of things, and we ran into, because of the backlog and dealing with pay and benefits side of the equation, we had to do some more shifting to re-evaluate where we were going to put people to deal with those backlogs, and put the appropriate people in the right places to try to do some catch-up in this area. So those were big areas that we had to deal with and come up with the right training component of that.

As well, when we started to get people in place to find our systems that were in place and how people used those systems differed quite significantly from if it was one that came from one department into this organization.

As well, our PeopleSoft system itself had been in the past customized to fit the government in how it did its business in the day, back in the day I guess, but now, as we're seeing, it's not working out that way. What we need to do, as I highlighted going to the new version 8.9, is to adapt how we do business with the system, not adapt the system to how we do business because we're finding out the wisdom of back then of adapting the system to us caused us some grief going forward. So that also causes a lot of people in the field grief trying to deal with the issue of our personnel. Thank you

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. There was a second part to my question, which was whether this employee benefits or the new section will be doing this job for the boards and agencies, or if they will remain sort of consulting, or sort of the arm's length kind of service? Thank you

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for that portion, not responding to that part of the question. We do all of the boards out there except for WCB and the Power Corporation. The rest of the boards do that and that is a significant shift. That alone has

caused some growing pains; let's just put it that way. Thank you

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given the time I think it might be appropriate for me to move to report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is non-debatable. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): The motion is defeated. We will continue. Can we have order. Can I have order, please. We're on page 2-92 and 2-93. Page 2-94, 2-95.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-96, 2-97.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-98. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Are we on page 2-96, please, may I ask questions there? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Does committee agree to go back to 2-96?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my general comments I talked about a number of things that I'm expecting this new department to do, and I spoke on my general comments on many issues and I see that reading the activity description of various sections, especially this one, a lot of what I stated is already covered here, so I think that's a good indication for me, but I'd like to know specifically on exit interviews and some of the things. I'd like to just have a better idea about what the department is proposing to do with regard to that, and also I'd like to give a chance to the Minister to respond to any of the general comments I made. I don't know if there was anything there because Minister's weren't answering to the general comments, or they weren't asked to. Thank you.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, this section, corporate human resource services, is now going to fall under the corporate human resources section later on, but, again, it's the same area. So I guess dealing with it now would save us the time of dealing with it later.

The issue of exit surveys, it is done, it is in place, has been in place for a couple of years. It is an optional process. So we do ask individuals to do this and if they feel they want to, then they can. If they don't feel like they want to, then they don't. I guess that's the simple and short of it.

The area of pension specialists and dealing with some of these backlogs, yes, we've had somebody on from superannuation to work with us in this area to help deal with our backlog and help us set up our systems and correct...The Government of the Northwest Territories is no longer the number one employer. In fact, we're having to compete in an ever-increasing competitive market, as a number of Members have stated, of trying to pull skilled people in and come up with that. The area of how do we bring people in and bring them up the line is something we definitely need to work on. It's an area that we've identified. Affirmative action is another one of those areas that is an area that we know there is a need to focus on. There's been much debate about it in past governments. Since I've been a Member since the 13th Assembly it's been one of those areas, and we're hoping in the next couple of months to be able to bring something forward for discussion with Members about where we would go with this piece, the employment equity, affirmative action piece, and the work as well would deal with individuals within the North that feel they are maybe under serviced and that one being the disabilities group of people in the Northwest Territories. So there's a lot of work that needs to be done. We've identified them. We've set up what is the start of some of these areas that are going to go forward on, but, unfortunately, being caught and trying to catch up with a backlog of files has delayed some of the work and the timing we were hoping to proceed with this. Hopefully with this work that's being done with the Hackett Group, and our systems, and how we deal with these issues, and how many times we handle a piece of paper will help us in streamlining some of these things and get us back on track. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A short follow-up and that is that I do appreciate that there has been lots of movements back and forth and a lot of logistics and lots of difficulties that come with amalgamating a department and having people move from one position to another and such. So I can understand how it might take us still awhile to get everything running smoothly. But having said that, we only have about a year-and-a-half left in this mandate, and I think it's the desire of everybody here to see this move along fairly significantly. I do understand that we're putting a lot of pressure on this department and I am hearing from the ground here that employees here are going through a lot of stress. I mean, when you're doing what they're doing, it's quite understandable and I would like to encourage the management to give as much support as possible to the employees and sort of listen to their needs, as well. So I want to state that. So I don't want to say that I'm not aware that there are issues and problems, but in focusing on the bigger picture, I think this is an important work.

But I do want to talk about the exit interviews. I do understand that we can't make people do things, especially employees that are leaving because we don't really have any incentive, but I would like the Minister to make a commitment to see what's the best practice in the field that's out there about how do bigger employers...I mean, human resource management is not a small field and things change all the time, there are lots of experts in the area, lots of best practices, and I'd like to ask the Minister to see if he could inquire in working out...I know we're working out a new human resource policy, I mean

there's still a lot more work to do, but somewhere in there I'd like incorporated, and the management to address their mind, too, what can we do to do an ongoing review about the morale or where the employees are and what can we do to encourage the exit interviews. Even if they don't do it, you could ask 100 people and if 20 come back, that's how the surveys are. But I think it all depends on how you promote it, how you market it, how you encourage the employees to fill that out.

So this is an area of huge interest to me and I would like to ask the Minister to give some thought to it and have his people look at it and see what other options are available. It doesn't have to be an exit interview or survey. There could be other things out there that I am not aware of. I would be very interested in having more discussions on that. I just want to state that. Thanks.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct in the areas that we need to focus on and try to get some feedback on. One of the pieces with the...(inaudible)...is something we think will help us identify some of these areas. As well, something we joined in other jurisdictions with was the employee satisfaction survey. It was established across a number of jurisdictions and a survey was done. We hope to have the results of that survey in about a month or month-and-a-half. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Page 2-96.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-97, activity summary, corporate human resource services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-98, corporate human resource services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-99.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-100.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-101.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-102.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Ramsay and then Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to ask a few more questions. I have heard the Minister and I have heard the soon-to-be deputy minister of Human Resources talk about some of the issues. I know there are some issues they probably can't even talk about that they

have inherited from various departments. Mr. Chairman, I think what I would like to see is I would like to know where the problems came from. What departments did the problems come from and who can we hold responsible for the new Human Resources having had to inherit problems? Who are they? Where did they come from? What are these problems? Ultimately, we have to go back to the department that sent the problems or didn't do the filing, didn't know what was going on and had no idea when the amalgamation took place that their employees were going over there armed with incomplete files or whatever the case may be. Somebody has to be held accountable. I don't see anybody taking accountability for the problems Human Resources inherited. It's every department. Maybe some are better than others and I think the Minister should let us know where these problems came from and what they are.

Just last year, we went through a one percent reduction exercise across the board and all of a sudden, the Finance Minister opens up a closet and finds \$450,000 to pay for a report. The report is needed, don't get me wrong, but somebody has to be accountable here and nobody is taking accountability for this. We just spent \$450,000 on a report. I agree the report is probably needed; lots of problems there. Where did they come from and what are they? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the area of human resources has been a problem for the government for many years. That is why it was identified in a number of previous works that were done in looking at the government organization and how it did the work of government.

Based on that, we have made a decision to move forward with this human resource amalgamation. So my task was to take the existing organizations that were out there, bring them together and establish this Human Resources department and start to begin work the way it should be done. I would be glad to sit down with AOC at some point, or Members, and get into a little more of the detail, blow-by-blow scenario, I guess is the way to put it, at some point. But my goal here, and the goal that's been given to the staff who have now come online, is to get the job done, get it done right, and be consistent in how we do the job.

So, yes, we've had to deal with a backlog of files and that's causing us stress in the system as we try to establish this new one. We could get into a blow-by-blow scenario, but I don't think this would be the appropriate venue for that. As I stated earlier, I would be happy to sit down with Members and give much more of a critique on that, but my goal now, as we have been mandated, is to proceed with this new amalgamation and deliver human resources in a more consistent manner. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's more of a principle thing here. Like I said, I agree this report has to happen, but just the way that it's been allowed to happen causes me a lot of trouble when I think about it. I know the amalgamation took place and we had a number of departments that contributed employees,

files, whatever, to the amalgamation of HR. Somewhere along the line, some departments allowed inactivity of employees, files to be incomplete and troubles to exist, and they just allowed that to fester inside their departments with no accountability and now you have inherited the problems and these guys are off scot-free, their departments are off scot-free in all of this. What other problems exist in the various departments? Who else isn't doing their job? I think that's the root of the problem and I think we have to try to get to the bottom of it. I would like to know who's responsible for the incomplete files in the various departments. Which departments are they? Somebody should be held accountable. You shouldn't have to go and dig up \$450,000 to find out what the problems are.

Ultimately, I guess that's where we are at today. We have to spend that money, but something just doesn't add up for me, Mr. Chairman. I think each of the departments should own up to the problem files. Maybe you could have gone back and got the various amounts of that \$450,000 from the departments who weren't paying attention to the human resource files inside their department. Maybe that's where the money should have come from, you know? It's a terrible, terrible thing, Mr. Chairman. If this has been allowed to go on inside departments, what else is going on? I really have to ask myself that question. Who is minding the ship? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as I stated earlier, the issue we've had to deal with, yes, we have been saddled with some past problems and past backlog that we have had to wade through and look at how that happened. I would be more than happy to go back and prorate amongst the departments where the biggest backlogs came from and draw that money back. That's always an option at some on it to have that go through. So hopefully the other Ministers are paying attention to that.

But ultimately, as we say now, we've established this new department to focus on how we deliver human resources from this point on, not only looking at the people we have in place and where they were, but where they are now and some of the training that's required and the training that's getting done, but also our processes that were established. Why were systems done the way they were? Why were certain programs or how paper was handled set up? Those things have to be re-evaluated. That's why the Hackett Group has come in, as well as why we have customized our system as many times as we did when probably the best thing might have been done in the past was just to adapt our sources or processes to a new system, not adapt a new system to our processes. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Minister is getting my point. I am trying to make a point here. I have been trying to make a point here for the last two-and-a-half years. It's not always a rosy picture. There are not always employees who do their job. There are not always complete files. I think this just is an example of that being allowed to happen and it's being allowed to happen under the watch of every one of our deputy ministers.

Ultimately, who is going to be responsible for incomplete files and people not doing the work? Somebody has to take responsibility and ownership of that. I am glad to see that the new HR department is being established and we are going to try to get some control on that area of our operation, but this government does a lot of other things, Mr. Chairman. I hate to think that any other files and any other responsibilities that this government has aren't being completed or aren't being done and people are sitting on things for years. You've got backlogs there for years from various departments. It's just not right that that was allowed to happen. I guess what I want to know from the Minister is, what action is he going to take going back? I know we have to go forward and we are going to go forward, but I think there's a big lesson we can learn here on going forward, and that's to find out what happened in the departments to allow this to degenerate to the point where it got to the amalgamation and there are all these problems. Something happened or didn't happen at the various departments and it's up to the Minister to go back to his colleagues in the various departments and try to find out what that was to try to make sure there are no other people out there who aren't doing their job. I think that's the point I am trying to make. Let's clean up everything. Why do we allow things to happen and it takes an amalgamation for us to figure out people aren't doing their job? It's not right. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the fact is, it was recognized by the government, members of this government, Members of past assemblies, that disassembling the Department of Personnel in the 13th Assembly was probably not the best thing, even though departments of the day, boards and agencies of the day wanted that to happen because they felt they could make things happen quicker and better in the way they could do their processes. For a season, that seemed to have worked, but as we went down the path and heard more from our own employees about how they're getting dealt with or not getting dealt with, it became obvious that there were problems and problems were growing. So a decision was made that we could not afford to keep going down that path and we had to change direction and that's where we are now.

Yes, as I stated earlier, I would be more than happy to go back to my Cabinet colleagues and give them a synopsis of some of the things that have happened. On that basis, even go back to them, I can go back to them and say because this workload has come from you, you should have to pay for this portion of it. There may be some rules of our budgeting that we have to go through, but I would be more than happy to go back to my colleagues with that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I do know that the corporate human resources kind of takes over whatever the corporate human resources services was doing in the past. Just one note, I guess, I want to point out and probably bring forward a motion to make a change in the activity description of this. In the corporate human resources services, the unit also develops and monitors the government's recruitment policy, affirmative action policy and other government-wide human resource

policies, and everything else in the corporate human resources services activity description is pretty much summed up in the activity description of the new corporate human resources with the staff retention, employee recognition, the MAP program, the Summer Student Employment Program, everything but no mention of any affirmative action policy or no employment equity policy. I want to know why the department decided to not include that policy or the monitoring and the development of that policy in this new activity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can include it, for example, where we give examples of the policies that we are involved with and procedures we've put in place like staff retention, employment recognition, management program. We can incorporate that into there. One of the things we are going to have to do as well is we bring forward to Members a discussion paper about where we go with this. Is it affirmative action or is it employment equity? That will have to be incorporated as we proceed into the business plan stage. We can incorporate that into there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Minister's quick response on that. I don't know if I still need a formal motion to make sure that happens, but I don't think I do. I trust that the Minister would follow up with that.

I am just wondering, just to take it a little further, if the whole affirmative action policy that the government has drafted up had included an affirmative action advisory committee to be established to oversee that the affirmative action policy was being adhered to consistently and appropriately in all departments. I am just wondering if that is still on the radar screen with the corporate Human Resources department. Is there something in the department structure that is going to allow for an advisory committee to be able to help them develop and work with the GNWT independent advisory committee, I am hoping, to work with the GNWT Human Resources department to develop, monitor and implement employment equity policies and affirmative action policies consistently across the board? Would that be included in this new amendment? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in fact, in the affirmative action policy that is in place today, there is a provision for an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee. That was in place about 14 years ago and it didn't prove to be very successful or helpful in trying to deliver the program. What we've done now is as we develop policies, the deputies are working together. Instead of working in silos, one department taking care of one issue and not dealing with others, it's more across the board now informing other deputies so that there are buy-in to this.

What we have found in governments is if there is no buy-in to a certain program or policy established, the development or the implementation of that can ultimately

fail, I guess, because there is no buy-in. But I would suggest that as we get into this new discussion of where we need to go with our employment equity piece, that we can have this discussion included in there as well of is this the most appropriate means. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand where the Minister is coming from with the policy, that it wasn't as really as effective as it was intended to be. If the advisory committee is still going to be an integral component of overseeing the development and implementation of the employment equity policies and affirmative action policies, how are we going to try to ensure that, yes, the advisory committee is very effective in their development and in the communication that they have with the government to ensure that we could make this affirmative action policy work, and there is work being done on the affirmative action policy, and the employment equity policy that's being developed? If it wasn't working in the past, 14 years ago, when it was established, why wasn't it working in the past? Was there representation on the committee that actually represented affirmative action groups, and interest groups, and other NGOs, along with government personnel, to ensure that, as a watchdog advisory committee, they could be effective and, therefore, we wouldn't have been in the affirmative action situation we are in today if we did have some kind of an action advisory committee that was effective in what they wanted to accomplish and how they were going to develop and refine the whole affirmative action policy and the new equity employment policy that's going to be coming out?

So before an official policy of employment equity actually rolls out that we know that there has been some committee that kind of speaks on behalf of the representative population of the NWT to ensure that the policy could work for all sectors of the economy and population. Could we do that first before rolling out this employment equity policy or the replacement to the affirmative action policy, Mr. Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Before the Minister responds, I would just like to welcome the people in the gallery really quickly. There are quite a few up there, so thank you.

---Applause

Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as I stated earlier, the affirmative action committee as in the policy hasn't been used for 14 years. At this point, we have just bounced and brought issues to the table with the deputy ministers across the board to get buy-in at that point.

I guess the idea of having an outside group then tell a government or department, no, you need to do it this way, would be much like if we, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, tried to step into the band council situation and say, no, you need to do it this way. Buy-in is going to be ultimate in a sense of getting things done. What I would propose to do is, when we sit down to have our discussion about where things should flow or go, I think that would be the time we can have our discussions

on the pros and cons of doing this and how we can best make sure our policies are fully implemented. Ultimately, it comes down to this forum here where we have Members of the House holding government accountable for a lack of implementation or for not following the rules. I think that this is the sounding board we use in what Members say is happening in their communities and constituencies, and if the policy is being fully implemented. There is recognition that we need to do some work in these areas. As we laid out sort of the broad plan of corporate human resources, was the areas of not just corporate human resources but human resources across the board with the Government of the Northwest Territories was areas like our management side, our training programs, how we are or how we are not having employees move up the ladder, so to speak, and have those that started entry level positions end up being managers and directors at some point. We recognize that and we know we need to do work in that area. I think that is where, hopefully, once we get this portion of this first major backlog dealt with, then we can now go back, re-emphasize work in that area and start bringing back the discussion papers to see if we are, in fact, going down the right path with members. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: No, I am satisfied with that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just wondering if the Minister could provide a breakdown of the fees and payments under corporate human resources, the \$4.28 million. Does he have a breakdown of what those numbers are?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the fees and payments under corporate human resources include the Maximizing Northern Employment and interdepartmental training development subsidies to GNWT staff training, staff retention and that supports retaining of individuals, and the Employee and Family Assistance Program. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: That is good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Page 2-101, 2-103, activity summary, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$6,470,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-104.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-105. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a question to the Minister on 2-104, could I ask the committee to go back to that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. The Member is requesting to go back to 2-104. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On this one here, especially for the Employee and Family Assistance Program or staff with less training or interdepartmental training development, especially again going back to some of the benefits for the staff in terms of families who may have gone through a rough time throughout the year that they need extra days to get support or support their families. Is there extra time without them dipping into their days that they earn or things like that? Some families have special leave for grieving that they give them a certain amount of time, like three days. It is really short. Is there any type of flexibility? I might be getting into some other issues that I am not aware of. I guess that is where the compassion comes in and some of the care comes into families who are going through a hard time, especially in the small communities where it is expected of people of members of the family to be there when they are going through a hard time. They have a tough decision to make in terms of their job and employability after they come back from such a tragic event if they are going to be penalized or whatever. Is there some flexibility in terms of having special consideration to these employees, especially in smaller communities? It may be true also for the larger centres, because I am not living here in Yellowknife or Hay River. I don't know. The communities I represent, in our culture, consideration is given to employees, especially to family members who are suffering at certain points of the events there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the specific area of Employee and Family Assistance Program differs from what the Member is speaking about. We get into the specific area of leaves, and special leave is a provision that is provided for occasions that, yes, an employee runs into difficulties and needs support, but our guidelines are quite clearly established as for what an employee can apply for that special leave. Beyond that, there are provisions that can be taken into account. If there is annual leave, if that employee would have annual leave on file or, as well, we would look at leave without pay if it is going to be a prolonged time away. So there is some of that flexibility built in.

When you do look at our overall package and we talk about special leave, annual leave, sick leave and things like that, we have a very generous system out there to help employees to try to deal with some of these areas. There is some flexibility. For example, if there is a loss in a family, and an individual has to travel to another community, there are some things that can be applied in there, but it still falls in with the allotment of time that has been established through negotiations with the employees. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Minister is right. There are some other areas that I can talk more

about these employees' relationship in the leave here on special leave. I want to talk, then, about the Employee and Family Assistance Program. How is it operated in our communities? My understanding is that some of the employees receive this type of assistance through a 1-800 helpline through the department. It is not very effective or very good for the employees. It is only when you come into a really crisis emergency situations that the employees are looked upon. I know there are some people in my region within this department have said there was support for them in their work. However, they had to call. They used a phone system. That's unacceptable, Mr. Chair, in terms of this type of program and we are trying to be good employees for our people. Is there any way that this program is going to be reviewed and strengthened to have employees from the government actually come and receive face-to-face family support assistance program or, actually, Employee and Family Assistance Program for themselves and families? Right now, it's just not doing what it's intended to do. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Employee and Family Assistance Program is under review and a new contract will be let out in approximately a year's time. As I stated, we are reviewing how the existing contract has operated and how we've been able to get service into communities across the North. The majority of communities are serviced by a 1-800 number as the initial point of contact. Where we have been able to get contracts in place with firms that would help in communities, we've been able to do that. But it is a very difficult field to try to find staff in regions or communities that would fulfil this area. It is an area we recognize needs to be improved and, as I stated, we are reviewing that to try to improve that before we go out for a new contract in about a year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the review. Hopefully it will be done within a couple of months from now to see where we could work. I am not too sure how long this review will take or when we will have time to have some input into it. The Minister did say that in a year's time there are some options to renegotiate or negotiate new contracts for this family assistance program. I am going to leave it at that level, but that program is going to be one of the key benefits to attracting and retaining good quality workers for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Certainly, I would love to see that 1-800 number have some good quality programming.

The Minister needs to recognize, I guess, counselling services are also offered by our traditional elders in the communities. You can't always rely on western science of counselling. Our elders offer good counselling. They are experts. Use the elders in the communities. I don't know how we are going to get around that, but use them. They guide us in our life. They are actually born natural counsellors. I don't know why we are getting away from them and looking somewhere else. That's not our life. Maybe for some others, but not for us in the communities that rely heavily on the elders who are recognized as spiritual counsellors, medicine counsellors, relationships.

They are there just waiting and we are not using them. It's not rocket science in our communities.

I just want to say to the Minister in terms of venting some of my views, be open and flexible to look at what works in the communities as opposed to working on a blanket-wide policy. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. We are on page 2-104. Corporate human resources, \$6.470 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-106, 2-107, information item, corporate human resources, active positions. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 2-109, information item, clients services, operations expenditure summary, \$16.130 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Page 2-112 and 2-113, client services, active positions. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 2-115, information item, employee relations, operations expenditure summary, \$5.263 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-116 and 2-117, employee relations, active positions. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, page 2-114 and 2-115, I would like to go back to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Committee, the Member is requesting to go back to 2-114 and 2-115. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I lost my question here, but I am going...Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the Minister and his department if there is any progress done on the code of ethics. Can we have an update on the code of ethics within this department?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, that is a project that we have slated for this upcoming year to have completed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the Minister says upcoming year, is it this fiscal year and next fiscal year? I am asking for the dates. I know the Minister will give them.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are intending to begin it and hopefully bring something to Members during the 2006-07 fiscal year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. My thanks to the Minister. Again, it will be another big task on the department's plate. It's another one that's going to be looked upon with interest. Going back to the employee relationships in terms of special leave for people who request or are expected to be at home at wakes, or burial sites, or grieving situations, is there going to be...I am hearing conflicting concerns that there is not enough time given to them and they don't have enough time at home or their supervisor is not being very flexible and they are taking some time off that they don't really want to use, like earned holiday pay or things like that. I may be getting into some other areas that require a whole discussion. I just want to ask the general policy and whether Human Resources will allow them some flexibility in to these situations. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the types of leave the Member has brought up here around special leave and so on is included in the handbook as part of the negotiations that we have with our employees. As difficult as it may be, or as people may feel it is or unfair, once they've used that allotment of time, that's the only time that's available. Then if they want to take more time, it would either be annual leave or leave without pay. As much as we want to be compassionate, we also have to ensure that we have people on staff doing the job because it does cost us more money as an individual is off taking care of family or helping out in difficult situations, we have to fill that position with a casual to ensure the jobs are getting done. So those are things we run up against and face. Ultimately, it does end up coming down to the negotiation process that employees are part of. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I appreciate the Minister's answer here. Sometimes death has no appointment. When it comes, it comes. So it's tough. I guess the key word is compassionate, but also the wheels have to keep on turning and things have to keep on going. Because we are a small region and our communities are smaller, we are more heavily impacted by what's happening in our small communities, especially how government is looked upon: a big meanie or bully. I am sorry to say, but that's sometimes how government is looked upon. It may be bigger in larger centres like Yellowknife where there are lots of people, but when you have a small community, a small region, it's just the way...I don't live in Yellowknife, Mr. Chairman, and I can't really say what it's like in Yellowknife. I speak for my region and what I hear. I want to just leave it at that. I want to let the Minister know some of the concerns I have. He's answered quite appropriately for me. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. We are on page 2-115, information item, employee relations, operations expenditure summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-116 and 2-117, information item, employee relations, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I will now ask that you please turn back to page 2-85 of your main estimates binder, program summary, operations expenditure summary, \$29.237 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Now I would like to ask that Members turn to page 2-11 of the binder, infrastructure acquisition plan, this is page 2-11, employee relations, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$500,000. Total activity, \$500,000. Total department, \$500,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Committee, do you now agree that the Department of Human Resources' main estimates have been concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I would like to thank you, Minister Roland, Ms. Elkin and Mr. Bird for being with us this afternoon. Have a great weekend.

What is the wish of committee? Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee wishes...I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is not debatable. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 19: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007, and Committee Report 5-15(4), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Is there a seconder for the motion? The honourable Minister for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 12 on the order paper. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will return to item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

REVERT TO ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 20: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, No. 2

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2, and wishes to report that Bill 20 is now ready for Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Third reading of bills. Colleagues, before we go on to the next item on the Order Paper, I would like to have Members join me in recognizing and thanking our Pages that have been with us all week that have been doing some work for us in the Leg.

Earlier this week, we had Pages from Mildred Hall and two from Diamond Jenness School in Hay River who, unfortunately, had to return home due to illness. Today, the Pages are from William MacDonald and, of course, Laurie- Anne Fabien from Katlodeeche First Nation on the Hay River Reserve. Thank you, Pages, for a job well done this week.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 21: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Monday, February 27, 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
14. First Reading of Bills
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
 - Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2005-2006
 - 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. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 27, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 14:57 p.m.

