



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

4th Session

Day 38

15th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Pages 1413 - 1460

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 28, 2006****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Honourable Joe Handley, 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. Welcome to our guests in the gallery today. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 85-15(4): Ottawa Meetings**

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide Members with a brief update on meetings held this past week in Ottawa.

On Friday, February 24th, I had a lengthy and productive meeting with the Honourable Jim Prentice to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the Northwest Territories. As the new Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and as the Minister responsible for the Mackenzie gas project, Minister Prentice will be a key player in our efforts to resolve several important issues for the Northwest Territories over the next two years.

With regard to the Mackenzie gas project, we specifically discussed the need to move forward with legislation to implement the \$500 million socio-economic impact fund. I emphasized our support for this initiative among the federal, aboriginal and territorial governments, and explained its importance in addressing the socio-economic impacts for those aboriginal communities along the pipeline route. While Mr. Prentice did not provide specific commitments, I was pleased with his understanding of the importance of the fund and am optimistic he will address this matter in the short term.

We also had an opportunity to discuss devolution and resource revenue sharing negotiations. I explained our position on the outstanding issues, including the most critical issue holding up these negotiations: an agreement on fair sharing of the resource revenues. I said we were encouraged by the commitment expressed by both the Prime Minister and Minister Prentice during the election campaign to ensure northerners were the primary beneficiaries of northern development. This important commitment is reason for real optimism that working with the new government will lead to successful agreements that have eluded us in the past.

Minister Prentice and I agreed to work cooperatively towards resolution of these negotiations. With respect to an agreement on resource revenue sharing, these discussions will also include the new federal Minister of Finance, the Honourable Jim Flaherty. Mr. Roland will be seeking a meeting in the near future with Mr. Flaherty to discuss these and other important fiscal issues facing our government.

We discussed two national agreements that will impact greatly on many residents in the Northwest Territories. I first expressed our continued support for the principals of the Kelowna First Ministers' Agreement to close the gap between the social and economic conditions for aboriginal Canadians and other Canadians.

We are committed to working with the national government to find ways to implement the commitments made to aboriginal Canadians in the Kelowna Accord. I reiterated our support for the agreement reached to compensate residential school survivors and hope that the new federal government will implement this agreement as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the initial meeting with Minister Prentice allowed for a productive exchange of views on critical issues facing the territory. This knowledge of the key issues facing the Northwest Territories and his willingness to work cooperatively to address these issues are reasons for optimism.

On Friday evening, the Premiers of all provinces and territories were invited to an informal dinner meeting with Prime Minister Harper. At this meeting, we discussed key national issues, including a fiscal imbalance, post-secondary education funding and national childcare agreements.

On Saturday morning, the three territorial Premiers met with Prime Minister Harper to discuss key territorial issues. It was a cordial and productive meeting. I raised the Mackenzie gas project and devolution and resource revenue sharing negotiations with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister made clear his understanding of the importance of the Mackenzie gas project not only to the Northwest Territories, but to the country as a whole. With respect to resource revenue sharing, the Prime Minister again stated his view that northerners must be the primary beneficiaries of northern resources and his commitment to work cooperatively to resolve this issue.

Mr. Speaker, these meetings were an initial opportunity to meet with both the Prime Minister and Minister Prentice to discuss key issues for the Northwest Territories. While they were not forums to negotiate or to resolve issues, I was pleased to have this early opportunity to meet and exchange views. I was encouraged by the meeting and impressed with the knowledge and understanding of the key challenges and opportunities facing the Northwest Territories. We welcome the commitment of the Prime Minister and Minister Prentice to work together to move forward on our key priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko.

Minister's Statement 86-15(4): Housing Market Forums

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to update the Legislative Assembly on upcoming housing meetings in regional centres.

Over the next couple of months, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation will be conducting housing market forums in three communities. The dates and locations are: March 28th in Inuvik; March 30th in Hay River; and, April 4th and 5th in Yellowknife. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is assisting CMHC with the planning for these meetings.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the housing market forums is to bring together housing industry stakeholders to provide market updates and to generate discussion and feedback on this information. CMHC has continuously gathered housing market data for Yellowknife. For the first time, CMHC has collected specific information on the emerging market housing communities of Inuvik and Hay River and this baseline data will be presented at the forums.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will also be conducting regional housing workshops in Fort Simpson and Norman Wells in late March. Representatives of CMHC will be in attendance and I will be working with Mr. Yakeleya and Mr. Menicoche on the planning of these meetings. These workshops will stimulate discussion on community and regional allocations and will help communities focus their housing decisions. The Housing Corporation will consult with communities on significant housing issues, such as the lack of available and suitable land and the processes required for land development.

Mr. Speaker, housing needs are one of the foremost priorities of communities. These housing meetings provide opportunities for housing industry stakeholders to work together in exploring housing solutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Funding For Metis Organizations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, during the review of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, I made it clear that I am frustrated with the way the Metis organizations are funded. In my way of thinking, Mr. Speaker, the Metis are forgotten people in the Northwest Territories. The federal government clearly only recognizes the rights of the Metis people when it suits them and when there is no cost to government to do so.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has made a point of recognizing Metis as First Nations people. They have instituted a Health Care Program that is equivalent to what is available to the people under the national Health Benefits Program. I am very happy when they did this. However, Mr. Speaker, whenever I think of the fact that Metis people are not eligible for the university or

college entry programs, or the UCEP program as it's called, I am no longer happy.

This is a greater understanding on the part of the ordinary Canadians of the plight of the aboriginal people in Canada. They understand that many aboriginal Canadians live in poverty. They do not have access to clean drinking water or sanitation services and are marginalized when it comes to accessing health and education services.

What I don't think Canadians are aware of is the fact that some of the Metis people live alongside the First Nations people in the same economic and poverty-stricken conditions. Again, Mr. Speaker, the Metis are the forgotten people in the North.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to this government that they are very serious about treating the Metis people as First Nations people. They need to examine how Metis organizations are funded. They need to introduce an equivalent program, so that Metis residents of the Northwest Territories can prepare for college and university as they need to do all they can do as a government to ensure that the Metis people have and will take their rightful place in the social fabric of Canada. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Human Resource Sole Source Contract

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to use my Member's statement today to again bring up the issue of FMBS somehow discussing \$450,000 to sole source a contract to a Florida-based company. The \$450,000 was found in various pockets of the FMBS operation, which, Mr. Speaker, ironically enough, happened during a government-wide budget reduction.

How can FMBS sleep at night? They sent every department scrounging, Mr. Speaker, for peanuts; a one percent reduction exercise. How is this fair, especially to the smaller departments? How can the government reduce spending by one percent in all departments knowing full well that all departments do not have the same ability to find these pockets of cash that FMBS somehow seems to find?

The Minister acknowledges that this American firm specializes in supporting businesses and organizational transformation and that the necessity to sole source a contract to them came as a direct result of the amalgamation of our HR functions. Once the centralization of the various departments was complete, only then did he, and everyone else for that matter, realize what a mess we had on our hands. Now in order to help fix the mess, we have to spend \$450,000. The Minister may not want to elaborate on what the problems are, but, Mr. Speaker, some departments of this government were allowed to sit on personnel files for years.

It is very evident to me that some departments were, in fact, negligent in their duties. The new HR department has just inherited all of these issues and problems. What

departments did the problems come from? Who can be held responsible? After seven months of physically leaving our public service, a constituent of mine recently has finally received all of the pension and severance she was entitled to and can actually retire.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, we have to learn a lesson from this. We have to go back to the departments that sent the problems, that didn't do the work, that allowed issues to fester and didn't know what they were supposed to do. No wonder deputy ministers wanted control over HR. Some of them should be completely embarrassed over the state of the HR and pay and benefits divisions that they sent to the amalgamation of HR. The departments that sent the incomplete files, the backlog, the problems, that's where FMBS must go to get the \$450,000 the review is now costing us. Who is sending the message here? Someone has to be held accountable for the state of our HR department. Departments were allowed to just get away with not doing their jobs and I find it completely unacceptable that our only solution is to spend \$450,000. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Responsive Housing Policies And Legislation

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the mandate and programming review of the NWT Housing Corporation. I would just like to remind this House, the corporation was enacted by legislation in 1978 and this is an old act. It is from a distant, archaic and colonial past.

The way that the program and policies run is that we tell our people we know better than you; we will do it for you. It removes freedom and flexibility from any clients in the Housing Corporation. I think today, in 2006, we should make homeowners true homeowners, Mr. Speaker. Often we give mortgage loans to clients, but we have to build it for them. I think today that, like any other loans we give to anybody, with ITI or BDIC, we offer loans and we provide them the loans; we don't tell them what trucks to buy or how to purchase investments for their businesses. It should be the same. The client should make the decisions on the type of home they get and they should be getting their own general. They should be hiring their own contractors to build their own homes to their satisfaction, Mr. Speaker. Their own choice. That's all they are asking; to have their own choice to have adequate construction and inspection proceeds for their houses.

That is all our constituents ever asked, is to be heard and to be in control of their own futures. In fact, I had one constituent with a new home being built next door and that person has no say in construction, but they are there. They see there are some inconsistencies, yet they really can't do anything, Mr. Speaker. Anywhere else in the world, when you're given money, you have control over your money and you can say what is built, what is inadequate or what is adequate. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I urge this House, this Minister and this government, to have flexible current policies for our constituents. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Transportation Services For Small Communities

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) I would like to talk about the investment for the future. Today, we have concerns regarding education, even the hydro projects. We have problems with that and we have concerns in our community. The young children of today are our most important people for our future. Mr. Speaker, the communities of Gameti, Wekweeti and Whati have many concerns for the safety of their children walking to school, especially in the dark because there are sightings of wolves and grizzlies around the community. They even kill the dogs in the community, so the people are concerned in their community. We just heard of the caribou decreasing in size. This is the wolves' food, so we have concern about that. If they are decreasing, there is a concern that the wolves are starving. Here in Yellowknife, parents have the option of sending their children on the bus, or the parents drive them to school with their own vehicle. So they don't have any worries of wild animals. We don't have those kinds of concerns here in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, the communities of Gameti, Wekweeti, and Whati do not have school bus services. We are requesting whether we can have a van or a bus. The parents and grandparents are very concerned about their children and grandchildren. The government has a lot of money. By rights, we should be investing our monies into our future children. Today, we are asking for two vans that they can use before we have a tragedy in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Use Of Traditional Knowledge For Caribou Management

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, I wanted to continue to express my dismay at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' bull-headed approach to the implementation of the seven immediate and what somewhat seems inappropriate and unnecessary actions to address the decline of caribou numbers here in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the Minister was referring to last week when he responded to my question about why the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are allowing resident hunters to hunt bulls only. The Minister responded, and I quote, "There sure is a lot of bull in that question," Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that information from the very experienced aboriginal elderly hunters and trappers say about why not to shoot bulls only should be construed as a lot of bull. Mr. Speaker, I don't think this Minister fully understands the importance that this kind of traditional knowledge and advice offers to this

government. I believe that, if he did understand why this government should listen carefully and adhere to this type of traditional advice from our people, we would not be in this predicament that we are in today.

So I say to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources today, pay heed, Mr. Minister. Not only do all the biologists, consultants and bureaucrats who expeditiously present their reasoning and rationale to addressing wildlife concerns with good intentions, no doubt, but pay very close attention to what people who have lived all their lives with the wildlife since time immemorial are saying, instead of brushing their advice aside in order to make way for the scientific approach, which, in many instances, only works on paper and not in the real world, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On WCB Assessment Rates For Quick Service Restaurants

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, we started this session on February 1st with concerns of many franchise businesses speaking out against the ever skyrocketing WCB rates. Mr. Speaker, the Minister took questions in this House and told us that the governance council was meeting in Yellowknife. I assume that we would have received his answers by now. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we are February 28th now, with two days left to go in this session, and we are still scrambling to find time for a meeting between the businesses and the governance council and the Minister afterward. I have no idea what the outcome will be. We need to remember that meetings cannot be an alibi for inaction and indecision. At this point, Mr. Speaker, I have to believe that the good chair on the governance council will do right by these businesses and not spend the meeting defending why the things are the way they are and why they have to continue on with the status quo.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to understand the grand purpose and goodwill of an insurance system, as a workers' compensation system is, it is that the businesses pay to the system to be prepared in case of worker's injury and fatalities and that the advantage of an insurance system is to share and spread the cost across the board. Where one sector of the membership keeps seeing a 25 percent or more rates increase year after year, the governing body has to look at how to address that situation and make adjustments to address this situation and improve it, whether it be a specific business, subgroup, or the WCB system as a whole, and that, even without being asked to, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion. This is what franchises are looking for from the governance council and the Minister. I believe these are eminently reasonable and sensible positions.

I would like to, once again, challenge the governance council to do right by the businesses. After all, Mr. Speaker, they are the very backbone of our community. If the outcome is not going to change the system for the better, I could give plenty notice to the Minister that I would expect the Minister to take an action and no more speaking about that is not my department; I am just a Minister and can't do anything about that. I just want to

give the Minister proper notice today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Tourism 2010 Plan

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. A few words this morning about our tourism industry and the welcome news yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has a very bold plan to top up current government investment by \$1 million a year. We want to lever that into almost \$3 million a year in new annual investment in tourism. The goal is to increase overall tourism spending over the next five years by 50 percent. That is a very lofty goal, probably attainable, but it is going to take some work and some investment and a lot of heart. A lot of heart is what the people who own and run our tourism businesses have.

Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in the tourism industry. I have owned a tourism related business myself and I know the hard work, the dedication and the rewards that come from it. So this is a welcome gesture from this department.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of areas that I hope that, as this tourism plan called Tourism 2010 evolves, we can invest some new energies in a couple of specific areas that I don't see a lot of mention in.

Mr. Speaker, something that I have talked about frequently is the importance of festivals and events, not only to the cultural life and enhancement of our communities, but it is a very genuine way of showcasing who we are and what we are to the world. We are unique. We are special. We are very worth coming and seeing. I would advocate that putting our support, money and strategies specifically behind this area would have a great return.

Also, Mr. Speaker, conventions and meetings, I think, are a very viable aspect of the tourism industry that is under its 11th different study right now to see whether or not we can do something. There is a great viability there.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the arts and the arts and crafts sectors. We have a shared strategy between two departments. There is a lot more mileage that we can get out of this area, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Need For Airport Authority For Yellowknife

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today is about the need for an airport authority. In the context of grassroots governance, Mr. Speaker, we have health and social services authorities; we have boards for education; we even have the WCB Governance Council, Mr. Speaker; so it is time to consider an airport authority.

We need to empower the airport to act like a business in a business manner, Mr. Speaker. Let businesses tell the authority what they need so they can respond more effectively. Let's give the authority that strength that they can come forward with ideas to help operate and run the airport in a businesslike way. It would respond better to the customers' needs. Let's face it. The airport needs to operate more like an authority under the business context because they could be proactive in meeting the needs such as the clients that fly through the airport everyday. They could help bring out tourism. They could even help with the city of Yellowknife to develop services out there. So it is about responding to customer and client needs, Mr. Speaker. Let's expand the business opportunities where we can give the airport authority the tools so they can encourage businesses out there. Let the airport authority focus on what they do and what they do best, running airports, Mr. Speaker, and they can run it in a businesslike mandate way. It would give them proper focus. Let the authority work and encourage circumpolar flights that could land here in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker. This could encourage much needed revenue in our territory.

The Edmonton Airport Authority acknowledges the role that they play in economic development for businesses. They say supporting the economic growth of regions demands that we show financial and business leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I think that truly speaks to the need. It is about a healthy attitude here. Tourism operators can work with the authority to help bring Japanese tourists directly to Yellowknife. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker; not Alaska, not Whitehorse, but Yellowknife.

Tourism could work with the authority to encourage those large airline companies to consider plans to touch down here. Mr. Speaker, it has been said before, if you pave it, they will come. Our highway is proof of that. So, Mr. Speaker, I think Yellowknife and the NWT have grown up enough. It is time that our airport grows with us so we could make something that befits the capital today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Interim Report On Mental Health And Addictions Services In The NWT

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week, my AOC colleagues and I spoke to the need for treatment centres in the NWT that can provide proper aftercare services for clients. The Minister of Health and Social Services kept making reference to the Chalmers Report and their recommendation that no new facilities be built. Our quest on this side of the House is to provide an option for those to seek treatment and would be more comfortable closer to their region.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister put so much merit in a report that even states that caution is needed when reviewing the report? Interviewed people for the report included the Minister of Health and Social Services, the staff of the district authority, authority chairs, and it says, some frontline workers and NGOs. Are these not the people that would be able to provide the best insight as to

the needs of those most affected? No mention was made of interviews with addicts or recovering addicts to see what they think would be required.

Mr. Speaker, it even states in the interim report that aboriginal and community content and views were extremely limited. My concern is how can the department put so much merit in a report that admits to its limitations? The fact that it mentions no new treatment centres may be just what the department wanted to hear. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislative Assembly the Grade 6 class from Bompas, students of Fort Simpson.

---Applause

Accompanying them are the teachers, Miss Hutfloetz, Mr. Leader; chaperones, Mr. Wright, Mr. Cui, and Mrs. S. Nadia.

---Applause

I see a stranger amongst them. I don't know them, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to recognize her, as well.

---Laughter

There is also a resident of Fort Simpson that is an adult student, Miss Emma Amundson. Welcome to the House. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well as the Grade 6 students from Fort Simpson, we have another group of students who are here to observe session. It is a class from Aurora College social studies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I take this opportunity to welcome everybody in the gallery today. It is nice to see you all here. It is always nice to have an audience. Welcome.

---Applause

Oral questions. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS**Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route**

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas activities are on a curve up in the Northwest Territories. There seems to be a lot of activity in some of the regions here. In light of the proposed Mackenzie gas project coming down the line here, I want to ask the Minister of ITI and also the chair of the Joint AOC/Cabinet Pipeline Committee, if he can summarize what the government has done to date in helping the communities deal with the massive immigration of workers that may impact the communities along the pipeline route. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In conjunction with a number of different departments, most notably in this area probably MACA, we have been working to ensure that there are monies available for communities who wish to sit down with the pipeline proponents and discuss through negotiations some fee-for-service arrangements to make sure that their community infrastructure is not overly impacted with the additional activity in the region. There was a fund also rolled out about a year ago now, Resource Pre-Development Program. I think it is about \$250,000 per region for communities to be better prepared. Health and Social Services, with the other social program departments, have been hosting regional workshops to better understand the challenges and the social envelope that communities will have to come to grips with. There are a number of initiatives underway. We have the coordinating body, the Mackenzie Valley pipeline office. That is our communication folks out of Hay River who are working with communities and making sure the messaging from our government is one message across departments and that we are working very closely with our communities to make sure they have the ability, the capacity and the money to be at the table and to be recognized throughout this regulatory hearing process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The committees need to be prepared and I am hearing a lot that there is going to be a huge massive immigration of workers into the North. Mr. Speaker, we need to really prepare for the types of opportunities that are going to come and prepare our young people to start training and be prepared to take the opportunities of the pipeline. Can the Minister give me some idea as to what improvements have been for the communities in terms of helping them get ready for the pipeline? Are there any statistics, for instance? How many students are being trained in welding? What types of workshops are given to businesses or the number of training sessions that may help out with these types of things? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To better understand the potential impacts of the project, we are relying quite a bit on the environmental impact statement filed by the proponents. In taking that, and using that, regional groups have used it. Land claim organizations, obviously, in their negotiation of access and benefits, which I am sure, although we are not privy to those agreements, speak to business opportunities, training opportunities, in addition to cash for access. But we are also using this document to help us frame up a socio-economic agreement that would be an over-arching umbrella document and agreement that will speak to training opportunities and benefits that we think should accrue to northerners.

Mr. Speaker, even in advance of that work, there are a number of initiatives underway. The Department of Education is our lead on the Pipeline Operators Training course. There are other training initiatives through the ASEP program that are already moving forward. I think there is a lot of good work underway. The Member is absolutely correct; if we are going to see the benefits of this project accrue to northerners, we are going to have to be ready, prepared and trained in order to be able to take advantage of those. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, the Department of Indian Affairs and the government, through the Minister's office, had successfully held a socio-economic conference and the Sahtu invited the Tlicho, the Deh Cho and the Sahtu people. Are there any targets in terms of preparing the communities who are on the pipeline route? What are we doing? What are we looking for in terms of reaching our goals? Are there any targets? If not, then why aren't there any targets right now in terms of preparing the communities for such impacts? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 480-15(4): Impacts To Communities Along Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Route

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I think it is in all of our interests to move ahead as quickly as we possibly can on this. I think that is why we are sitting down now, and the Premier has already met with the Prime Minister and with Minister Prentice to talk about the Mackenzie gas project. We are very interested in how the socio-economic impact fund will roll out because it will be regional decision-making bodies that set the priorities and talk about the strategic initiatives that will be funded with that money. We know there will be accessing benefits money that needs to be targeted. We can certainly play a support role there in working with communities because we are the delivery agent for many of the programs and services in communities. I think communities are going to become engaged as we better understand how the socio-economic impact funds will roll out. This is some of the

discussion the Premier has been leading with our federal counterparts. We look forward to getting more detail on that shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to refer my questions to the Minister of Transportation with respect to my Member's statement given earlier today about airport authority and the need for them. Mr. Speaker, I am a big believer that an airport authority can do the job of running an airport in a more businesslike way that would attract more services and flights to the NWT, and specifically to Yellowknife. On the heels of that point, Mr. Speaker, and the absence of an airport authority, what is this Minister doing to attract circumpolar flights to stop here in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of an airport authority was discussed and a steering committee was actually formed during the life of the 14th Assembly. Since then, the interest has moved away from this concept as there is a lot of investment that is required in the airport here in Yellowknife. It is a territorial airport and it has huge capital needs. We have to be able to address a number of things. Polar flights is an issue that we have raised from the stand point that the federal government has to deal with some of the issues around the concept of polar flights. This airport is not equipped to accommodate the large size airplanes that are used in the polar flights. However, in some cases, we have been forced to accommodate them during emergency landings. We are not planning, at this point, to do any expansion of our runway. We don't have it in our capital plan. That would have to be some place down the road. But we have looked at it and we are looking at how we can accommodate it as part of all the other capital needs that this airport requires. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say it again; if you build it, they will come. If you pave it, the planes will come. So if we pave that runway, we will be attracting flights. Mr. Speaker, Whitehorse did it and they came. German tourism is up. It is always packed. Mr. Speaker, what is this Minister doing to encourage these flights to Yellowknife for German, Japanese tourists, et cetera? What is this Minister doing to build the infrastructure so we can get these planes interested in our area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that is a good concept, to build and they will come, but if we build it, we have to pay for it. I am not sure how we do that. Mr. Speaker, I think we have to be clear. In the Yukon, I believe the military built the extension to the runway. It was not the Yukon government. The Yukon government is still struggling to deal with all the other requirements that come from having polar flights land in that airport. They are struggling to deal with the concept of having customs, being able to expand their airport facility to provide space for custom officers. There are a number of things that have to be taken into consideration if you are just looking at expanding the airport. I think that is something that we really have to study and make sure that we can pay for it, we can accommodate it, we have the room and that we have the capacity to deal with it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Minister's answer was very good. It is true; we have to pay for it. But I would like to hear what the Minister is doing to develop those types of partnership. That could be with the federal government, through the Department of Transportation. That could be through Joint Task Force North which has established here in Yellowknife. What is the Minister doing to help encourage or create legislation that will enable the airport authority so we can build these types of partnerships with DND and the federal government through Transport Canada? We need these partnerships built. What is the Minister doing to encourage that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 481-15(4): Airport Authority

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, until we can deal with some of the capital investments that are required for the airport, the airport authority concept is not something we are putting forward. We have had discussions with the stakeholders, the air carriers, some of the land lease holders on airport lands, and there are a number of issues that we have to deal with. There is a need for water and sewer services in that area. There is a need for a combined services building. There is a need for new firefighting equipment in the airport area. There are a number of things we have to deal with. For the long term, we may have to look at a new terminal building down the road. These things are not issues that the airport authority is willing to take on. They would like us to deal with some of the investment requirements that need to happen in this facility before we take this discussion on airport authority any further. That is how we are proceeding, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, my question was regarding the safety of children. This is our concern that we would like to bring to the government. If the Minister feels the same about the safety of the children...(Translation ends)

...the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Would the Minister tell me what kind of funding is available for school bussing services in small communities such as Wekweeti, Gameti and Whati? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with the Member that the safety of our children is always of paramount importance, and one of the reasons that we have locally elected school boards or DEAs is to make sure that they can react to local conditions and do what is necessary to make sure that kids are not only able access the program of Education, but to do so safely.

In our funding for divisional education councils, the formula provides for transportation. We don't stipulate to the boards that they have to spend that money on transportation. They can choose to spend it in any way that they choose, so we allow flexibility. Some of the money that we provide is allocated to transportation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Just elaborating more on transporting these students to school in the smaller isolated communities, we do lack vehicles in the communities. We certainly don't have school buses in the community. Although there is a school board and divisional boards in the communities, they are also scarce for funding different programs. Would the Minister commit to this House of providing funding to purchase and operate transportation services in Wekweeti, Gameti and Whati, so that we can ensure that children are able to get to school safely, Mr. Speaker? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment doesn't keep any separate funding for student transportation. All of that money that is for student transportation is included in the \$120 million-plus that is given to the schools for their operation. So in those communities, the schools, or the DEC, or the Tlicho Community Services Agency will have to examine how they can accomplish school bussing if that is their intent.

They are already getting all of the money that we have for education as part of the formula. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to highlight in brief how the agency works in the community. Mr. Speaker, the agency does not have the money to do this in the community. The formula might work for larger communities where they have bigger pots to start with and small cuts can be found and a little money here and there, but this isn't the flexibility in the communities, such as the communities I identified. Their budgets are stretched, Mr. Speaker. They are expected to provide core subjects, language, cultural program, inclusive schooling, all with inadequate funding, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, will the Minister provide funding to purchase and run school transportation in the communities of Wekweeti, Gameti, Whati, so parents and elders can be assured that their children can go to school safely? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 482-15(4): School Transportation Services

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those monies are already in the formula. While the Member may not be satisfied with the distribution of the formula, our monies are split up according to a formula that it does compensate for small size. The smaller communities do receive a significantly higher proportion of contribution than do the larger communities. We have membership on the committee that sets the formula, that meets two or three times to discuss how the formula's set up, from the DEC's including the ones with very small communities. So the formula is already reactive to the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of ITI and it's in regards to the tourism plan announced yesterday. Certainly it is a good news item and it's one that addresses some of the issues that the industry has been telling me, and I'm sure people in this Chamber. There's always been need for additional funding for the tourism industry, but also to focus on marketing, product development, infrastructure, human resource training and research and planning, which the Minister is dealing with, although I'd like to add a human resource recruitment and retention as well as training, because I think getting the people is a hard task given our shortage and scarcity of people for lots of jobs. Mr. Speaker, the Minister's announcement speaks to \$145 million annually by the year 2010. That's quite a chunk of money and I'd like to know if the Minister could give me a breakdown on where that will be spent and where that would come from. Is that

completely new money on the tourism industry, or is it something that's combining everything? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I should just clear up some of potentially what is confusing here with the numbers. We're proposing to invest GNWT money; \$1 million a year for five years. We're hoping to lever additional investment of about \$2 million per year from other partners. We're also going to be working very closely with stakeholders like the NWT Tourism folks to deliver on programming. The number 145 was arrived at looking at the current state of our industry. It's about a \$100 million a year industry in terms of GDP. It's broken out amongst, as you can imagine, a number of different sectors. We think, in sitting down with our departmental people and the NWTT and other stakeholders, that \$145 million is a doable projection, and so that's what we're targeting; that level of growth in terms of GDP for the entire industry by 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I read it a couple of times and I couldn't envision how \$1 million plus \$2 million every year could add up to \$145 million, but I see that's the government hopes the tourists will spend, not what the government will spend on the tourism industry. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, in watching the closing ceremony of the Olympics recently and looking at how Vancouver 2010 was presented, it appears that the Vancouver Olympic team, or the Canadian Olympic Team, is planning on promoting Canada as a northern country. The emblem is an inukshuk from the East, and the guy that showed up with the ice fishing machine, I don't know if he's from the Yukon or the NWT, but I think this is a real opportunity for us in the 2010 plan to capitalize on the audience that we're going to get not only across the country, but around the world; not only the visitors, but the TV viewers. I'd like to know if the Minister has any plan to incorporate this tourism plan to maximize that opportunity. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree with the Member and think that the Olympics are a great opportunity for us coming up in Vancouver. We're using the upcoming Canada Games in Whitehorse, if you will, as a bit of a dry run. We are making an investment in terms of promoting the North, working with the other three territories. The Premier's had some discussions with the other territorial Premiers and it was agreed that we would promote the North together at that event. Further, I guess, to Member Braden's statement earlier, we think there is a real opportunity for the promotion of our culture and our arts and crafts. So we'll use that Whitehorse

venue first and hope to parlay that into a bigger presence at the Vancouver Olympics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe the NWT has a challenge to get between east and west and get our product out there. I'm pleased to see in the Minister's statement that he will be working on regional product development and regional attractions. Marketing is one thing and 2010 gives us enough time to use that marketing opportunity, but we need to spend resources and money to develop our product and produce well. I'm sure what the tourism industry is telling him. So I'd like to know what he has in mind for that area, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 483-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In may be to oversimplify it, but I think the strategy is twofold. It is about generating interest, and marketing is the way for us to do that. But it's also about developing product. That's why you see the breakdown and we have this discussion of developing regional attractions. We need that product in place so when we go and drum up business and create the interest, we bring people home and there are a lot of attractions for them. So we see the Olympic Games as a wonderful opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I know the Premier's also had discussions with the chair of the Olympic committee, Jack Pool, and invited him North. He's agreed to come North. I think at that point we can have a good discussion about what the opportunities are for the NWT, and promoting ourselves and enhancing our presence at those games. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to revisit the Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy that hopefully hasn't rolled out yet. I want to ask the Minister when I can get information about the traditional knowledge aspects toward how do we manage the caribou management issue and the continued decline of caribou in the NWT. But we hear this traditional advice coming and going, but it's never incorporated. It's not even in this Caribou Forever - Our Heritage, Our Responsibility. There's nothing in there that relates to the advice that we're receiving from chiefs, elders, hunters and trappers. Nothing that even mentions that, and all of a sudden we're throwing seven rules out there for caribou hunters, trappers and harvesters to follow, Mr. Speaker. To me, that's like treating hunters and trappers like a bunch of school kids and throwing a bunch of rules out there and say this is the way we're going to do the job. I get a lot of information from harvesters and hunters saying that, hey, this is just too cumbersome; these rules are just overbearing for a lot of hunters and trappers that basically a voluntary harvest limit would suffice for everybody. So

I'm going to ask the Minister if he'll just back off a bit on imposing these seven rules for hunters and trappers in the NWT, and maybe let's start with an education campaign. I think that would suffice, Mr. Speaker. Would he do that? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the work we are proceeding with was done as a result, as I've indicated numerous times in the House, after extensive consultation with the co-management boards and a number of other stakeholders like the Yellowknives, the Northwest Territory Metis, the barren-land outfitters, and we've done a lot of careful work and we are going to proceed. I'd just like to point out that, as we speak, there's a major Bathurst caribou workshop taking place here at the Explorer Hotel for over the next three days. We've brought together an extensive number of people and organizations to look at, in particular, the Bathurst herd. We have DIAND officials, GNWT officials, the Government of Nunavut, the Tlicho Government, Yellowknives, the North Slave Metis Alliance, the Kitikmeot hunters, Nunavut Tunngavik, Nunavut Wildlife management, Kitikmeot Inuit, the Lutselk'e Dene First Nations. We have a number of environmental groups and Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency, Environmental Monitoring Advisory Board, the Barren-Ground Outfitters Association, NWT Metis Nation, the Dehcho First Nations, the Akaitcho Territory Government, the Nunavut Planning Commission, the Wekweezhii Renewable Resources Board, Land and Water Board, as well as the land protection department, and the Mackenzie Valley Land Impact Review Board. They have a very full three days laid out to look at the issue of caribou in this part of the country and I look forward to their feedback. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point exactly.

---Laughter

I know there's a big meeting happening exactly with the wildlife management issue and all that stuff. So why are we putting the cart in front of the horse here? You know, he's waiting for the feedback from these co-management boards and all these people that have input into this strategy, but already we're implementing seven rules, immediate actions, that the GNWT's throwing out there that people have to adhere to before he's even heard recommendations from the big meeting of all these boards and agencies. You know, Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the government drop these seven immediate action plans that they have in place and wait until they hear from these recommendations of all these experts, and these hunters and trappers, and these co-management boards? Why...

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, thank you for the question, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to point out to the Member, as well, that on page 4 of the strategy, we refer on the last bullet on the page to using local and traditional ecological knowledge. On page 9 when we talk about co-management, we talk about using traditional knowledge and technical information, and working together with the aboriginal governments.

Mr. Speaker, we're using the conservation principle. We have enough information to tell us that there's a problem and we have to start taking the steps to make sure that we are doing the right thing in regards to proper stewardship, and that is what is driving this whole process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know there is a problem. There's a problem with declining caribou. Seven action plans may be overdoing it. I know wolf furs are down in the market right now, but if we put an incentive out there for hunters to maybe harvest wolves, the government will pay them \$50 to see what the wolves are actually eating. I was talking to a hunter here yesterday, Mr. Speaker. He said he went out hunting and he saw 200 wolves. He only shot 18. That's all he could shoot because he ran out of shells. You know, Mr. Speaker, that gives us an indication that predation is the key to this whole management issue, and I think that the government should really take our advice seriously and look at the issue of putting some restrictions or limitations on raising the limitations on the wolf predation. You know, increasing the...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a question, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: Would the Minister consider doing that, instead of throwing seven rules out there? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 484-15(4): Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member does touch on a very key point in which is why it's been identified in our plan that we want to look at the issue of predation and try to do some work to quantify the number of wolves out there so that when we gather next fall and early winter, we'll have a clear sense of what decisions we need to make in regards to the whole issue of making sure we have herd sustainability. Thank you.

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

Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of FMBS, the Honourable Floyd Roland, and it gets back to my Member's statement from earlier today and again yesterday when I addressed the issue of the \$450,000 that was sole sourced to an American company to try to get to the root of the problems at our recently amalgamated HR division. I'd like to ask the Minister if any thought was ever given to going back to the individual departments where the problems came from and getting them to pay for the \$450,000 study or review that's currently underway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did not bring that issue back to my FMB colleagues as I feel that the situation was we needed to move on this, we needed to move rather quickly on this and bring it back for discussion. Trying to get them to put some money back into it would cause further delays in actually getting the work done. So the decision was made, and I believe it was the correct one, to get on with the job and we'll deal with the issues later. We've had to put off some projects to go ahead with this initial piece of work. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't disagree with the Minister that I think we have to move on it and we have to move on it quickly. It's how it was done and why we're where we're at today that I think is the bigger problem, and the fact that various departments were allowed to get away with not doing their work, get away with sitting on personnel files for years, and obviously there was a backlog of work that got to the new amalgamated HR division. I'd like to specifically ask the Minister responsible for FMBS who these departments were, and is any disciplinary action going to be taken to the departments that caused us to spend \$450,000? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of the backlog and bringing that all together under one roof has been a problem for us, as I stated, under the review for HR. The fact is, that is the reason why we've gone to the system we have, is in a more decentralized version of each department having it's HR services and it's own interpretation of the rules that's caused us many of these problems. So our goal is to move forward from where we were to get a good grasp of where things were sitting, and move forward with some

new implementation to improve on the way we can deal with our HR services. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have so many questions; there are a number of questions that come to mind. I'm going to try to ask this final question, and that is to the Minister of FMBS. According to the FAA and the government contract regulations, I'd like to ask the Minister how it is that he can spend \$450,000. Where in the government contract regulations does it state that a review at HR would allow him to do that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 485-15(4): GNWT Fiscal Management

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact is, with any department, when work is needed to be done, the Minister initially would look from within his resources to try and get the work done. If he can't, then he has to come to FMB for request for further monies. The work, as I stated, was done in a manner where we've had to put off some of our internal working, reduce some of our travel and training to go ahead with this work. As for going back to departments to try and recoup some of that funding, Ministers have already stated, and correctly so, that when this was devolved out from back in the mid-'90s when the Department of Personnel existed and it was sent out to each department to manage their own, they were not given additional funds at that point. So that's a point of contention, as well, of trying to go back and say, well, we need further monies for this HR process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 486-15(4): Corridors To Canada - Coast To Coast

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Premier for the update on this meeting with the Prime Minister and Minister of Indian Affairs last weekend. Maybe what I didn't hear in regard to his opening comments about the meeting is, I'd like to ask the Premier, with his discussions with the Prime Minister and Minister of INAC, was there any discussions in regard to connecting Corridors for Canada II and connecting Canada from coast to coast to coast with the Prime Minister and Minister of INAC, and were they able to acknowledge these documents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 486-15(4): Corridors To Canada - Coast To Coast

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did make reference to the documents with Minister Prentice, and, very generally, with the infrastructure demands that our heated up economy is creating for us, when I met with the Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, the

Minister for DIAND, Minister Prentice, has committed to coming to the Northwest Territories to meet with us sometime in March. He has acknowledged that he understands the cost to us of maintaining our existing infrastructure and the demands to increase our transportation infrastructure in particular because of our heated up economy. So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to meeting with Minister Prentice in March to further the discussions on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 486-15(4): Corridors To Canada - Coast To Coast

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Premier. I would just like to ask one other question as follow-up here. Have they indicated that they will commit to the two documents? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 486-15(4): Corridors To Canada - Coast To Coast

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, no, they have not committed to the proposals in the two documents. It's early in the government. They have only been in government for a few weeks. But, Mr. Speaker, I would say that both the Prime Minister and Minister Prentice acknowledged that the present situation is just not tenable where we face the costs of deteriorating infrastructure and yet go and get the benefit from resource revenues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Mr. Speaker, the long-gone social housing program is rearing its ugly head where we did once build houses for our First Nations people. That program is from a distant past. In my Member's statement, I was talking about questioning the homeownership. Let's not call it homeownership if it isn't, Mr. Speaker. Will this ministry review the programming of programs in the Housing Corporation in this mandate review? Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing the mandate of the corporation. We are looking at our programs trying to find a better way of streamlining it so it's simple, straightforward and more accommodating to our clients. If anything, we are doing that, Mr. Speaker, and we could continue to work with the Members here, but, more importantly, work to deal with the programs we have, make them simpler and also make them user-friendly. So we are doing that at the present time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, another thing that happens in the housing industry is that construction techniques, standards and building codes periodically change. Has ours changed since 1978, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way since 1978.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: We have evolved to a point where we are actually delivering programs in the North with the CMHC of Canada, but I think we also have to realize that we used to have programs where individuals were able to get their homes, own their homes outright. Now we are in the process of delivering housing, which will allow individuals to go to a bank or EDAP programs, so they get some assistance from us and they move to the bank to get the rest of the money they need to build their homes. So we have evolved from a process where we used to give people homes, they built their own homes, such as the old HAP units. We have devolved from that stage to where we are today by using bank financing, third-party financing and working with the private sector. So, Mr. Speaker, we have evolved a long way since 1979.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Your final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have come a long way; I agree with the Minister, but there is a way further to go yet. Constituents increasingly call for further participation in the construction of their homes. I am not convinced, and the constituents I represent aren't convinced, that the corporation knows best for us that they have to build the houses for us. That's what I am saying; let's have the flexibility for us to be our own general, to build our own houses and find our own contractors. So, Mr. Speaker, just once again, will this ministry look at reviewing the programming, as well as the mandate? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 487-15(4): Review Of Mandate And Programs

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we are doing.

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

Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I spoke to a report that was tabled here in the House. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services today on some of the content of the report and the Minister keeps referring to the report. My questions are going to be more in line with the addictions and mental health counsellors. My understanding is we are requiring mental health counsellors in the communities now to have university degrees. I am just wondering if that's limiting our ability to recruit people to come into the communities where we have residents in the communities who are wellness workers or social workers. I would like to ask the Minister if that's limiting our ability to bring in wellness workers that need a university degree. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an evolving level of service in the Northwest Territories. As we raise the standards, and the job qualifications and requirements, and increases to deal with difficult, complex issues, yes, it does sometimes present some challenges in terms of staffing.

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

Supplementary To Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said complex issues. A lot of the communities, we know there is a problem and it's usually something that could take a little counselling or a little referral for some treatment. I have a hard time thinking that we get people from out of the territory because the report states that out-of-territory recruitment may be necessary to fill some of these university degree positions. I would like to ask the Minister if the community social workers and the wellness workers have the authority to refer clients for treatment, or is that something that only a person with a degree in mental health and addictions can do? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the way the process is set up, individuals can come to a community wellness worker and they can do a number of meetings. If the social worker is involved, they are doing case management and a decision is made based on some of the counselling that's gone on with the individual, then the referral process will take place. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ultimate referral in the communities would be made by who? That was my question. If there is no mental health worker to make that referral, where does it go from there? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 488-15(4): Addictions And Mental Health Counsellors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no one in any community will be denied a referral because there may not be a particular position filled or not. There are approval authorities all the way up and down the organization at the regional level, the community level as well, so that we can respond to all requests and needs for treatment. Thank you.

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

Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for Mr. Bell, Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment, on the Tourism 2010 plan that was announced yesterday. On a careful read, Mr. Speaker, this is a broad scope approach done in close concert with the tourism industry, and credit to both the department and the industry for linking arms on this. Mr. Speaker, the plan identifies five key areas of focus: marketing, productive development, human resource, research and planning and infrastructure. In this, just about every one of them says, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to develop a plan for them. So while this is very positive and very strong, it is, at this point, short on specifics on what is actually going to be done other than saying we are going to develop a plan.

Mr. Speaker, if I am a tourism operator, and I hope this isn't a hypothetical question here, or I would like to become a tourism operator, Mr. Speaker, where do I go to see if my idea or my need can get plugged into this strategy, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, when we sat down about a year ago, in large part in response to committee members who were suggesting we better needed to understand our roles and responsibilities, vis a vis the NWTT, we conducted a review and agreed, at the end of that, it made the most sense for the government's involvement and role to be around product development. So if you are a would-be entrepreneur, you come forward to our department, work with our regional people, have a business idea, we can steer you in the right direction, point you toward the BDIC, other lending agencies, help you develop a business plan. If your question is in relation to marketing, we use the NWTT as our destination

marketing organization of record. So we put an additional \$400,000 towards their marketing efforts here. We don't purport to tell them how to spend that money; how to target the various different sectors. We rely on the experts in the industry, these folks, to make some decisions in that regard. We are at the table and have discussions, but we have a new governance mechanism, a new marketing committee under the NWT. They make decisions based on which sectors need the help and which sectors have the most potential for growth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, is it this advisory committee that looks at and screens ideas and proposals? I am just trying to get a better sense of where in the food chain here does an entrepreneur, or a community, or an association, or an organization, take their idea to get it off the ground. Where do I go first, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, they would approach our regional staff. We didn't think it made sense, when we talked about responsibilities, to have a would-be entrepreneur come forward to a group of industry business people themselves with a proposal that could be in competition with several of those operators. So we weren't going to be putting those people in a position to have to be discussing their specific business plans, business ventures, asking for money from the folks who really are our destination marketing organization, responsible for marketing NWT overall in a broader way, not specifically targeted at any one business. So if you are a businessman, an entrepreneur, you have a business idea, you approach our ITI officials in the region and we work with you on the business plan. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, is the department going to be undertaking any kind of initiative to take this plan out into the regions, into the chambers of commerce, the other organizations, and sell this idea, help people get familiar with it and help them through the process? Is going out and actively selling it part of the plan as well, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 489-15(4): Tourism 2010 Plan

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We are going to make sure we are working very closely in the various different regions. Our regional staff will lead much of those discussions. We have to engage the various different stakeholders, not the least of whom will be the other potential funding partners and funding agencies. So there will be a lot of discussion with the Canadian Tourism

Commission, with DIAND, but also we recognize that we need buy-in in the regions. I can certainly agree with the Member who proposed earlier that it is difficult at times to get people interested and engaged in the tourism industry. In my travels to Inuvik recently and discussing with the departmental staff, because of the state of the economy, because people are so bullish on oil and gas activity, it is difficult to get people thinking and talking about tourism, but that's our role. We have a job as government to engage them in that discussion and we will work to do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Written questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 35-15(4): Human Resource Sole Source Contract

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the chair of the Financial Management Board.

1. According to section 10 of the government contract regulations, how can the chair of the FMB enter into a sole sourced contract for \$450,000 to an American company?
2. Where did the \$450,000 contract come from within the FMB? I would like detail on which activities the money came from or was transferred from.
3. Can the FMB be certain which departments the problems came from in the amalgamation of our human resources functions and, if so, how can responsibility and accountability for the apparent neglect of duties be addressed by the chair?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Written questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Written Question 36-15(4): Risk Of Bird Flu In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. What are the dangers of the virus H5N1 bird flu in our wild migratory birds in the NWT?
2. What is our emergency plan specific to the H5N1 bird flu outbreak?
3. Do we have a vaccine available?
4. Does our northern health centres in all our communities have access or stock of H5N1 bird flu vaccine?
5. Do we have a communication strategy to inform all NWT residents of the dangers of an H5N1 bird flu outbreak?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 11: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**Tabled Document 101-15(4): Communities And Diamonds 2005 Annual Report Of The GNWT Under The BHP Billiton, Diavik And De Beers Socio-Economic Agreements**

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Communities and Diamonds 2005 Annual Report of the GNWT Under the BHP Billiton, Diavik and De Beers Socio-Economic Agreements.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 12: NOTICES OF MOTION**Motion 17-15(4): Performance Audit Of The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation**

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 2, 2006, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that the Legislative Assembly request the Auditor General of Canada to undertake a performance audit of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and report thereon to the Legislative Assembly; and further, that the performance audit examine the corporation's organizational structure, activities, practices, attitudes, philosophy, decision-making processes, internal performance measures and procedures to ascertain the corporation's planning and management capacity and effectiveness; and furthermore, that the audit examine the adequacy and appropriateness of the corporation's governance model and accountability relationship to the Legislative Assembly and its committees and, in particular, the quality and relevance of the business plans, main estimates and other documents put before the Legislative Assembly and its committees; and furthermore, that the Auditor General examine such additional factors as she, in her opinion, feels are relevant; and furthermore, that all employees and officials actively cooperate with the Auditor General in providing all appropriate documents, records, papers and information; and furthermore, that the Assembly request the Auditor General to complete this audit as expeditiously as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 12, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20, and Committee Reports 5, 6, 7 and 8. By the authority given the Speaker by Motion 9-15(4), Committee of the Whole may sit beyond the hour of adjournment until it is prepared to report, with Mr. Pokiak in the chair.

ITEM 16: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Good afternoon. I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee wishes to consider Legislative Assembly, the NWT Housing Corporation, Bill 18, Committee Report 5-15(4), Committee Report 6-15(4), Committee Report 7-

15(4) and Bill 20, followed by Bill 19 or Bill 12 and Bill 15. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): We'll take a short break before we commence.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Good afternoon. I call the meeting back to order. At this time, I would like to ask Mr. Speaker if he has opening comments.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the 2006-2007 Main Estimates for the Legislative Assembly. As was the case last year, the proposed operating expenses for the Legislative Assembly for the upcoming fiscal year are characterized by fiscal restraint. A total of \$14.54 million in expenditures is proposed for 2006-2007 compared to \$14.48 million last year. This represents a 0.6 percent increase. This increase was due largely to forced growth expenditures and was mitigated by reductions in a number of categories, most notably in the financial support provided to statutory officers of the House.

In response to the general fiscal restraint exercise undertaken by the government this year, the Board of Management felt a responsibility to again look at its own operations for sources of potential reduction and savings. Among these is an additional \$25,000 reduction in the Assembly's travel budget and a \$70,000 reduction in the budgets of the Assembly's statutory officers, most notably in the budget of the Official Languages Commissioner and the Equal Pay Commissioner.

Funding for the Electoral Boundaries Commission and the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation and Benefits was also reduced, as most of the work for these commissions will be completed in the current fiscal year.

Despite the climate of fiscal restraint, the Assembly is moving forward with a number of important initiatives that will improve the level of service to Members and promote the importance of our institution. There is \$35,000 earmarked this year for a Legislative Assembly Outreach Program modelled upon a successful initiative in the province of Manitoba. The program will see the Speaker and MLAs travel to schools in small communities throughout the Territories with the mace to promote the importance of public government and the vital role of MLAs.

As you know, extensive public input was gathered when our mace was first being designed. Since its completion, however, it's never left the capital. This initiative will allow the residents of the NWT, particularly those in small and remote communities, to see the mace up close and learn a little bit about the work that is done in this House and by all MLAs.

A major priority for the Board of Management this coming year will be to find a long-term and comprehensive solution to the Assembly's broadcasting requirements. In a jurisdiction as long and diverse as ours, it is absolutely

critical that all our residents have adequate and equal access to the proceedings of our Assembly. The loss of APT coverage is an unfortunate reality. However, with every loss comes an opportunity for renewal. The interim measures put in place during this session indicate that alternative forms of broadcasting do exist. The introduction of audio and video web casting during this sitting puts our Assembly on the cutting edge of broadcasting technology. It is not enough, however. Next week, I, in cooperation with the Speakers of Nunavut and Yukon legislatures, will be issuing a request for proposals for a comprehensive solution to our broadcasting needs. The highest priority for my office in the coming months will be to implement a broadcasting solution that will far outperform our previous efforts. The preferred solution is a channel dedicated to broadcasting the proceedings of the three northern legislatures in every community in the Northwest Territories and in all its official languages. Throughout this process, I will consult all Members to ensure that our needs and the needs of your constituents are met.

In the meantime, I would like to thank CKLB Radio and the community cable and radio stations in Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Holman and Yellowknife for their efforts in making our proceedings accessible to residents.

As Members are aware, the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation and Benefits was tabled during this sitting. While Members have not yet had an opportunity to consider the commission's recommendations in the House, a number of them followed up on concerns raised by Members in the House last year. Notably, the recommendation to expand the current Page program such that each Member will be entitled to bring four Pages a year to Yellowknife from their constituencies is one that I welcome.

---Applause

In addition to recommendations to provide Members with adequate funding from the Assembly's appropriation to visit each of the communities in their respective constituencies at least five times a year is one that I feel will greatly level the playing field among all MLAs to meet and represent their constituents. I look forward to your deliberations on these matters and I stand ready to respond to your needs.

Parking remains a critical issue for the Assembly. Last year, engineering work was completed for the creation of 21 additional parking stalls to the east of the access road into the building. This project has been delayed for two reasons. First, the Assembly was in a position of reducing its overall expenditures this year. To proceed with this project value at over \$150,000 would have meant unacceptable reductions to the services provided to the Members of the House.

Secondly, the proposed law court building is likely to have a significant impact on the traffic level into and out of the Legislative Assembly and the current parking capacity. The board is interested in seeking further details on these impacts prior to proceeding with a project that will leave a significant impact adjacent to the Legislative Assembly. As design work on the proposed law court building proceeds, we will be in a better position to determine the best way to proceed.

Supporting the work of the statutory officers of the House is a critical component of the work of the Legislative Assembly. This year, the budgets of the Languages Commissioner and the Equal Pay Commissioner have been adjusted to reflect the lower-than-expected number of complaints received by these offices. The budget for the Equal Pay Commissioner has been reduced from \$175,000 to \$68,000; \$35,000 of this reduction has been transferred to the office of the Speaker to fund the Legislative Outreach Program and \$22,000 has been transferred to the ATIPP Commissioner to provide her with a small operating budget. The remaining \$50,000 was used to meet the Assembly's expenditure reduction targets. The Languages Commissioner's budget was reduced from \$200,000 to \$180,000, also to meet the fiscal restraint target.

The budget for the Chief Electoral Officer has been increased by \$75,000 in preparation for the 2007 General Election. While the budget for the Human Rights Commission remains steady at \$630,000, an increasing number of complaints to the commission is putting pressure on this allocation and will likely require adjustments this year or next.

Mr. Chairman, 2005-2006 saw the successful completion of a number of large pieces of work including the Electoral Boundaries Commission, the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation and Benefits and a general review of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. The year ahead will be focussed on implementation, particularly in the run-up to the general election in just over 18 months from now.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the Board of Management who have the unenviable job of administering the services and benefits provided to all Members. I am proud of the work that they have done on behalf of all Members and our institution. This concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. PAUL DELOREY: I would.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Would the Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the witnesses in? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is the Clerk of the Assembly, Tim Mercer; and to my left is Myles Moreside, director of corporate services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. General comments to the Speaker's opening comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to just make a few comments on the Speaker's opening comments with respect to the Legislative Assembly budget. Mr. Chairman, I just want to show my support for any work and the work that the Speaker's office, Clerk's office, and the Board of Management is doing regarding doing the public campaign or communications out to the

communities and travel with the mace and let especially the young kids all over the Territories know about the power that we've been given by them to be here and to represent them and make decisions on their behalf. I think there's always...You know, kids change and they grow fast, and just when...That experience with myself in my riding you need to, you can never visit enough and talk to them enough about important issues of the day and what it is that this House means to our democratic system and what place it has. So I want to applaud the Speaker and his officials for that.

The second issue that I want to speak about is the importance of communicating to our residents about the work we do here. I appreciate that we've had some hiccoughs because of the complications we have had in getting the coverage aired in APTN. But I think the one idea that we should really consider, and in partnership with all northern jurisdictions, is to have our own northern channel. I don't think we can underestimate the power of TV and media for the public to disseminate information. It is an essential part of the democratic system and it is something that we should really focus our energy on in working out a workable arrangement. It is not just to advertise, so to speak, what we do, but TV is a very, very important medium and any government has to rely on that to make...I think it's a connecting agent between a public body like this and the public. With the cooperation and partnership of other northern jurisdictions, I think there is a lot we can do with this. Not only to broadcast the House proceedings of the NWT Legislature, Yukon Legislature and Nunavut Legislature, but on an ongoing basis there are very important press conferences that happen here that could be aired.

Not only that, there are lots of cultural activities that happen in all corners of the Territories that people outside of that specific locality do not have privy and access to. I think one of the privileges that we have as a Member is to be able to travel to different communities and, say, the festivals all over northern communities, for example. There's a very distinct culture and music in Tuktoyaktuk, or Inuvik, or Aklavik. I mean, there are a completely different set of songs and ways of singing in the North that we have the privilege to visit and take part in; Dene hand games and all of the assemblies. There is just so much going on and I think this government has to, even if it costs money, to take an important step of being the agent for serving that need.

I think when CPAC, the national channel, came on, there might have been a question about whether would anybody want to watch committee proceedings or the goings on in the Supreme Court about lawyers appearing before the Supreme Court and arguing on issues that may not be understandable to laypersons. But that's not the way it turned out at all. In fact, CPAC is one of the most watched channels in the country and I think it's because people appreciate getting information from the source and not being filtered by any other middle agents, whether they be, you know, whatever that might be. It's commercial free. The Arctic Winter Games we have going on in Alaska, if we could air those.

I think the opportunities are limitless and I think the CBC being the national broadcasting, they do try to have a component, like absolutely Canadian. But I think we could do something absolutely northern and really use it as a medium to share our common experiences and common culture and also display our distinct, you know, differences

in the different regions. I think there is just such potential there and I would encourage the Speaker's office to keep on working with the other partners to see how we can make this accessible and make it possible, but also to try to tap into CRTC or any of the heritage funding or anything, because I don't think we realize the shortcomings that we have in not having the medium that communicates so much that is going on in the North.

Lastly, another thing about it is, people like to see themselves reflected on TV, especially if it's a national media. All the children, and all the culture groups, and the students, and sports groups, and all that should be reflected on our TV. The national media can't do that. We can do that with a northern channel. That's something that I really, really want to encourage our Assembly to take the leadership role on, because the benefits are going to be tenfold, twenty-fold. We are not even aware right now what the positive impact of that might be.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I know I probably ran out of my time here. In a jurisdiction where at times it seems like there's so much going on in the NWT, that might be putting pressure to separate us and sort of highlight the more differences than the common culture and common history that we share as a jurisdiction. I think there is a lot more than just broadcasting the Legislative Assembly sessions that we could tap into. There's just so much more good to it and it's an opportunity, and any problem has to be seen as an opportunity. Minor problem we had with APTN, we just have to turn it around and it's an opportunity for us to capitalize on and to move forward. So that's my statement.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll keep my general comments fairly brief. I just wanted to again say I'm really happy that the Outreach Program is going to be really looked at, and we are going to try to get out and get into schools and the communities and try to get through to young people on what it is that the government does, how it works. I think that's really important to try to foster that type of knowledge with our youth and get them excited about the possibility of one day getting involved themselves and getting out there and doing this work. We'll hopefully see some future MLAs being talked to and getting excited about the possibility of entering into public life. I'd encourage that to move forward.

One thing I wanted to really talk about, and that's coming from being on the Board of Management, it really is, I remember back to when the Board of Management was going through a proposed reduction scenarios when the word "edict" came down from the Department of Finance and FMBS that we had to look at our expenditures and reduce as a government-wide reduction exercise. The Legislative Assembly's operations is fairly small compared to many of the other large departments, and I just don't understand or comprehend why FMBS would, in their infinite wisdom, try to enforce reduction on departments that don't really have much room to move. This is the case; and I saw it firsthand with my involvement on the Board of Management, how this is just allowed to happen. It really makes me quite ill when I see things that have just happened here recently with the \$450,000 coming out of somewhere, the 525 for caribou management, and then the FMBS is nickel and diming other departments,

including the Legislative Assembly, and we've got jobs to do here. We can't forget that.

Somebody, I don't know if it's, I wouldn't say it's calculated, but I mean, somebody is trying to tell us how we're going to do our job and there's something about that, Mr. Chairman, that I just don't like. It doesn't sit well with me when things are imposed on us that try to limit our ability as Members to carry out the work here at the Legislative Assembly. I think that's partly what those reductions set us on a course to do, is limit our ability as Members to carry out our work. I take great offence to how that happened and, again, I want to state on the record that I am not supportive of across-the-top reduction exercises government-wide. It just doesn't work in all departments. The Legislative Assembly is a very perfect example of how it doesn't work.

I know the, well, I can't say where the certain individuals are right now because it's against the rules, so I won't, but maybe they can read Hansard and pick up on my comments, as well, because I think they're warranted and I think somebody has to be paying attention to that because they haven't been paying attention. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just with respect to the budget of the Legislative Assembly. I'd like to thank my colleagues because it's an honour for me to sit on the Board of Management and undertake looking at the Legislative Assembly budget and goings on and understanding a little bit in depth as to how the Assembly works as a whole, how we keep our buildings and administration systems going.

I think by far this particular year, or within the last six months, the biggest issue that we had, of course, was getting our message out to the public: the loss of programming into a former contractor that was providing TV, or providing our Legislature on TV to each and all the communities. It was something that, believe it or not, people took quite public. Going back home the last couple of times in the last couple of weeks, people are saying, hey, we've been looking for you on TV, you're not there. I know that you guys are in session, we hear you on the radio. I guess our challenge is, I know that we lost that one channel that we're normally on, but now we're going to be on, we're trying to find an alternate solution. Mr. Speaker has mentioned it in his opening remarks about the loss of coverage by APTN.

At the same time, I kind of like his comments, too, that here's an opportunity to build a better communication strategy for the Legislative Assembly to bring to the kitchens of all our people in the North and now's the time to be deliberating it. I know that our staff is working hard on finding alternative solutions. Also, there's interjurisdictional negotiations and considerations, as well, because it's the other northern jurisdictions, like the Yukon and Nunavut, who have the exact same issues that we have with regard to providing our legislatures viewing into the communities, and in official languages, as well.

So I would favour investing in some kind of new northern network that can provide our Legislature to all the people. Because over the years, our elders and community members and constituents have all grown accustomed to

turning on the TV at a certain time and knowing that they can watch their MLA either in English or the language of their choice. That was a huge build-up of steady watchers and it's a form of participatory democracy, too.

You know, like, Yellowknife MLAs are lucky because their constituents get to continue to watch them live on TV and catch current issues and provide them feedback, current feedback, as well. It's something that I, as a regional MLA, I feel saddened that the people that I represent get a delayed...even some of them aren't getting it on the TV. I believe they're getting it on the radio, but they're not seeing it on TV in some of the very small communities, like Trout Lake, and Nahanni, and Wrigley, and Jean Marie. But it's something that being a small northern territory, then they used to participate and see it all the time. They knew all the issues and it was great. I would go visit them and have a tea and we would talk about issues that interested them that they saw in the Legislature, be it on housing or economic development or even some of the current issues in Tuktoyaktuk. But it interested them and they saw that, and I'm not too sure what kind of continued feedback I'll get now, but we'll see. I'll make my tours and get some feedback for our next sitting in the May/June session.

Hopefully, too, by then, I know our staff and Mr. Speaker is working hard on coming up with alternate solutions and hopefully you'll have something firm by then so the other small communities can see it on their local channels. But that remains to be seen. I know that setting up a new northern network will be like any other project. It will be, I wouldn't want to say cost prohibitive, but the start-up costs will be huge. But that's something I'm prepared to support and speak in favour of, if and when the time comes.

Another thing that's of great interest to myself and to the constituents and students, much like the crowd that raised their own money to come visit us here today. During recognition of people in the gallery, I recognized the Grade 6 class up there. Mr. Chairman, they're at that age that they're at the Page age level, I guess I would say; Page age. Whereas, next year in Grade 7 they'll be eligible to come and participate as a Page. I believe it's a fun thing to do. I've had four this year. In fact, I had to pay the cost of two extra Pages this year for myself because the interest and the uptake was there and I didn't want to constrain students from not participating.

So I had no problem providing that service and it goes a long way because, believe it or not, in the smaller communities people are saying, well, I didn't know we had a program like that. I didn't know we had the opportunity to travel or participate. Where was this when I was growing up? But the Page program has been something that I believe we've had in the Legislature for a very, very long time, but it just wasn't used for whatever reason. But I'm finding that the uptake is getting more and more. In fact, in the springtime, I had students from Fort Liard and they enjoyed that immensely, Mr. Chairman. It's something that I'd like to continue in the new year and I'm glad to see that we will be budgeting four per year starting in the new year. I look forward to participating in that and allowing more and more students to come to our Legislature and see how it works.

The new initiative put forward by Mr. Speaker's office about the mace program, or travel with the mace to promote the importance of public government, I think that's huge. It's just one of those things; hey, great idea,

why didn't we do it before? But I'm very supportive of it and I think our Speaker should travel and get out there and let our students know a bit more about participatory democracy. I myself, as an MLA, when I travel to the communities, I like to get into the schools and talk to the students. The more and more they see about our government, the more and more interest they'll have as adults and utilize our public government system and understand and know how it can work for their favour. Because there comes a time in each person's life when we have to lobby government for a particular issue that we're passionate about, and once you know how it works, at least you know what the next steps are. So I would champion the mace program and get more knowledge about our Legislative Assembly. The more knowledge about how it works out into the communities.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll end my comments. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Along with the way that the Assembly has changed a few of the ways it's doing business in our committees and this, in these past few weeks here with the way we're managing the budget, Mr. Chairman, so too have the staff and some of the contractors who work here in the Legislative Assembly. I wanted to acknowledge my thanks to them because these things, you know, it means change is not easy for anybody and I know that the staff here has had to undergo some changes in their own personal hours, their own family hours to accommodate the kind of things that we want to change here in the Assembly. I wanted to say that I appreciate that, and that I'm really looking forward to making this work even better.

There's been quite a bit of mention, Mr. Chairman, of the pre-budget consultations that Members on this side of the House undertook in September of this year. We will be doing that again. I believe that we were looking at some preliminary plans for late August, for the fall of this year. With that I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we will also see more access not only to the public sessions of this Assembly, but to our committee meetings, Mr. Chairman. Something that is still a marked difference from our Assembly to the national Parliament and I think most of the provinces, is that our committee work, which is an extensive part of Members, the way we do business, is still held behind closed doors. We have started in a small way to open our committee process up to the public and, with the cooperation of the Cabinet, I really do hope we can do more of that.

This gets me to the point, I think, that several other Members have already mentioned, and that is the access that the public has through communications. Indeed, I think the change from the APTN television format has caused us to become much more innovative and by getting into things like web casting, using existing radio, television, and cable TV networks, we are actually going to end up giving greater access to the public to what goes on here in this Assembly. That is really significant, really important, and very, very positive for me. It's one of the things that I've been striving to do, is find more ways to make this Assembly not only more accessible, Mr. Chairman, but more relevant to the people of the NWT. I think through these new ways of seeing how we do business, and I hope being able to interact with us, that

we will make ourselves more a part of people's lives and they will see how significant it is that we do a good job and that they keep a watch on us. So I'm looking forward to expanding that reach and perhaps even making some of our committee processes acceptable, Mr. Chairman, or accessible, Mr. Chairman, through things like web casting. It's very doable. We just need to turn our minds to it.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps just to serve notice of a couple things that I would like to ask Mr. Speaker and his staff when we get to the appropriate place, is the bit of progress or bit of a status report on the work of the Legislative Assembly Enhancement Committee, I believe it was called. This was an offshoot of a study and a survey that was done at the tail end of our previous Assembly, Mr. Chairman, to look for ways that the Legislative Assembly building and grounds could reflect more currently the nature, and the cultures, and the lifestyles of the peoples of the North. So some kind of snapshot of what they have done and, Mr. Chairman, in the forthcoming year what kind of accent can we see from that committee.

Another area, Mr. Chairman, that I recall discussing at this time last year when Mr. Speaker was before us was the delivery of Legislative Assembly information in various languages. We have, it's now, I believe, 11 official languages. Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Eleven official languages here in the Northwest Territories. We have, through broadcast facilities, some broadcast of that of our processes. But there are other aspects of what we do here that I believe can and should be made available even in brief summary form in our other languages, and it relates to a specific question that I had last year, Mr. Chairman, which was the provision of services, or some interpretive services and information materials to our Japanese visitors.

Mr. Speaker, as we're speaking right now, just outside the glass doors of the Legislative Assembly, I see a small tour of Japanese visitors here. The private sector companies that make their visits possible escort them into the building, Mr. Chairman, provide them with some interpretation of what we do in Japanese, but nowhere in the building, Mr. Chairman, given the fact that there are, I think it's safe to say, thousands of Japanese visitors who come through our building during the winter, nowhere is there any information in their language of how this Assembly works, let alone in the official languages of our own territory. So that is an aspect, Mr. Chairman, of the Speaker's job that I would like to make an inquiry into at the appropriate time.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll keep it very brief and to the opening comments. I want to say, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the hard work that the Speaker and his staff are doing. I know times that, for us new MLAs, called rookie MLAs, there's lots of regulations, there's lots of patience required by your staff to get us comfortable and understanding how the system works. So I really appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of guiding us through this process here, that your staff have been very patient with us. I want to support you and your staff and continue working to help us understand our jobs better. Sometimes we just don't understand things and they have the patience to let us know, and still sometimes we don't understand. But that's the way it is. So I want to

thank and in saying that to Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, in terms of his staff giving us good support as we're down here.

I want to also say he certainly has my support of seeing a program going into the smaller communities all over the Northwest Territories, south of the lake here and further up north right up to the Beaufort-Delta, in terms of bringing the government into the schools and having them understand that, someday, they may be some up-and-coming MLAs from our regions, and so they understand that we are bringing government into the communities so even our older people in the communities don't understand that who haven't seen the mace and the like before. It is like bringing the Stanley Cup to our communities. I would think so, to really understand the mace and to understand it, because, as MLAs, we sit here day in and day out. We sometimes take that for granted. Sometimes it is nice to bring some of the government into our communities so people in our communities somewhat appreciate the work that we do and the integrity of the government that we perform in. I want to support the Speaker on that initiative.

Some of my colleagues that spoke on the public broadcasting, there is an opportunity waiting to be resolved and looked at. I support what they have talked about how we could really use this opportunity to really broadcast some other initiatives from the Legislative Assembly that will bring more understanding and education into our communities that would enhance the bringing of the mace and the Legislative Assembly into our communities.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Speaker and the staff to recommend that the Page program that Members would be entitled to bring four Pages a year to the Assembly. Again, that would bring some excitement to our region when who the four would be coming down. That is very good. That is why I am going to get some good MLAs in the future that this government is going out to the people. I just wanted to keep it to that point, Mr. Chair, that certainly, I will have my support on the initiatives here. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of areas that I would like to talk about. I think the first one is I will start with the Youth Parliament. I find it very intriguing what we do. It is really an interesting form of engagement to the youth on the importance of democracy. Sometimes that value isn't realized until people become voting age, or they may even become taxpayers through the homeownership process. I find, sometimes, that could be lost out there for many years until, like I say, you become part of the taxpaying cycle. Then you realize how important public government becomes.

I think, through our education system, I am quite proud to say that I have gone through in the Northwest Territories. They taught us a lot about the importance of the Legislative Assembly. When Mr. Menicoche had mentioned today about the young students and some of the parents who came through here today who are going to school in Bompas in Fort Simpson. I attended that school while I grew up. I can remember them teaching us, the teachers that is, they were teaching us about what

was happening here. They talked about the old days, about bringing government to the people. It sort of reminded me of those days, seeing them up there, those young, happy, smiling faces seeing what we did. Back when I was a kid, they had not travelled, the Assembly that is, for quite some time, so we got to know our MLAs through little brochures about who they were and whatnot. Occasionally, because I knew the Sibbeston family very well, I grew up at houses like Nick Sibbeston's and understood what they did here. It was very fortunate for me to sort of have that experience and to have teachers through the education system to talk about what we did. I am really proud to say that this Assembly is responding to a need through the Youth Parliament system which encourages youth to get involved and learn more about what is happening. Seeing them here reminds me about that period in my life when I first learned about government and what we did. That was a start where I first envisioned of coming to this Assembly, and one could say that I have realized the dream I have had since I was a little kid watching even Parliament on television back in the late '70s, early '80s, so we are on our way.

To the Page process, it didn't exist when I was a young student in Fort Simpson growing up. Until I moved to Akaitcho Hall, they went there and solicited and said, does anyone here from the communities want to participate in the Page process? I was fortunate enough to be one of those that was selected. It was quite exciting because I remember I started as a Page. Like I said, I learned about our government system through our school. It has brought me through today. So through a long-winded way, I am trying to say that I think it is an important process that we continue to bring the youth from the communities as well as, of course, our youth from Yellowknife here into the Assembly here, so they experience what we do, know and realize how important it is, the decisions we make today. On that point, I will leave those by themselves and I will move on.

Mr. Chair, when I am out in the community meeting and seeing constituents, not a week goes by when people talk to me about how exciting it is to watch us on television. I really find that encouraging because, in my mind, that is the way the Assembly brings government to the people. I know we have transcripts that you could read through the Hansard process by downloading them. I know the newspaper does what they can, the radio, the CBC and whatnot, but there is something a little bit different about watching your MLA on television than there is sitting down and reading it. Warren Kinsella had once said about the Canadian public, whereas they are a busy bunch of people, it is difficult to sit down and make time to go through the process, but yet, being able to focus in on a few minutes and watch things and listen to things, I thought was always a very stimulating point which was people's lives are busy, but bringing democracy in through the television into their homes, I think, is something that we need to continue.

I will say that I am extremely pleased to be part of this Assembly that has now started the pre-budget consultation process. I, as well as many Members, trumpeted this. I think this was met at great success. We started here in Yellowknife. I thought this was a neat way of bringing government to the people, because we are asking them in advance what is important to you and can we help bring this to life. It has never been done, to my knowledge, before this Assembly. I would like to see and

hope the future assemblies grab onto this important challenge that we have done by bringing it open. I think what we have done is blown the doors off the process so we can show to the citizens that we are trying to be more accountable to their needs.

With that, I am really committed to the process to ensure that the public really does see what we do here. That is why I have spoken even through a Member's statement about saying that I am fully supportive of stepping forward to a satellite channel where the Legislative Assembly can be seen throughout the North as well as throughout Canada, of course. I have spoken about the fact that I believe we should create a northern channel and embrace our colleagues to the left and right of us which are the Yukon and Nunavut legislatures. I think that is a good vehicle to bring our debates and our questions to the people which, ultimately, are the ones we are here to serve. I have been cornered, in a sense, a number of times where people have wanted to tell me how excited they were to see us on television from community members when I was in Fort Good Hope, how they say that they enjoy seeing us. They like watching our debates. They like to see that, sometimes, we even get an answer when we ask a question. They find it quite a different process. I think it is very encouraging to know, on a personal level, that people are watching. I know that the Legislative Assembly debates are maybe not the most stimulating things to watch on television, but the fact is they are good information and there are good things seen that are being done.

To lend my support to, say, a satellite channel, I think, is the way to go. I know that there will be short-term costs. I don't want that to be seen as a criticism to the idea. I think the value of that type of communication goes far beyond any type of short-term costs that we may see as a quick hurdle. The fact is there will be no other system that we can truly bring a broad brush of democracy into citizens' homes. I think that is our mechanism, like I say, or our vehicle to help ensure that the people are seeing what we do and help ensure that they know what we are doing, as well.

With that, Mr. Chair, at this time, I am going to leave my comments at that and say that I am very supportive of what we have been doing here, and I would like to continue to see the good work that goes on. Like I said earlier on a number of occasions, I think the pre-budget consultation through this Assembly support I think is one of the most significant steps that we have done. It will only be realized years from now about how important that step was about bringing democracy to the people and asking them their opinions, because it is truly them who we are serving. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have already spoken on this so I don't want to extend that, but I just wanted to suggest one thing. I guess I could write to the Board of Management about that, but this way I get it on record and hopefully this will be looked at. That is the issue with the Japanese visitors. I have to tell you that it is always a good thing when you work in a place where people from so far away come to visit and they make a point of visiting our facility. I do believe that they walk away very impressed each time. We do get an enormous number of Japanese visitors. I think it is up to 12,000 and climbing.

One thing I want to suggest is, Mr. Braden spoke about having some literature in Japanese. I don't know if that has already been done. I think some parts of description are written in Japanese. I am wondering if the Speaker's office could work with the tourism industry and the Department of ITI to see if we could have DVD or virtual display where Japanese visitors could just press a button and hear about the Legislature, or about the North, or our people, our land, in their own language. I do understand that we don't want to focus all of our tourism money on one sector. The tourism plan that the Minister of ITI unveiled speaks to developing regional products and building infrastructure at a regional level. I think what we have here is a captive audience. They have come all the way here. They are in our House. I know that, through their guides, I am sure they get good information, but the important thing is that we are more than...We, the territory, is more than just this House and this city. I am just wondering if the Expo being held in Japan and I am sure there was some production and promotion material that was already made about the Northwest Territories in Japanese. It could be in the form of TV format already. The only thing is, though, whenever we suggest anything to be done in this building, everything has to match the building. It has to be the same kind of colouring and wood. Next thing you know, even the recycling box looks better than most furniture I have in my house, to tell you the truth.

I don't want to see thousands of dollars worth of display case for something like this. I do appreciate that it is protecting the integrity of the design and colour scheme that makes our building look very beautiful as even the years go by, so I didn't mean to knock that down, but I want to make a suggestion and not make it as a big costly endeavour. I think it certainly is an idea that should be looked at if it has not been already. Thank you.

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

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Yakeleya was saying before, if someone said, come down here for when we first come down here, the first people that meet us at the door is Mr. Clerk and his staff really help us to be able to do our duty here and they keep us in line, as Mr. Speaker does. I have always appreciated that you come down here and you get the help from people downstairs and it makes your job a lot easier. A couple comments I would like to make other than that on the Speaker's opening comments, like some of the Members, I was disappointed that we weren't being broadcast this year because a lot of people do like watching us on TV, but I can understand their reasoning as for not broadcasting and going with the existing demands of the broadcaster. I back him up on that. I think they made the right choice. I like the web cast format. I checked it a couple of times and I think that is something that will work really well. Iron out some bugs.

One of the things I don't agree with is in speaking to the law courts building being on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. They are both tourist attractions. I don't want this law courts building. Even with the price tag, it has got to be thought of as a tourist attraction. If there was another place that this building could sit. I would just as soon see it sit there. I would support any initiative to move it off of this property here and have it somewhere else.

I like the suggestion of the Pages. I think that is an excellent idea. The Pages that we have come down, to them, it is a real honour to be part of our proceedings. They take that very seriously. I would support any initiative like that.

I like the program that the Speaker is talking about bringing the mace and that out to the communities. All the travelling that we do, the people in the communities really, a lot of them like seeing their MLAs in the communities because they see us on TV and for them to actually see the mace and have the Speaker and some of the MLAs bring the mace around I think would give it a lot of good exposure. I think that is an excellent idea.

With that, Mr. Chair, I have outlined a couple of my concerns. I mentioned that all the help that we get from the staff here and everyone will agree with me. It is second to none. I had only one negative comment. I am sure a few of my colleagues will share the same feeling. Other than that, Mr. Chair, I will leave it at that. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. General comments? If there are no further general comments, does committee wish to go into detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can committee turn to 1-10? Information item, revenue summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-12, 1-13, activity summary, office of the Clerk, operations expenditure summary, \$7,381,000. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Under this particular area, the office of the Clerk, describes one of the responsibilities or activities is that visitor services and public information is coordinated through the office of the Clerk and this expenditure area. It is here, Mr. Chair, that I would ask my question about the provision of language interpretive, descriptive information services, whether in print or audio or, as we have seen in some cases, Mr. Chair, there is information and interpretation information on the walls, on the glass windows and various displays. Mr. Chair, how can the office of the Clerk continue to provide language service interpretation in the Legislative Assembly building? I would like to include a special mention to tourism audiences and their languages, as well as our own official languages, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This issue, of course, did come up as the Member mentioned when we were before the House before, as far as putting out brochures or CDs or whatever publication we could put out in Japanese for the tourists that do come to the building. We gave that a considerable amount of consideration, but we also had to keep in mind the comments that came back to us from the Members that were in the House at the time. It was put to us pretty clearly that, before we put a lot of dedication or expense

to putting stuff out in Japanese, we pay a lot of attention to our own official languages in the Northwest Territories. I guess that is a legitimate concern. We do as much as we can to make this building a House for the people of the Northwest Territories. Of course, because of the different coverage that we have now with APTN, we have changed some of our broadcasting in different languages. We are a bit limited right now.

I guess, with the Japanese one, a couple of things we, as much as I acknowledge the fact that we have large groups of Japanese coming in through here, we are not a tourist attraction, per se. We are not a museum or we don't have a tourist business because we go out and promote the tourist ourselves as a tourist attraction. We are here for the House of the people to do business in. That is not to say that it is not important when Japanese do come in here. I would like to see ourselves and our staff maybe work with...There may be a way we could approach the tourism industry. I think a lot of them end up here because of information they get at the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre. There may be something that we could work through the tourism industry, or through the information centre here in Yellowknife, for them to provide some kind of brochures or publications that would be available to Japanese or whatever type of tourists come through the Northwest Territories. I certainly would be more than willing to have our staff work and look at some of those areas that maybe we could do something.

We have worked for our own official languages. Members will notice that, along the booths, we have put up all the writing around the building in all of our different languages. Most of our brochures now are out in most of our official languages of the Northwest Territories. I guess it is safe to say that we have put a lot more emphasis on our own official languages in the Northwest Territories before we step outside. My office, I am prepared to have some staff work with maybe the tourism industry or the Northern Heritage Centre to see what we could provide for them to assist them in putting stuff out for Japanese, for sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Respectfully, I would beg to differ with Mr. Speaker. We are a tourism attraction. This building is one of the most magnificent legislatures in Canada. It is acknowledged. I know Mr. Speaker has heard that himself from his counterparts who just visited us a few weeks ago and marvelled at the beauty, the complexity, and the features of this building. I think that, to the tourism industries across the Northwest Territories, if we can send them a signal that we believe that we are part of this industry, at least in that we are an attraction through our building and our style of government, that would be a very welcome step, a good companion to what was just announced yesterday, increase investment on the part of our government. I would like to think, with modest cost, we can extend an extra welcome to the visitors to our land through some interpretation of this building and the job that we have here as part of the government of the people of the NWT.

I would very much welcome the Speaker's suggestion that we could work with the tourism industry officials here in the city of Yellowknife. I think they are very proactive, as well, to see just what would be appropriate, and design our service to meet that need and potentially in other

languages, Mr. Chair. Is there an adequate or large enough number, for instance, of German or Italian along with French and Japanese people coming to the Assembly to make it worth the while to talk to them?

I would leave this request, again, with the good offices of the Speaker to advance and see what we can do to enable us to be an even better part of the tourism industry in the North, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to get into a dispute with the honourable Member about whether we are a tourist attraction. I don't dispute the fact that this is an attraction. This building in Yellowknife is an attraction to visitors from all over the world that come here and we are very well known for the beauty of the building. My only point is that we are not in the tourist business, per se, and we are not a building that is on display that we try to bring people in here particularly as a tourist attraction. I agree with the Member that we should have something, maybe work in cooperation with the people that are in the business of what they have and what Yellowknife has to attract tourists here. I don't have a problem with that. So I will leave that commitment open to the Member, that we will look at any way we can to work with the tourist industry to help out promote our building and make it accessible in their languages if there is anything we can do there. I will make that commitment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to speak on almost the very similar lines Mr. Braden did. Maybe I am just going to take it in a different approach, although I may get somewhat of a similar answer. If the Speaker isn't offended, I am just going to go about the same direction, which is it is no surprise to anyone here, that I am very supportive of the Japanese tourism. That has come up on a number of occasions. I am very proud to be very supportive of it. We bring 12,000 visitors through our major tour companies here to the Northwest Territories. There are spin-offs to our communities for aurora tourism. That, to one extent or another, brings \$16 million to our local economy. To that, I think that is a significant element to who we are as a territory, from a business sense.

In recognizing that we have several pillars and columns here in this Assembly building and many walls that could be used for something small, I am going to challenge the Speaker, and I am hoping he finds it an interesting challenge that I would like challenge him, to take him up on a suggestion about meeting with some of the people in the tourism industry. We have three major tour operators here locally, and they do bring in a lot of Japanese. It is my understanding that they would provide translation services in order to keep the fees realistic enough for us to come up with a small couple of plaques just to acknowledge what we are and what we do and whatnot. I can't imagine it costing more than a couple hundred dollars to take it to one of the local companies in order to produce what appears to be a fitting wall plaque or whatnot that would be suitable for the Assembly. I only say this in the sense that, from my experience with the Japanese people as well as specifically the tourists, that

any acknowledgement of them seems to go miles. In a tourist economy that is extremely shaky at best in the sense that we have strong aurora here and it is acknowledged all throughout Japan that the best aurora is in the Northwest Territories, but the problem is that we have competitors in Alaska and other places that are competing just as hard for these tourists.

The reason I say all of this is because it is just about appreciation, respect and recognition that I am really going about. All I am asking is if we can get ultimately a clear commitment from the Speaker on this matter and that would probably end it for me. Could he find some way to agree today that they will put up some type of plaque in recognizing either explaining what our mace is, or something suitable, that at least Japanese can come here into our building and definitely see some writing on our wall that we recognize that they are an important customer to the Northwest Territories? If I can say this quite simply, happy tourists spend money. New money being brought to our economy is good for everyone. It is my opinion, growing up through the Territories, I don't think we would be offending any culture or other language if we just put up a small plaque to recognize the Japanese people in the sense of translation of one of our things on our wall. It is my belief that it only strengthens who we are. It will only further recognize the diversity of the world and what we do bring. I will say that I do understand what the Speaker means about we are not a tourist attraction, per se. I mean, we don't have carnie rides or handouts or things like that, but being one of the most important buildings, in my mind, in the Northwest Territories it is seen as a draw. I can tell you anytime I'm to any province, the first place I always wonder about going to visit is the Legislature. Maybe it's because I'm an MLA, I don't know, but I certainly think that they're important buildings. So I do understand the Speaker's point. So if I could get a small type of commitment from the Speaker whereas we'll just find some way to accommodate the request of something on our wall so that the Japanese people will see that we truly appreciate and respect them, that would satisfy me for the short term and give us a chance to go forward and see how it works out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll give the commitment that we will look at this issue some more. I know that from my office anyway, and I think with my staff, my preference and my priorities lie with all our official languages and whatever we can do to support, like I say, the building in recognizing the fact that we do have a lot of tourists come in here I am in support of that, as well. I will take it back and talk with staff over it and see what direction we can go with this and keep Members apprised at the progress we're making in that area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Hawkins. Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A quick question to the Speaker. Have there been any discussions in terms of working with the community constituents on a basic manual in terms of operations and procedures in working with the community constituents on putting together a basic manual for the community constituent assistants that we have in our office at the Legislative Assembly in terms of the CAs? I wanted to

ask if there was some discussion or that discussion will happen sometime in the future. Thank you

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

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We haven't produced a separate brochure or information package for CAs, but we do have the role of CAs and the role of MLAs, and the connection between the two is pretty well spelled out in the Members' Manual. We do have an orientation manual, as well, that we put out for CAs when they come on stream. We also give two copies of the Members' Manual out when new Members come on stream; one for themselves and one for the CA office. So pretty well anything as far as the role of the CA or the MLA is pretty well spelled out in the Members' Manual. But we have not, other than your orientation manual that we put out at the beginning, as well, we have not put out another package beyond that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the constituent assistants, would there be some thought to even review that constituent assistants' manual because for two years now, and it is going to the third year, that we might need some options for putting some feedback into it in terms of improving it. I'm not too sure if that needs to happen now, but to review it again or to look at it. Not so much as a major overhaul in terms of things that we could look at with our CAs to help us make our job a little easier and also with working with your staff at the same time. That's what I'm getting at, Mr. Speaker. If it's a possibility, I just wanted to ask that question, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would be open to any area that the Member wanted to talk about as far as looking at our operations manual and our orientation manual to see what changes, additions or improvements we could make in there. It's a little vague when you throw it wide open as to what we want to deal with, but if the Member has some specific concerns he'd like to have addressed, I'm certainly open to sitting down with him and seeing how we could address them through improvements to the manual or whatever. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly look forward to sitting down with the Speaker at some time in the future just to go over it and look at some of the specifics. I look forward until the date that we can do this. So I'll just leave it at that for now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. 1-13, activity summary, office of the Clerk, operations expenditure summary, \$7.381 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): 1-14, 1-15, information item, office of the Clerk, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): 1-17, activity summary, office of the Speaker, operations expenditure summary, \$199,000. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under this area I believe the Speaker has a responsibility for the Legislative Assembly Enhancement Committee. Actually, I believe this is under the direct chair of the Deputy Speaker, but it was set up through the Legislative Assembly to look for ways to help our Assembly and our buildings, and our grounds better represent the peoples of the NWT. How is this committee doing on that mandate, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee, Cultural Enhancement Committee, did get together a couple of times in this past year. The first meeting was more or less an organizational meeting for themselves to look at how they were going to operate, what things they thought they could look at. Then the second meeting that they had they did go over quite a number of issues, looked at around the building. but their main focus for the first meeting and the first year that they were in operation was more in the conservation end of things, and looked around the building at what's in the building right now, what's in danger of maybe being damaged and needs more attention as far as preserving any art that we have in the building.

They were instrumental in coming forward with some recommendations to, well one of them was the use of hot food in the caucus room to protect the paintings that we have in there, made some suggestions as to what we should be doing to try and mitigate any damages that we might be causing to the artwork in there. They also made recommendations to build a stand for the caribou carving, whale bone carving that's outside of the Members' offices, to protect that a little bit. It's sitting right down on the carpet and the commission was worried about having some damage done to that, whether it's cleaning people with vacuum cleaners or whatever. So they recommended that a base be built for that. They also recommended that some display cabinets be built for the previous Speakers' robes that are on display here. So those were some of the issues that they looked at.

The funding, of course, is very tight for the commission. We only had at that time I think \$10,000 to work with, and with that amount of money they did some recommendations in those areas. They also had putting up the banners up in the Great Hall. So going forward, they have a number of issues that they want to look at in the coming year, but again, the funding is going to be very tight for them to operate on. We only have a budget of some \$20,000 for them to operate in. But they do have some of what they want to look at in the next year; they had a couple of areas that they want to see. There's an area on the outside of the Great Hall on the curved wall that they would like to have some artwork put up there that would include some Delta braid and different cultures in the Northwest Territories on display there. There was another one, too, that they were going to put up... Oh yes, also they made a recommendation that we look at commissioning the work for a large teepee out front of the building on the grounds somewhere that's representative

of the cultures in the territory. So those are some of the issues that they're hoping to be able to come forward in this next year. Again, it's going to be depending very much, though, on the amount of money that they have to spend. Last year was more preserving what we do have now and then going forward looking at different areas where we can promote the building and promote the different cultures of the territory within the building. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could we anticipate that in the coming year this committee will give us more of some tangible plans, or ideas, or options that we could consider? Even though there isn't a whole pile of money to toss at this, I really would like to see, before there's any talk of funding or money, just what is the objective, or the vision, or the outcome of a given plan? I believe that with some reasonable care and practicality, we may be able to find other agencies that we could partner with who could assist us in financing some of these enhancements if we feel that they're outside of our scope, but first of all it takes that planning or that preparation for us to look at. I value the work of this committee; I think it's a very good idea, but I would like to see a bit more tangible work from this group and I'm more than prepared to look at new ideas or new requests for proposals for funding or other resources, Mr. Chairman. So not really a question there, but an expectation for the coming year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I appreciate the Member's suggestions and comments. I know that from the commission point of view, as I said before, their focus, when they first got together and their first meetings, were to look at what's in the building now. They met with the architect that designed the building to see what possibly could fit in the building, to make sure that anything that they do is going to be well incorporated into the building. But one of the things that they looked at, as well, is to convert the media room into an interpretive centre for the Legislative Assembly, and that was part of the Outcrop report. Some of the suggestions were made in there, and that is one area that they've looked at, but at the same time that's a fairly costly venture. It would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100,000 to \$200,000.

But I mean, I'm sure the commission, as well, is quite open to suggestions from any Members. If Members have ideas that they would like them to look at, I'm sure that they would be more than willing to do that. After their meetings, they report back to the Board of Management with any progress that they're making, or any concerns or ideas that they've come up with. Then, of course, it's up to the Board of Management to see if we can find some money for them or go along with their proposals. So I would encourage the Member that if he has some specific areas that he would like that committee to look at, to maybe make it known to them. I'm sure they would be more than happy to look at different areas and report back to the Board of Management, and we can certainly keep Members apprised as to what their reports are. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden. Thank you. Page 1-17, activity summary, office of the Speaker, operations expenditure summary, \$199,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-18 and 1-19, information item, office of the Speaker, active positions. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-21, activity summary, expenditures on behalf of the Members, operations expenditure summary, \$5.528 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-23, activity summary, office of the Chief Electoral Officer, operations expenditure summary, \$433,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-25, information item, office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Oh, I'm sorry; 1-24 and 1-25. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just wondering, the deputy CEO that has been talked about for awhile, that's the other position that's included here and I'm just wondering when the deputy CEO might come on staff. When are we projecting that to happen? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. PAUL DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There has been money added to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer this year. Part of that is for the hiring of the CEO. There is some legislative change required for that, but we're hoping to get that done in May, June, so that we can proceed with that hiring of the DCEO. Of course, the hiring of the DCEO is pretty well within the mandate of the Chief Electoral Officer, although he's agreed to work very closely with Members on who that's going to be. So we're expecting that to be coming forward here in the next months. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So the individual that gets the DCEO position, will be in place for about a year prior to the election in the fall of 2007. So that's a good time and I don't need a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Page 1-24, 1-25, information item, office of the Chief Electoral Officer, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-27, activity summary, statutory officers, operations expenditure summary, \$995,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 1-29, activity summary, statutory officers, grants and contributions, contributions, total grants and contributions, \$298,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can the committee turn to 1-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$14.536 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we turn to Main Estimates '06-07, volume II. Page 1-5, under Legislative Assembly, infrastructure, active positions, lands, office of the Clerk, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$110,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$110,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total department, \$110,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree that the Legislative Assembly department has been concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): I'd like to thank Mr. Speaker and his staff for appearing before the Committee of the Whole. I'd like to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses out, please.

At this time we'll take a 15-minute break before we go on to the Housing Corp. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. When we left off with the NWT Housing Corporation, we had deferred it and I would now like to ask the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation if he would like to bring his witnesses back in.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Yes, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Mr. Minister, please bring in your witnesses please.

For the record, please introduce the witnesses that you have with you today.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, to my left I have Mr. Jeff Anderson, acting president of the NWT Housing Corporation; and to my right I have Gary McLean, director of policy and programs. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses, to the proceedings this afternoon.

When we left off, committee, we were on page 8-7, department summary, NWT Housing Corporation, operations expenditure summary, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps you could offer a bit of guidance here. One aspect of the Housing Corporation's plan that I had requested a bit more information on and resulted in a deferral had to do with the market housing initiative. The corporation has since provided some information. I would like, Mr. Chairman, to see if I could ask a couple of questions about it. I am wondering if this is the place to do it, or do I need to ask permission to return to a certain page in the department, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. I think what we will do is we will stay on this page. I think questions relative to the material we covered in the past can be included on this page. We won't seek committee's indulgence to return to previous pages, we will stick with 8-7 for questions. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Right; then to the market housing initiative, this is a two-year initiative, Mr. Chairman, undertaken by the Housing Corporation. Early in the life of this government, we were seeking ways, with some urgency, Mr. Chair, to find housing alternatives for essential workers, essential employees of the government or our authorities in the smaller communities, Mr. Chairman, those places where housing tends to be a major problem and is a real barrier to attracting and keeping employees. So especially for health care providers and teachers, Mr. Speaker, this was our need and the Housing Corporation got the assignment. Since then, it has purchased and installed -- in one, two, three, four, five, by my count here, it looks like about 11 communities, I may be off by one or two -- 44 units, Mr. Chairman. By the information the corporation provided from the first phase of 22 units going in, nine of them are occupied by essential workers and in the second phase, Mr. Chairman, five of the 22 units. So that's only 14 out of 44 units installed, Mr. Chairman, that actually met the initial target market of essential workers.

Mr. Chairman, it would seem to fall far short of what our thoughts were, or anticipated need here, and I am wondering, if the Minister could advise if the plan called for 44 units to house essential workers, how is it now that only 14 of them are actually occupied by this initial target market, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we all know, the intention was to provide the opportunity to government employees first. The second option was to go with government program service delivery agencies in communities such as municipalities, band councils, anyone who provided programs and services in a community. The third option was to go to individuals who may be housing clients who have high incomes who would be able to get out of social housing, but be able to acquire one of these units through ownership. So it wasn't totally directed at people in regards to the professions, but we did allow an opportunity for getting them first right of refusal, so they have the first option going in. Then the second option, because of concerns raised by Members that we had too many vacant units, that we went to other agencies such as

government bodies in communities, hamlet councils, band councils, charter communities. Then the third option was to go to individuals who were providing services, but were in social housing who were paying high rents in social housing, to get them to move out of social housing, go into the Homeownership Program by acquiring these units. That's how they came up with these numbers. I know the Member talked about 145 units, but we do have Housing Corporation staff, like our local housing authorities, and we have people such as our maintainers, our finance people in our communities who are also in these units which are not classified as government individuals, but they still provide a unique service on behalf of the communities. So those people also are in there, but they are not showing up as government staff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, I know these units have been a welcome option for some tenants, for some folks outside the initial target area. I guess where I am going at and going over history here now, but in terms of the accountability, why did the Housing Corporation decide to deliver 44 units when, obviously, now that we have had a couple of years to work this out, only 14 of them were actually filled by those essential workers, Mr. Chairman. It would seem that we really overshot the true need. Why, then, did the Housing Corporation invest far more money than the demand really warranted? In the meantime, of course, we need to fill these up. There is no sense at all having them empty, so we can go to other potential tenants like the Housing Corporation's own staff, GNWT employees, the private sector and still we note, Mr. Chairman, from the information provided, that 14 of the 44 units are vacant, 13 of them.

So it's not a great track record here, Mr. Chairman, of determining exactly what the size of the need is and then designing the service to suit the need. We really went overboard here. A lot of money tied up where it wasn't essential. This is the accountability that I am asking for. How was it that the service far exceeded what now is shown to be the need?

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make it clear to the Member, the first 22 units we put on the ground, we have one vacancy out of the first 22. The second 22 units that we put on the ground, because these were approved last year in last year's budget, we got most of them in through the barges/winter road. Out of that, we have a majority of the units going to be completed here shortly. There is a unit in Aklavik which is still being worked on. In Deline, they are hoping to have that completed and ready for occupancy March 31st. In Norman Wells, we are hoping to have the tenants in there by earlier this week and also in regards to Behchoko, Rae, two of the eight units are presently occupied but six units, because of the Tlicho agreement, have held up us getting these units on the ground. They are ready to go in and we are working out land arrangements. Now we have the development permits because we are now dealing with a new government.

So these units are online, coming on stream here shortly. So by saying we have that many units vacant, I have to

agree with you, but it's because of logistical concerns of getting them on in place and having them ready for occupancy. We haven't completed the setup of these units. Because of that, that's why we don't have people in them. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. Next on the list I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My clock is off a little bit, so if I run over...I don't think I am going to have long comments to make, I just want to lend a couple of comments. I guess we held the completion of this department's budget because various Members had questions or extra information they needed to get with regard to the budget. I do believe that we have been working through this process. I didn't have specific issues there that I needed to get information on. Obviously, I have been asking questions to the government and Minister of Finance, in particular, about the budget address with regard to the workforce conversion project.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to state, though, I was surprised to hear earlier today when we had other meetings on that issue, the Minister suggested that somehow I was not appreciative or grateful about the information that I am getting from the officials of the corporation, and I think that's misstating the situation a bit. I think it is our job here to ask questions and to keep the government accountable. In fact, I believe I'm on the right path of asking these questions and making sure what due diligence that I feel are not being done, I somehow try to do my best to get the government to do that. But in asking those questions, it's never a question about whether I question the work, or work ethics, or competence of the staff. I believe that my work here is...and my questions are really always geared toward the Ministers and not to the staff, and it's up to the Ministers. I question the information that the Minister or the decisions that Ministers make, not to the staff. In fact, I think I made statements here, in one of my statements, stating that my criticism of any department on any issue is at the political level, not at the administrative or bureaucratic level. I think it's really important to keep that straight, because sometimes that's hard to tell. I could appreciate that when the discussions and debates here get heated and I could see that some people might feel that that's somehow reflecting on what they might be producing or not producing. So I just want to keep that straight. If there were any misunderstandings, I want to offer an explanation and clarification.

I do have one question in line with what Mr. Braden has been asking about the marketing housing initiative. The latest information we have on that new housing concept is that the government is hoping that 50 percent of the 1,400 homes would be taken up by the private sector. I guess one of the past performances that we could look at to gauge as to what would happen in the future is that there's no question that the Housing Corporation has had difficulty filling a majority of the market housing initiative properties. So if the Minister wants to present to us that he now wants to forecast that 50 percent of the 1,400 homes, which makes that 700 homes by the private sector; I'd like to know what the Minister is planning on doing differently or better to make sure that those lots are available. I would think that they have to do some kind of a market analysis, because we know from the market housing initiative...In fact, I think I was there when the official said that we heard that the teachers needed these

homes, and nurses needed these homes, and we had lots of need; there were lots of people who needed these homes. But when we got them there, there were lots of issues about people not wanting them. So I believe in learning from past experiences, so I'd like to know what best light the Minister can present to us as to what sort of steps the Minister and the corporation will take to make sure that doesn't happen again. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in regards to the Member's first question about how we're going to deal with 50 percent of the units that we're looking at for sale of the 1,400 units, right now we've acquired some 600 clients who own their own homes, they're our EDAP program. Out of that, they were able to acquire almost \$46 million from bank financing. I think this EDAP program will continue on into the future. So there's an existing program that can assist people to get into homeownership, and that's an area that we're going to offer.

Also, we are laying out a new program that we are going to be delivering into the future. So these programs will continue, in which we're hoping to be able to stimulate homeownership through those programs we already have.

In regards to the issue of market housing, yes, the intention was to provide housing to people in communities to basically assist professionals to stay in our communities and also to provide services. Someone that's local or whatnot that works for the band, or works for the municipal council, or provides a municipal service, they also provide a service to people in communities. So I don't know why we're trying to put people in different boxes, saying, well, this was only for you. The program was a general program out there to offer the communities houses where there is a shortage of houses in non-market communities. So this offers an alternative to one time where we provided so-called staff housing. We are no longer doing that. The idea was that we had to provide housing in those communities at a cost-recovery basis, either through rents or basically being able to sell them off and recoup our costs. That, for me, is, if anything, the program is now showing that it is successful, out of the 22 units we originally started with where we have one vacancy in Fort Resolution. That tells me that people are now taking up these units; they're moving into them and they're acquiring them by way of purchasing them outright. For me, that's a good thing.

I think in regards to the other 22 units, to accommodate the professions and arguments, we heard that these units were too big. The second 22 units that we're putting on the ground are duplex configuration where, basically, they're independent, two-unit modular homes which will offer teachers, or nurses, or whatnot, that they'll have independence of their unit where you can accommodate two people in one unit, again which cuts down the costs to be able to deliver that by way of your transportation cost, your land development cost, and also being able to...The operational costs have also come down. So again, that's how we've been able to evolve this so far.

I think that anything, it has provided an option or opportunity to professions, people providing programs, services in communities without having to be classified,

which now is being taken up by people in those communities. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. In the two minutes remaining here, I have a question to ask, but before I do that, this is so bizarre because, you know, it wasn't us sitting here saying we need housing for nurses and teachers. We were aware that professionals weren't being attracted to communities because of lack of housing or whatever, but it was the Minister and his corporation that came and said we have this great idea, we've got this market housing initiative, we think we can house nurses and teachers in there, and then he's asking me, well, then why should we make them a separate group. I mean, why is he asking me? He should have asked that when he was working out this policy. I mean, talk about justifying the policy afterward. I'm telling you, what that is saying...What he's saying is, well, they tried this policy, it didn't work, so then they had to widen the scope, which tells me they didn't do a proper market analysis.

The third thing is...I don't know. Sometimes you sit here and everything is so surreal, it's just a bizarre experience. He's saying, well, we just figured maybe we should have two bedrooms. Well, why didn't they know that then? I mean, when they ordered 44 units they should have known if there's a market analysis done, other people are going to rent, is this going to meet the needs that we're supposed to, and should we set up a separate housing program for teachers and nurses when there are local professionals who are going without housing. I mean, all those questions he should have asked. He didn't do it. He's coming around and giving us heck for them not getting the stuff in the first place. Anyway, gosh, this is the beginning of ongoing, just illogic kind of giving us heck for asking questions in effect.

Anyway, I want to ask a question about this EDAP thing because the Minister is suggesting that there are people who are buying housing under the EDAP program in homeownership and all that, and I know that some of the money that the GNWT is going to put on for the new housing concept is coming from that money. So I'd like to know if the Minister is proposing that all of the 50 percent of the 1,400 units...The latest proposal is half of that will be bought by the private sector. I'd like to know if the Minister is proposing that all of that will be through the EDAP program. Does he foresee that all these are going to be bought by EDAP clients? If not, what percentage does he think will be brought by the EDAP program? I'd like to know, does he foresee 100 percent of the EDAP program being taken by this program? Does he mean that anybody who wants to get EDAP from housing has to buy this unit, or do they have an option of buying anything else? Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are other options individuals could look at. EDAP is one of them. IHP, we're looking at a lease program that we're involved with. But I think, in most cases, people can go directly to the bank and basically talk to the financial institutions out there and be able to acquire it through their own means. But for those people who may need assistance in acquiring the financing from

the bank, we will have programs there to assist them to be able to do that. So there are avenues and options we are able to look at again. Similar to the EDAP program, I was just using the illustration of how we were able to get bank financing to fund 600 houses in the Northwest Territories where \$46 million of that was basically through the banks. It's the same programs we have here. We will be able to assist low income people, give them the down payment assistance they're going to need and also go to the bank for the rest of their financing. Those are the existing programs, and they will continue on and we are hoping to be able to leverage that for low income people. As we know, the majority of these units we are talking about will be in outlying communities where we have large market communities such as Yellowknife and Hay River.

So we are looking at our programs and services, looking at the qualifications of the applicants and seeing which programs will fit the need of that client. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to offer, if I may, a couple of comments with regard to having the Housing ministry back up before us and comment on the deferment. Like I said in my Member's statement and in committee as well, a lot of the concerns really don't seem that that programming is really working or getting down to the constituents. I often share the concern that the Housing Corporation is legislated by a 1978 act and that's very old. There hasn't even been one amendment to that act. Hence, I think a lot of the operational concerns because the corporation has been legislated from a distant past. In fact, that's in the late 1900s and here we are in the 2000s, Mr. Chair.

I think it needs revisiting and another grave concern is decision-making has to be revisited. I don't know how they do it in other departments, but our corporation was set up to be run like a corporation, business-minded with a board of directors, but none of those things are in existence today. In fact, I mentioned today that some of the programming type was specifically intended for the Housing Corporation to provide housing to NWT residents, build them houses, get them on the ground, get them in the communities. I can see that in the '70s we didn't even have houses. We had lots of dilapidated buildings that people were living in and so the Housing Corporation was born to address those needs and we built houses for everybody. Yet, now, we want to still provide housing, we want to provide people and say we have to generate our own revenue, now people have to pay for those houses. Hence, lots of confusion. In fact, the communities I represent are adamant that housing is a treaty right. I don't know what happens. People say they should be providing houses, why am I paying rent. So there is lots of confusion that's happening in the communities.

It just stems from how we do business. All of a sudden, the Housing Corporation changes midstream, so people are confused about consistency of programming. They are sitting there saying you refuse me housing, yet the guy across the streets, he's in the same wage category as I am yet he gets approved and I don't. What's going on? I want to appeal it and there is no appeal mechanism. I think that's how the Yukon had done it, Mr. Chair. They took a good, hard look at how they provide housing and

how they best meet their people's needs. I am supportive of that.

I am very supportive of the motion that's going to be before the House in the next couple of days of providing a performance audit by the Auditor General's office. That's only one way for me, as an MLA, to support a comprehensive operational review of the Housing Corporation. We talked about other ways of doing it, of actually hiring somebody to do an operational audit, but legislatively the only person who can get to the inner workings of the Housing Corporation and ask the employees to be a fair and impartial and provide information on a timely basis is the Auditor General's office, so I don't mind doing that. Let's have a good, hard look.

The other thing, too, is, yes, housing has to be delivered by us. People look to us to be champions in that regard, but once again that's from a distant past and now we want people to pay. So things have to be done a lot differently. I am not convinced that when we are providing loans, like EDAP, we have to build the houses for them, that we have to tender it out, we have to do this. The Minister indicated, Mr. Chair, that for consistency, for quality, for accountability of public dollars, it has to be done this way. I am not entirely convinced. Because we have other departments that provide loans to people and they get hold of their own contractors, but the whole fact is that they signed documents saying that they are being lent money and they are totally responsible and that's what we are doing, yet we are not allowing people the flexibility of controlling the pace of their houses. I don't know if there is any comparison. Perhaps I could ask a question. I don't want to debate the merits of the program, but specifically perhaps the Minister can tell me about the products for people in the free market; how fast do they get their houses and the quality of their houses that they create in the market as opposed to something that is controlled by us. Every time the Housing Corporation gets involved somehow, it gets botched or they have skyrocketing costs. What is the root cause of that? Is it because we are not doing our homework?

Quite often, with government, we get a good idea and we just hit the ground running and we are just sitting there a couple of years later, whoops, I guess it wasn't a good idea. I think a lot of Members on this side of the House keep asking that. We have to do our due diligence first. Let's have a good, hard look at the numbers and justification before we take a program and start running with it. I am supportive of that. Let's have a good, hard look at our programming.

Some of the decisions are based on policies and guidelines that are not even pertinent anymore. Once it is public dollars, but is it applicable anymore? Do you lend the guy money? Is that applicable anymore? It's in his hands. He signed the document that he's letting money out and that he's responsible for the quality and the construction of his home.

You go to the bank and borrow money for a home, it doesn't matter if it's a mobile home or frame built, as long as you make the business case for it, you get lent the money. So it's that kind of flexibility that people want. They want to hire their own contractors and we should have that. There's got to be a way of doing that. We've got to take our hands off the big brother approach, Mr. Chair, and say we know better than you. You can't handle

a \$150,000 loan that we have to do it for you. Yet, everyday people do it in the North.

With that, Mr. Chair, if the Minister can answer me that. Are there any stats that we can compare how much of a delivery of the programs that we deliver compared to the free market? How much quicker? Is there a comparative analysis that we can do? I am sure if we are flexible enough and change our programming geared towards full responsibility of the owner and true ownership, I think that we can go a long way in having better homes on the ground no matter what type they are. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to point out to the Member that we were in the process of making changes to the NWT Housing Corporation Act by way of the mandate process. We were hoping that by making those changes in the mandate, it would allow us to change the act itself. We were in the process of doing that. In the process, we were also looking at changing the programs and services as we deliver right now. As I mentioned, we deliver something like 19 programs. We were hoping to consolidate them down to five areas. Again, that was something that we were working on going forward. That presentation was given to committee.

Mr. Speaker, also as part of the program evaluation, we were also looking at putting an appeals board in place, so people could appeal decisions with regard to applications that they did not feel comfortable with or they did not like the decision that was made. Again, the Member is right; we do have an act which was in place since 1994, which is over 30 years old. A lot has happened in that period of time. I think we have to realize as a corporation, in 1995 when we were part of Nunavut, we had 190 PYs running housing programs throughout Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Today we have 98 positions within the government. We lost almost 100 PYs on programs and services through budget cuts and program services being delivered.

I think with regard to Members' comments about why different programs and services that are delivered in different centres throughout the Northwest Territories, larger centres or communities. I think you can answer that question simply by looking at market communities and non-market communities. There are no markets in a lot of those communities and in a lot of communities, we don't have the human resources or expertise locally where we depend on people from outside the communities, either regional centres or territorial centres to provide the manpower that's needed to construct a lot of these houses in a lot of communities. So it adds extra costs to these projects that has an effect on being able to deliver these programs and services. The biggest challenge is the logistical challenge that's in place.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to follow through and I think just a couple more questions on the market housing initiative. On this one, I am perhaps a little bit on Ms. Lee's page from the original call for a program like this was to satisfy what was perceived to be

an urgent need to house these essential employees. Yet, the Minister has told us it includes other employees of the GNWT and, in fact, virtually anybody in these communities, given that they fall into a certain criteria and could have access to these places. I wanted to ask again just what was really the absolute original intent of the Market Housing Program from the Minister's point of view. Did the criteria of who was an eligible tenant change as the number of units that went out were not filled? Just what happened to that original mandate, which, from my recollection, Mr. Chairman, was issued on an urgent basis? I would not have approved a program, Mr. Chairman, I don't think I would have approved a program on an urgent basis to house basically the regular folks in a community. This was for essential people that we have a hard time housing out there, yet it's opened up and expanded to include more types of tenants. I will stop there, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister give some accounting of that original mandate and why does it now seem so broad, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there was a directive given by the Department of Finance to look at putting houses in non-market communities to assist in where we try to attract professionals or people delivering programs and services in those communities where we don't have a market in place to provide housing. A majority of our communities, 75, 80, in some cases 95 percent of these houses in those communities are public housing for social clients. There is a very small portion of those houses owned by the private sector that are available for rent. We are finding that we have professions trying to get jobs in communities and renting whatever they could find. In most cases, there was very little opportunity to rent or whatnot in those communities. So a decision was made by the government to pass a directive directing ourselves, as the Housing Corporation, to deliver houses to non-market communities to assist in accommodating those people going into those communities, providing a government service by way of housing at the lowest cost possible with regard to a cost recovery principle where we could not add on any extra cost in regards to administration or extra operational costs. We had to do it on a cost-recovery basis. So we were only able to recoup the cost of those units by way of rent or selling those units outright to professionals or people in the communities who provide services.

Also, as part of the directive, there were three principles. The first principle was to give the options to the professionals coming from outside of the community. The second principle was to offer it to government bodies, municipalities, band councils, community governments. The third option was for people in the community who would be able to acquire it who needed housing in communities where right now there was no market. Those were the three guiding principles that we were following. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, the Minister mentioned that part of the criteria here was cost recovery. In fact, one aspect that I recall was a design and part of the financial design would be that there would be a 10 percent premium charged by the Housing Corporation to cover

vacancies and this kind of thing. In effect, they were getting the rents or tenants to provide a contingency fund for the Housing Corporation. That's my reading of it. How are we doing on that basis, Mr. Chairman? Perhaps even if we look only at the units that are occupied now, are we doing so on a cost-recovery basis and meeting that 10 percent contingency cushion, Mr. Chair? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, there was a vacancy factor added in, which was 10 percent. As we all know, teachers, in most cases, leave the communities for their summer holidays and they are gone all summer, so someone had to cover the accommodation costs. The same thing with different professions who do provide services in the communities. They do come and go and, because of that, having the units unoccupied for that period of time during the year. That was what that thing was built in for. With regard to the cost, maybe I will... So that is sort of the reason for having the 10 percent vacancy built in there, to ensure that we are able to cover off our costs, so that we weren't losing money for that time that those units were sitting empty. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. Perhaps we can just leave that question about the cost recovery for the units that are now occupied.

On a broader scale, given the mandate that the corporation had, the costs that it incurred, the vacancies and the issues and difficulties we are still trying to overcome, the Minister mentioned that one of the major ones was land in a number of communities. How would the Housing Corporation characterize the results of this initiative at this time? Could we get a qualitative assessment? Is the market housing initiative something that was worth the investment and has it more or less done the job, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we can see from the first phase of the 22 communities, we have one vacancy and again we already have communities asking for these units in their communities that did not receive them and want to be able to have these units similar to other communities. With regard to the new 22 units that we have put on the ground, we have already people on a waiting list to get into them. So we are seeing a major uptake of these units. As far as I can see, we have had positive responses with regard to the take-up and, because of the occupancy numbers we are seeing, we feel that all of these units should be occupied within a year. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: With regard to the Member's question with regard to rent collections, we were estimating \$110,000 up to January and we've collected \$106,000, so we are short about \$4,000.

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

MR. BRADEN: So the rent collection target of the units that are occupied is within a couple of percentage points of target. Okay, I am seeing some nods over there. Mr. Chairman, one more question on the market housing initiative, for the 2006-2007 budget that we are about to vote on here, are there any costs, expenses, carryovers, commitments that the government is asking us to vote on related to the market housing initiative, or have all the expenditures been satisfied, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: With regard to market housing, which this falls under, we have 110 units that still follow under the classification of market housing, not just the 22 units from last year and the 22 from this year. The total cost is \$892,452. It has been approved already in the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. Next on the list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister a question of the facility in Deline. When would the good people of Deline see that facility in operation? I am not going to belabour the amount of money or all the other good things that go along with having that facility empty. It takes some coordination and I would like to see that facility in use. I am asking on behalf of the community of Deline in terms of the facility that is not in use, what plans are in place by this department to sit with the other departments to get something in place or finalized? There is some concern right now from the people in Deline in terms of getting that building into some use. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have an agreement-in-principle with Health and Social Services on this facility to retrofit the facility and turn it into a wellness or administration support offices. Our department, along with Health and Social Services, will be going into Deline in the next week or two and basically do their assessment, do their inspections. After that, we are hoping to be able to sign off an agreement with Health and Social Services, so that we can turn the facility in Deline into a wellness administration support office. That's roughly where it's at right now. We are hoping to get materials in there this winter on the winter road if we had to do any renovations and hopefully have the facility open up this fall sometime.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, that's good news. I am very pleased with the Minister and Health and Social Services that worked on a coordinated approach and it's no longer a crying shame for the people in Deline to have that facility in use. Is there any type of discussion in terms of if the people want to repatriate their elders from the Aven Manor centre if someone requests us in the future? Again you have to talk to the Minister of Health and Social Services. That's part two on this Deline

facility here in terms of plans or discussions or other consultation with departments. I want to know if that option is available. I am not sure how receptive the Department of Health is going to be or how open they will be to that idea. The people really want to repatriate the elders back to the community. There are two right now in Aven Manor and there is one from Tulita; two elders from Deline and one from Tulita who have some feelings of heading back to their home country for their final days. That's what they are asking for. I understand it is going to require more discussion, but I want to see if there is an opening here somewhere to have some of that discussion. At least we know where we stand with the Minister on this issue. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think the question would be better addressed by the Minister of Health since he's talking about a level two facility. The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for seniors' homes. We simply build and manage these facilities on behalf of Health and Social Services. So I would allow the Minister of Health to answer that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, my recollection is we had this discussion when we did the Health budget and we are looking at the Deline facility. I know there is a letter in there for a seniors' unit in addition to that that's not in anybody's planning at this point. So that's about all I can add to the discussion.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, both Ministers. At least we know where both departments stand on this issue. There's ample time for further discussion. I wanted to ask not so much in terms of a question to the Minister. As you know, our region has been quite high in the needs survey in terms of the housing survey. People in our region sure appreciate when the houses are built and repaired in our region. You are starting to see some improvements. So as much as we know there are things that need to be corrected, however, when we start seeing houses being improved in Fort Good Hope, for example, where houses were being fixed up, looked after, I look forward to some sort of regional meeting for our own region to talk about our own needs and our input into housing. Certainly it will be different from other larger centres and we appreciate that these units and the housing that's different from the larger centres. Our needs are a little bit different than the larger centres. We want to have some flexibility in terms of how they look at our homes in the communities. For example, Colville Lake, there is a high core need there. There are cases of TB, meningitis. There is sickness in this day and age that shouldn't really happen in our communities. I don't know it's not because of one issue. I think it's many issues that make this happen. I am not blaming any department. These types of situations, there are basic needs that need to be met in our communities and housing is one basic need that needs to be really on the list of our top priorities in some of our communities that have families who are living in single dwelling units, large

families with six or seven people. That's just the condition. That's the way it is right now in our region. However, we see this department making improvements. So it's not as bad. I am not speaking for our other regions because I don't live there, but I see there are some improvements, new ideas and new concepts.

There's a shift in the changing and thinking. We certainly have to support our regional offices, our local offices. There is a different attitude of owning houses in the communities. We have to have more grace time. For a long time, our elders have said the government has promised housing. That's an oral interpretation or commitment that they passed down onto us. Now they get confused or not too sure. You know how government is honouring the commitments. So it's becoming somewhat difficult. We tried to tell them it's a different way of doing business. Those old-timers, they hang onto the word very tight. If it changes, they really get mad at you. We, as some leaders, can understand. We have some good advisors and some good understanding of what the agreements are. It's the old way of the tradition.

To some, Mr. Chairman, in terms of having some leeway and flexibility, I am not sure how that will affect government or the housing, but that's why he has people working for him to advise him on these kinds of issues. For the community people, they hold sacred the words of the treaty or the oral version of what they think the treaty is or the interpretation of the treaty. Housing is a sacred cow to them. It's going to be a real challenge to make a shift in our attitude to what you guys are talking about. I think that's important. The Minister has to realize that. We go back home and it's totally different. I just ask for that blessing in the transition of what he's aiming for. We understand it. It's the old ones we have to convince because it's the old ones that give the word and we follow it. I am just trying to understand that we need some leeway time here, Mr. Chairman. We need the word, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do have to agree with the Member that even working from the territorial perspective and also nationally with the previous First Minister of Housing and the First Ministers' conference on aboriginal issues, housing is probably one of the more stemming issues that are in aboriginal communities and we are no different in the Northwest Territories. We do have processes that now allow us to address the self-government process and it allows people to take over government programs and services such as housing. I think the Sahtu is well on their way.

In other parts of Canada, you do have First Nations housing, on reserve and off reserve. We have to start looking at how those programs and services are being delivered. Also, we have to realize we are taking steps to improve the quality of housing, especially in the Sahtu communities. This year we are looking at some 35 units. We are hoping to deliver 94 units over three years. I think that will really improve the housing conditions in the Sahtu communities.

One thing we have to pinpoint is where does this problem stem from. I believe it happened in 1992 right across Canada, not only here in the Northwest Territories where

the federal government, through CMHC, made a decision to get out of social housing and stop funding social housing programs. At that time, they changed the format from looking at social housing to look at running the programs by way of using the mortgage systems such as bank financing, EDAP, another program such as that based on looking at financial institutions to provide housing across Canada.

I think the Member is aware that we are going to be hosting a housing conference in the Sahtu possibly at the end of March. There is another opportunity for the people of the Sahtu to tell us, as government, exactly how we should lay out the delivery of 34 units in the Sahtu communities. Where should they go? Are we putting them in the right place? Are the programs we have going to meet the challenges that are in a lot of these communities? One that I touched on is land development in a lot of these communities, especially the experiences we have had in Fort Good Hope where we have had floods. We have an area in the community which is a slide zone. We are not allowed to build any more houses there. We are being restricted on how we can deliver programs on those types of communities.

Again, I would like to thank the Member for his questions. Hopefully a lot of these issues will come out when we have the conference in Norman Wells at the end of March and we will be able to address a lot of these issues and lay out to the communities what is going to be allocated over the next number of years and how they can assist us by meeting the goals and objectives of getting these houses on the ground. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. Next on the list I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, further to the market housing initiative where we had left off, I had asked the Minister if he could identify in this coming fiscal year what expenditures were booked for the specific market housing initiative. The Minister advised that this was rolled into the whole Market Housing Program of the corporation and I don't find that adequate, Mr. Chairman. We've spent, over the last two fiscal years, a great deal of debate and interest in this. The Minister has told us that it has helped solve considerable...It has had a considerable positive impact in these given communities and I don't want to take away from that success. Mr. Speaker, this was a fairly distinct, separate initiative, still underway, I still want to keep it on the radar screen of accountability and scrutiny and if the Minister or the corporation needs a few more days to tell me are there any specific costs associated with the market housing initiative in the coming year's budget? I will be happy to give him a few days to come up with a precise answer, but I need to know. Are we going to be spending yet more dollars on these 44 trailers at least in the coming year? That is the question that I have and the answer I am looking for, Mr. Chair. That about does it for me for the Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. I have Minister Krutko next.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we did provide as much detailed information as we can on the market housing to AOC, and the information that was requested, there was an attachment D that was provided. If the Member doesn't have it, I think you have

it in front of you. If not, I can get a copy of this made and I believe that is it. That is the latest information that we were able to put together in regards to market housing. That is the most updated information we have. I believe you do have that information. It was provided to AOC.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Krutko. We are on page 8-7, NWT Housing Corporation, department summary. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the units that are built in the communities versus the communities that are on all-weather roads, is there a different process for communities up in the Beaufort-Delta, Sachs, Holman, Paulatuk, and in the Sahtu region not having access to an all-weather road? Is there a different process in terms of these houses being built? Certainly, in our communities, we certainly require some more lead time or flexibility in terms of the arrival of the units, the supplies and the development of lots certainly need to be re-examined. I just wanted to ask the Minister because of the seasons and because of the material being delivered to the community is certainly different than NTCL barge versus coming up the highway down on the South Slave here except Lutsel'e which is on the east arm of the lake. I just wanted to ask that question to the Minister, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we usually tender out our packages to the winter road communities in the fall time so that those packages could be ready to go on the winter roads usually December and January. In some communities, we only have about a month window of opportunity so we try to have these orders out by the fall season. In regards to the barge communities, it is usually the spring months when our budget is approved, the allocation to those communities by way of the barge transportation that has to take place over the summer months. Then the road communities are usually done at the same time. In regards to the winter road communities, we have the budget. We basically submit our tenders out in the fall season so we can have the fall packages prepared for the winter haul in usually December, January and February. That is roughly how we tender our packages.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the second issue I have is, it may have been brought up already by other Members in terms of people who have been approved by one way or another through a funding program to get their house renovated or retrofit, is the owner of the house or the signature of the loan involved in the approval process, the last sort of walk around the house? I heard somewhere that some people need to be reminded of the contractors that need to involve the owners in the final inspection of the house, or it is not what they agreed to, or sometimes they have a discrepancy with the technical team and the owner itself. They want to make an improvement to the house. The owner thinks it should be done this way. The decorator's wife thinks it should be done this way. Is there any process being looked at by this department to have the owner give the final say on each step of the housing to make sure that this is what they are asking for, this is what

they signed their name on to this loan to repay? I just want to get that cleared up by the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we do sit down with the client. They do a walk-through of the unit once the project has been signed off. When they go through the walk-through, the client, along with the person from the Housing Corporation, inspects everything. At the end of it, they have to sign it off. Also, as part of the arrangement, there is a one-year guarantee that is in place for if there is any deficiency or whatnot within that one year. So you are covered under the insurance that we have in place, and also the contract that we have, there is a holdback for a contractor. So we do have steps that allow the individual homeowner to go through, do the final inspection, sign it off, that they walk through with the Housing Corporation staff in which they, along with the individual, check everything off. He has to sign it off before the house is handed over to the homeowner. But there is also a one-year insurance that we have in place to protect against any deficiencies that may occur within that one year. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, how does the owner determine a deficiency which the contractor might not agree with that? How do you get a qualified person to say, well, this is a deficiency, so please come back? You still have a warranty on this house. The contractor may be out of the country in terms of the Northwest Territories, maybe in southern Canada. If they pay their way back here, they are going to kick and scream all the way back to that community. How does the Housing Corporation get the contractor to come back and honour that commitment, agreement, or quality of work? We shouldn't use him at all, again, in terms of any type of work in the future because they will have to go the community contractor in the community to finish the work. That is where, Mr. Chair, that some of the contractors in the community say we have to come up and clean up their work. That kind of discussion we are having. I just want to make it very clear that the owners need to really know what they are signing off in terms of just walking around the building and say yes. They need to really understand. I hope that Housing provides that type of education for the homeowners when they sign on. It may seem that they are not, but I think they are. But there are a lot of complaints about that, so I want to see how he could address that. There is lots of hearsay and all that stuff. There are a lot of stuff that is questionable even for some of the contractors coming, because it is cold in October and November. They want to get out right away. It is freezing up, so there is certainly a different process for us in the communities that don't have an all-weather road. We are on a sort of a rush building project here. That is what I have for the Minister, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in regards to the Member's concern regarding the inspections, we do have technical people that basically do the inspections on our behalf. I know that one of the

issues on the mandate stuff was we were looking at five positions for more technical officers. Right now, we just have one person in each region. We are finding that they are having a hard time just keeping up. I think that is where a lot of communities are concerned that people aren't doing the inspections or whatnot. Again, we only have one person in each region where he has to serve all of the communities. One thing we are hoping for is, through the mandate changes, to be able to increase that by one more person so we have two in each region.

We do have a warranty that is in place. If the Member wants, I can give you a copy of the warranty that we use that basically is in all of our contracts so people understand that the contractors know what the warranties are. Mr. Chair, if I can provide this information for committee so that they can have a copy of exactly what the warranty is in the contracts we provide to our contractors, making them aware that they are responsible for that one year.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I have my last question and then I will be done with the Minister of Housing. Mr. Chair, we certainly need to get the support into the communities and have the owners really know the dotted line that they are signing on for their homes and that they fully understand, along with the contractor. The contractor needs to really know who the owner of this house is, who is paying the bill. Sometimes it is the other way around there. I certainly support the Minister in terms of getting some more technical advisors into our region and into the regions that really need help. They stay in our community longer than four to eight to one day. They stay longer. They stay two or three days in our community. Don't rush back home right away. Stay in our community and work with them. Really make them understand.

That is all I have for the Minister of Housing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Okay, committee. We are on 8-7, department summary, NWT Housing Corporation, operations expenditure summary, expenditure category, \$36.828 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Does committee agree that the Housing Corporation's main estimates have been concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. I would like to thank you, Minister Krutko, and your witnesses for being with us this afternoon. Thank you.

Thank you, committee. You can pull out your grey binders. We are on Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007. I will give committee a second to just get that in front of you.

Thank you, committee. I would like to call the Committee of the Whole back to order here. What we will do, we are on tab 18 in the grey binders. We will stand down the consideration of the preamble and the clauses of the bill and start with the schedule first. So if committee could turn to page 3 under Bill 18, schedule, amounts

appropriated for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, part 1, vote 1, operations expenditures, total appropriation for operations expenditures, \$1.068,323 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Part 2, vote 2, capital investment expenditures, total appropriation for capital investment expenditure, \$110.620 million, total appropriation, \$1.178,943 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We are back on page 1, please. We will go clause by clause starting with clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Okay. Thank you. To the preamble.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): To the bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Bill 18 as a whole. Does committee agree that Bill 18 as a whole is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Does the committee agree that Bill 18 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bill 18 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, committee. I now would like to ask if the committee agrees that consideration of Committee Reports 5-15(4), 6-15(4), and 7-15(4) is concluded.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Committee Reports 5, 6 and 7 are concluded. Thank you, committee.

In your grey binders, we are going to deal with Bill 20. I now would like to ask the Minister responsible for Bill 20, the Honourable Floyd Roland to please introduce the bill.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to introduce Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2. This bill proposes to reduce the NWT corporate income tax rates on large corporations from 14 percent to 11.5 percent effective July 1, 2006.

If the Legislative Assembly agrees, the rate applicable to public companies and to income over the first \$300,000 and income of Canadian controlled private corporations will be reduced to 11.5 percent.

The NWT has long maintained a very competitive tax environment with both personal and corporate income tax rates among the lowest in Canada. These competitive rates have helped us attract individuals and businesses to the North. In fact, our competitive corporate tax rates in 1999 and 2000 were the reason we received large amounts of tax. More recently, however, as we have increased our rate to 14 percent and several provinces have reduced rates, as a result we have lost some income to other jurisdictions.

Two years ago, when we increased the rate to 14 percent, we were concerned about formula financing implications. Under our previous formula arrangements, our grant would be clawed back by more than any possible revenue increases had we left the rate at 12 percent. Under those conditions, we had no choice but to increase the rate.

Since then, however, the federal government has changed the way our grant is determined. The level of the grant has been fixed in federal legislation for 2004-05 and 2005-06 and will be established in legislation for 2006-07. This effectively means that the GNWT will keep any increases in tax revenue and bear the full cost of any decreases.

We will not know how our tax revenues will be treated under new formula arrangements until the federal government responds to the report of the Expert Panel on Equalization and Territorial Formula Financing. However, we cannot wait for these new arrangements to be put in place before we act on this corporate tax rate issue.

Over the past two years, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba have all reduced their corporate income tax rates. These rates have reduced the NWT's overall competitiveness. Our position relative to other jurisdictions could have negative effects on our tax base as companies look to do business where the tax climate is more favourable. New companies currently paying tax in the NWT may re-examine their corporate structures to minimize their tax liability.

The changes proposed in Bill 20 would result in the NWT having, along with Alberta, the lowest corporate income tax rate on investment income and, after Quebec, the second lowest general corporate income tax rate.

Passage of this proposed change during the current session will permit timely notification to the federal government who administers corporate income tax on our

behalf. That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to recognize Mr. Menicoche on the standing committee's comments.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to introduce Bill 20...

---Laughter

I beg your pardon, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight introduced a public review of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2, on February 23, 2006. The committee generally welcomed the bill which will reduce the corporate tax rate to 11.5 percent effective July 1st of this year. Members find it regrettable that the government was essentially forced by Canada's formula financing rule to introduce a rate of 14 percent two years ago, resulting in an uncompetitive tax regime and a significant loss of revenue to the GNWT.

The committee heard from one public witness, Mr. Ben MacDonald, representing Alternatives North. Mr. MacDonald suggested that in order to ensure corporations pay a fair share of the tax burden over the next year, the GNWT should examine options for other forms of taxes such as capital taxes or property taxes that would be tied to operation and work in the NWT and the corporations would not be able to avoid by filing in other jurisdictions. To this end, he suggested that the bill include a sunset clause to ensure that the tax rate would have to be revisited after one year.

Mr. MacDonald also expressed concern about the competitiveness between Canadian jurisdictions into a race to the bottom to have the lowest corporate tax rate. He suggested the NWT should take the initiative to work with its federal, provincial and territorial counterparts on a strategy to eliminate competition among jurisdictions and focus on obtaining a fair return for Canadian governments from the corporations.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2. Individual Members may have questions and comments as we proceed. Following the clause by clause review of the bill, a motion was carried to report Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2, to the Assembly as ready for consideration by Committee of the Whole. Mahsi.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

At this time, Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me from the Department of Finance, the deputy

minister, Ms. Margaret Melhorn; and Mr. John Monroe. As well, we have from the Department of Justice, Mr. Mark Aitken. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments on the bill. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, it is a race to the bottom that concerns me. I would like to have a little bit more discussion with the Minister. I was doing some reading of the latest issue of the Fraser Forum with regard to tax rates in other jurisdictions, particularly in all of our provinces in Canada. It looks like everybody is trending downwards. Even though we are going to 11.5 to be fairly competitive and attract businesses here, they are saying that other provinces are trending even further downwards, like towards eight percent, even Alberta. I don't know if the Minister can comment on that, if he has heard of it. That is what this article was saying. If that happens, then 11.5 will be on the high end again, Mr. Chair. Does that mean we are going to lose out on potential clients and potential revenues? I was just wondering how the Minister or the ministry sees the downward spiralling of all of the income tax rates in Canada. Is this truly, 11.5 percent, the low rate today, or are other legislatures sitting as we are today and reducing their rates? Is this a true reflection? Is this a true strategy? That is probably it, Mr. Chair. Is this a good strategy to maintain as much revenue from businesses that want to claim income tax rates outside of our territory? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the term "race to the bottom" is something that is not necessarily a new one. Something all governments do pay attention to, the smaller jurisdictions especially, is when you look at our revenue base, to continue to try and match the large provinces would be very difficult for us, indeed. We have less flexibility in that area, but, at the same time, when we feel the immediate impacts of a less competitive environment being what we were at, we feel the immediate impact especially with the formula the way it is right now.

Waiting for the federal government to come up with a revised formula financing arrangement is something that we need to do and try to work with and ensure that they adapt or adopt the issues that we raised that would see us working in a more favourable climate.

The other comment I would make to that is that although there may be articles that would refer to a spiralling downwards of the corporate tax, adjustments are made in fairly small increments when adjustments are made. The true picture, at least at this time, when we are looking at this bill, as I stated in my opening comments, is that we are the lowest, matching with Alberta, when we look at our income and second lowest when you look at just general corporate tax rates. Quebec is the lowest overall.

Alberta has announced in the past that it would look at the possibilities of going down as low as eight percent. Right now, they are at 11.5 percent. They haven't given any timelines on that target, but it is something that we will have to keep an eye on as they are our closest neighbour to the south and have the largest impact on businesses

here in the North because of their relationship with the Northwest Territories and how things generally flow right through from the Northwest Territories into Alberta.

It is something we do have to keep track of. As stated in the opening comments, of having to adjust our rates based on our formula arrangements with Ottawa will continue to play a role in how we look at our fiscal strategies in the future. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister again just tell me a bit about the strategy once again? Should we find ourselves at the high end this time next year, is our strategy to then again to reduce our rates to be competitive down towards eight percent if it's trending down that way, or are there other alternatives out there that the ministry can examine, can look at other options as proposed by Mr. MacDonald? What else can we do besides chasing other jurisdictions? Are there other innovative ways of developing taxation models without chasing businesses away? Like it's even our own businesses that are moving outside our territory. Is there another way of doing this, Mr. Chair?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are, for sure, a number of theories about what a government can do to try and increase revenues or keep revenues, but ultimately when you do look at the equations we're faced with and the formula and the working arrangement we have with Ottawa on formula financing, our options are limited. Our change in our fiscal strategy initially was based on the relationship we had with Ottawa around formula financing and tax effort. As I stated, under previous conditions, if we tried to be competitive in a sense and drop our corporate tax rate, we would be hit with a negative adjustment on transfer payments. As one of the measurements of our comparison to other jurisdictions was what we call tax effort adjustment factor, and that played a significant role in our fiscal strategy. Now with the existing situation, we find that does not play a role anymore, its 100 percent gain or loss. In this environment and looking at an immediate impact of having funds reduced, the short-term we'd have to look at our competitiveness compared to other jurisdictions. Longer-term there may be solutions looked at, but it would take something that not just one jurisdiction can do on its own. We can bring an issue to the table and talk with other jurisdictions about corporate taxes and setting a basin, and then having the federal government agree to something like that would be very difficult. So unfortunately, in the short-term, we're faced with the regime of trying to remain competitive. If the federal government does not deal with the expert panel report in a timely fashion, this could carry on for more than one year. That's something we'd have to be prepared to look at, again, in the environment of being competitive. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a number of things that I wanted to talk about with Bill 20 and some bells going off. Bells have been going off in my

head for awhile in regard to this bill and why we're here today to discuss it. I'm going to ask the Minister some pretty pointed questions today. I guess first of all I'd like to know why, I guess the big question for me is, if we went on the increase from 12 percent to 14 percent in 2004-2005 and the level of the grant had been fixed in federal legislation for 2004-05 and 2005-06, why did we have to wait two years for the government to wake up and realize that other provinces were lowering their rates, we weren't being competitive and why did we have to wait two years? Why wasn't this done last year? That's the big question that I have. Why didn't the Finance Minister let us know last year that we weren't competitive and that it was impacting us? Why did we have to wait two years? That's the big question, and who knows how much money it's cost us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the arrangement we have with the federal government, the formula situation we were facing, the work we were doing, we've kept Members informed of our situation. Of the corporate tax rates of our arrangement with the federal government, when the information came to us about the changes in revenue, we informed Members as soon as I got the information within a matter of days. So it is frustrating in a sense that from one regime we set up under had changed. Again, in allowing our changes to occur and having impact on the rates and working with the federal government, there's a timing factor that comes into play there, but it's not until we actually get our results back from previous year's filing and working with the federal government that we could take a look at the situation to see if, in fact, we did need the change, and we did identify the amount of revenue drop to Members. Again, it was a combination of the corporations refiling their tax, as well as a loss in actual revenue. Now that could be a number of reasons; one company, somebody is not being as profitable as they were the previous year, or of moving their profits to other jurisdictions. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess what I'm trying to understand is the first budget that I dealt with as a Member here when we looked at increasing the rate from 12 percent to 14 percent, that was two years ago. This is the third budget, so, yes, it was two budgets ago that we did this. Now, between then and now, things have changed and the level of the grant was fixed and federal legislation for 2004-05, which would have been almost immediately on the heels of us approving this increase, I didn't think it was a good idea so I didn't approve it, but we, as a Legislature, decided to approve the increase to 14 percent. On the heels of this, the grant is fixed in federal legislation. We do nothing about it for 18 months and the only reason I think that we've actually stood up and paid attention to it is the fact that we were hit with a \$30 million corporate tax hit. This happened and it woke us up. All of a sudden it hit us in the head and we realized well, geez, maybe we should do something about this. I'd like to again ask the question why nothing was done for the period of time that it was fixed in federal legislation and today? Why are we only talking about this now? That's the question I have, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I guess the tax environment we operate under isn't one that changes from day to day in a sense of how filings are done and reporting times and so on. The sequence of how we did things, and the Member is right; our first budget laid out the tax changes, we went from 12 percent to 14 percent, and that was in March of '04. The formula change occurred in October of '04. Filing deadline for the 2004 taxes came on June '05, and our reporting arrangement and notice we received from the Canadian Revenue Agency was in October '05. At that point is when we began to look at our fiscal picture and made a decision that we needed to make this change. That's why now the first available opportunity at this budget session is to come and lower the tax rates to make the correction we feel is needed at this time. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We had the public meeting and I mentioned this at that time. I'll mention it again. If you are forced into a situation where you have no choice, and I think the Minister has explained that, that under the formula financing arrangements with Ottawa we had no choice but to increase our corporate tax rate from 12 percent to 14 percent. The Minister has admitted that and everybody understands that; no choice. When you're in a situation where you have no choice, you have to have some way to go back and try to seek some damages from somebody for forcing you into a position that's not your own doing, and I think we can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the previous formula financing arrangements with Ottawa were punitive to the Northwest Territories, it harmed us, we lost \$30 million, Mr. Chairman. My estimation is we'll lose probably \$60 or \$70 million more before the dust settles. Now is it our fault that we lost this money? No. I go back to the formula financing arrangements that we had in place that forced us to raise our rate from 12 percent to 14 percent. Why can't we demand some action from somebody, somewhere to recognize that fact? Am I the only one that's seeing it this way? I don't understand. Some days I feel like maybe I'm going crazy or something, but somebody is responsible here. Somebody has to tell me that they are going to address the fact that we were pushed into a corner. As a territory we just accept the fact that we have to pay, and that's not acceptable to me. Why do we just continue to accept that fact? Why can't we stand up and demand some answers and demand some action? This is just the start of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member did say earlier he was hearing some bells, so I'm sure that's not to deal with this bill itself. But the realities are, yes, it is frustrating to be in a position where if you don't make adjustments you get penalized, and that's why we made our adjustment, is not to lose more than we were going to lose in transfer payments because we were deemed to be not having corporations and individuals pay a higher level of tax in the Northwest Territories compared to other jurisdictions. The issues come back to the fact, and I'll go back...My experience

back in the 13th Assembly, when the federal government mandated reductions across the board, all provinces, territories and that force our hand at reducing budgets across the country, and we were hit in a very serious way in the Northwest Territories. Some Members would still say we're feeling some of the effects of the choices the government made in the day to try to meet its budget targets. We've made our arguments; we made our business case; we made our arguments, along with other jurisdictions and support from other jurisdictions, about the impacts of the tariff and the tax effort adjustment factor, and with the concerns mounting we had support and other jurisdictions had their concerns with equalization from the provincial end that the federal government did finally agree to re-look at the matter. They came up with an interim solution that they felt added more money to the pie and that it would give some stability to governments for budget planning. That, again, as we're pointing out now, had an impact on our corporate tax situation and we've made that adjustment. We have yet to negotiate on some of these matters and get down to the business discussion that we need to have with Finance Canada around some of these areas, but it is definitely not as easy just coming up with a business case and say there's damages, you need to reimburse us. It's a long, difficult process at times, and the increments can be measured in very small amounts.

The issue of seeking damages, I think our role at this point is to see whether the federal government will come with a new arrangement and if they will address our adequacy and, as well, have a discussion about our corporate tax situation as we have had with the previous government. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a brief comment in support of the general, I guess, thrust of this bill. As other Members have stated already, it's not an area that we have a whole lot of control over in terms of having options about what to do with the shortfalls that we have experienced from raising the corporate tax a couple of years ago in the first place. So I support this bill in light of the fact that that seems to be the only option we have really to recover, or at least not have happen to us again a shortfall of money as much as \$30 million, because that is not a small amount of money and one that we need to address to make sure that we don't have that sort of shortfall in revenue in the years to come. But I think I share with the sentiment of other Members here that speaks to the fact that we do need to get better control of, or try to get more control of our financial leverages, I guess, so to speak. In some ways this might be one that we have control over because at least it's 100 percent within our control to raise, or increase, or decrease, our corporate tax rates depending on and to make fiscal decisions. Although, increasing it has cost us, but is within our control in terms of passing the law and trying to adjust that depending on what the outcome is to our purse, so to speak.

But there's a lot of outstanding issues out there for the Minister to take care of and formula financing is one of them. I mean, the mechanism in there is that's making us to have a shortfall on, or defective mechanism, or the perversity, or however you want to put it, you know, just basic fiscal system and arrangements we have whether it's under not only in formula financing, but all the

clawbacks and it's the system we have with the federal government that makes it difficult for us to have 100 percent control. So obviously the biggest task at hand for the Minister is to work on those other big files and I'm a little concerned.

I appreciate that there's a great need for the Premier and everybody to get really, really excited to send out positive messages for the new government and you want to develop a good relationship, and you want to get on the good books, but I'm not sure if the past practice of this government talking about how much we appreciated federal politicians in Ottawa, especially the Prime Minister, I don't know if that gets us far. I think what will get us far is for us to really get behind the door, and get behind the door or close the door and, you know, work out a deal. I think whatever goodwill there might be being created by the Premier and the new Prime Minister and all the counterparts of the Ministers here, I think that window of opportunity for working out a negotiation and getting a deal is quite short. I know and I'm sure there's lots of provinces, and leaders, and NGOs, and all sorts of groups that are trying to get attention of the new government, but we really need to, and this Minister has to focus on getting down there and getting to the ear of the new Finance Minister, who sounds like he's pretty, I don't know him personally, but from what I see on TV he might be a hard negotiator and we need to really get our...I know we could do a lot of discussions here about how bad the federal government is and they're not listening and it's all their fault and it's one Minister after another, it's one Prime Minister after another, but sooner or later, and we're at the last leg of this Assembly really, we only have a year-and-a-half left, sooner or later I do believe that the people of the North have the right to ask us to account for what we have been able to do. Politicians are judged by the deals we make or the deals we don't make and I would like to encourage, once again, and, as I've stated in my reply to the budget address, or the first statement I made, I still expect the Finance Minister or this Minister to come out and turn green, or turn out to be an incredible hulk, or maybe he could just be in his quiet self, I don't know, but whatever tactics he uses there is not a lot of time left for him to really get us a deal.

I know it's hard for me to talk about budget without talking about these other things, Novel housing concept. Oh, I wasn't supposed to mention that, sorry, new product concept, but I have a legitimate concern there and that is that I think this Minister of Finance has a lot of work to do to get a better income tax system so that we don't get penalized for going up and down on corporate tax. The Member from Kam Lake talked about why do we get penalized for something that we didn't have control over, and I just think the agenda and the action item for the Minister should be just a couple of things and he has to concentrate on that, and to clutter his agenda with other items is problematic for me when other parties can do their jobs just fine.

On that note, that's just a long way to say that I support this reluctantly because we don't really have a choice to do it and I wanted to plug in, once again, before we adjourn this budget session, that I would like to see the Minister spend a lot of time in Ottawa and getting to know Minister Flaherty and try to resolve this resource revenue sharing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Before I ask the Minister to proceed I just want to tell the Members that this bill

decreases the general corporate income tax rate effective July 1st, 2006. So at this time I'd like to ask the Minister to respond to Ms. Lee. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Lee has raised a lot of points that I think at the same time I share the concerns about where we are and the processes we're involved in and the timing of things coming down and the need to get down to Ottawa and get our business case before the new Finance Minister and make our arguments and hopefully have other jurisdictions support us in our work so that we can see some positive resolution to this.

With that, this bill will have an impact on at least what we can control at this point and, ultimately, I guess that's what it's coming down to, is our ability to make the necessary changes in the short term. Longer term, yes, we've got major work to do that needs to get done. I guess one thing I'll say is, yes, I will be travelling down to Ottawa on a more frequent basis now that we know that the Ministers have been appointed and hopefully soon ready to meet with jurisdictions across the country. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: That's it. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going to be very quick on this matter. I give my cautious support at this time for this bill. Going from 14 to 11.5 percent only makes sense when Alberta is so close to us it's difficult to compete and the fact is, business can work on not just a local level or not just a national level, but also on an international level and the way business can be attracted or swayed to file taxes in other areas across Canada quite easily, it only makes sense that we consider this seriously. The sad thing I see before is that we're in a reactionary position where the challenges before us is, if we don't react, who knows where we're going to be. I mean, just like Members mentioned earlier, having to go from 12 to 14 percent, what did that do to us and how long did it take us to figure out what actions those implications have created? I often wonder that the Finance Minister had said at the time we were forced by increasing our tax rate at the direction of Canada, I wonder how much we would have lost if we said forget it, we're going to keep it at 12. That being said, it turns around that our so-called big tax customer refiled somewhere else and, of course, we lost out big time. So what I mean also about sad about this situation is it will be another year-and-a-half before we see results of this fallout before we even get a sense of where we're going, and I don't know if it will be a year-and-a-half from now or if it may be only two years from now to find out what our steps have truly realized.

I will agree that if we don't become competitive, we will be seen as not competitive and that's a difficult choice for us to make. So where do we sit in the larger scales? I think we have no other choice but to follow suit. We cannot detract from business by not creating a competitive market, because, like I said earlier, we live in an international world today and people can compete on bidding tenders and whatnot from anywhere. As much as I love technology, and every Member here knows that, I mean the competitive process of filing taxes and operating

businesses could be anywhere. So we're sort of forced, I guess, by industry in order to create this positive tax regime. I'm very happy to do that, I only say this going back to my very first statement, which is I'm cautiously supportive only because who knows what reactionary methods are going to happen and that goes back to the fears where our one witness had said a race to the bottom, where do we go next.

On a personal note, I'm very supportive in the context where we're going from 14 down to 11.5 percent for small business. The fact is, if small business is profitable, that means good things for our community and our territory. They'll hire more people, hopefully, that they'll pay people competitive wages because they have more money that they can do it. In the long run, happy people make happy spenders and those are the kinds of people we like around here. Businesses making money; that's good for the territory. So I'd be foolish not to seriously consider this. I only say cautiously, like I say, because we won't know the fallout of any type of adjustment over the long haul. So it will be a couple of years before we truly realize our wisdom of today. So at this time, I will be supporting this. So no question, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. General comments. I'll go to Mr. Yakeleya first.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, the issue here is I support the bill, it's when the province of Alberta, or B.C., or Saskatchewan if they choose to go down to, again, 11 percent, if they go down any lower I guess that would be something that the department would look at in terms of what type of incentives do we have from stopping the migration of corporations in filing in the other jurisdictions? I'm looking forward to the Minister if he has some discussions in the future in terms of our strategy. Right now, I'm supporting this bill, Minister. It's a good bill. I think we are doing what we have to do and I know there's other factors that make a bill the way it is. So I want to say I look forward to where we have a solid foot in terms of our fiscal arrangements, fiscal policy, especially when the National Energy Board or the powers to be grant the approval of the Mackenzie gas project. It is very key now that we're going to have corporations coming up this way here. I'm looking forward to that type of discussion. In general, right now, I support the bill and I think it's a good more. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, just quickly, as the Member stated, we will have to review our fiscal strategy as we see some of the impacts of this. Mr. Hawkins, as well, prior to Mr. Yakeleya on the issue of timing, it is one in this area where there is lag time in the sense of getting the impacts of our decisions. In this case, of trying to be more competitive when we see the next filing date come by will be one of the measures if this is indeed the right track we are on. At that point, if other jurisdictions decide to drop their rates at some point, we would have to look at that based on if this strategy started to pay off. It's not going to be an immediate thing. It will have lag time of up to a year or more. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am finished.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I forgot to mention when I was on my first round that I am supportive, obviously, to the decrease of 11.5 percent of the corporate tax rate. I listened to some of my colleagues speak and it brought a few other things to mind. At first I would like to say this, at least there is a chance now with the change in government in Ottawa to get some surety. I know some of my colleagues have said governments come and go, but we were under the same regime in Ottawa for 13 years and how, on God's green earth, did they come up with a formula financing arrangement that's completely backwards? I would have to go so far as to suggest the former Finance Minister must have cut that arrangement out of the back of a cereal box or something, because it's completely absurd that we were forced to live under that arrangement; completely absurd. It's totally backwards. Like I say, we just take it, accept it, that's the way it is. Thankfully there's a change in government in Ottawa and at least now, we will have at least some kind of fighting chance with the new Finance Minister because the one before him, who knows what they did with this tax. They were taking tax money from us. What were they using that tax money for? Somebody should launch an investigation into where that money went. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Whoa!

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can I have order, please? When you are making comments, can you just refer to the principle of the bill? General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Clause by clause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yay!

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree to go clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree that Bill 20 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 20 is now ready for third reading. At this time, I would like to thank the Minister and his staff for coming down. Thank you.

Welcome back, committee. At this time, we will proceed with Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can Minister Bell please introduce the bill? Thank you.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to come before the Committee of the Whole to discuss Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act.

This bill would amend the Territorial Court Act to allow for more efficient, cost-effective administration. Amendments relate primarily to the Judicial Remuneration Commission and the to Territorial Court judges.

Currently, the act provides that the NWT Judicial Remuneration Commission must hold an inquiry every three years to set judges' salaries and benefits. GNWT pays the entire cost of these inquiries which totalled over \$200,000 in 2001 and \$300,000 in 2004. This bill, Mr. Chairman, would reduce cost to the GNWT by increasing the time between inquiries spreading costs over a longer period.

The bill would also allow complaints about judges to be reviewed more quickly. Currently, a subcommittee must review all complaints to the Judicial Council. It would be faster and more effective to allow the chairperson of the Judicial Council to refer minor complaints about Territorial Court judges to the chief judge. Serious complaints would continue, Mr. Chairman, to be referred to a subcommittee of the Judicial Council.

Finally, this bill would clarify the residency requirement for judicial candidates. Currently, the act could be interpreted as requiring a person to be resident in the NWT in order to be eligible for appointment as a territorial judge. It's necessary for judges to reside in the Territories during the term of their appointments. However, requiring candidates to live here before being eligible for appointment may not be compliant with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The proposed amendment, Mr. Chairman, corrects the problem.

The judiciary and the Law Society of the NWT have been consulted and they do not object to the proposed changes. I would be pleased to answer questions the committee may have about this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to recognize Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Standing Committee on Social Programs held public hearings on Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act, on December 5th, 2005 in Yellowknife; on December 6, 2005, in Enterprise and Kakisa; and on December 7th in Fort Providence and Behchoko. The clause-by-clause review of the bill took place in Yellowknife on January 31, 2006.

Bill 12 includes an amendment that allows for the appointment of non-resident judges, although once

appointed they would be required to relocate to the NWT. While the committee does not have concerns with this specific amendment, Members do wish to underline the importance of northern experience and familiarity with northern culture and the selection criteria for judges.

Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 12 to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole. This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 12. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in witnesses.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Sergeant-at-Arms, please bring in the witnesses.

Mr. Minister, at this time can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. BRENDAN BELL: I have Reg Tolton, assistant deputy minister; and Rebecca Veinott, legislative counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. To the principle of the bill. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the record, I just wanted to confirm my understanding of the purpose and intent of this bill. I do support the bill. Obviously it's a minor amendment and I understand this to be a bill that would make it possible for there to be a judge appointed who is not necessarily from here, but that would not necessarily be the main practice. I do think the general sentiment up here is that wherever possible, that we will be appointing judges that are from here and you have to be a lawyer to be a judge in this country. So I would think that you would first look at lawyers in the North to be considered for any judicial appointments.

I understand for the higher level of courts here, judges do come from outside the jurisdiction and because of the workload and sometimes conflicts, sometimes you have to...So for higher courts, there is still a Court of Appeal for Alberta and obviously I don't know if there is a question there. I won't go there. Sometimes we need to use judges who are not resident here, too.

I understand this to be a practical thing and to build in some flexibility to where our judges come from, but it's not in any way to dilute our desire to have, wherever possible, the judges to be appointed from the North. I just want to try to state my understanding of this bill and to support it in that way. If I didn't get my information right, he is welcome to correct that. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Member is correct in her interpretation of our intent and I think Members will know the three recent appointments to Territorial Court, the three recent judges, are all from the

NWT bar and I suspect that that will likely continue to be the case. We will have most of our judges come from the local bar. This is in no way attempting to change that. In looking at the provisions around residency, we were concerned that there was a problem here potentially and that you can imagine the scenario where you might have somebody who has practiced in the Territories for many years, takes a job outside the jurisdiction, Nunavut or in the South for six months and there's an opening on the bench and would make a great candidate but wouldn't be eligible if they weren't resident. We don't want to exclude people in a situation like that. So this is not to indicate that we are looking to fill our bench with lawyers from the South. This is to suggest that we needed to clarify this point in the legislation and we were concerned about the provisions potentially being interpreted the wrong way and running afoul of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Minister, in light of the federal government's new process of selecting or hiring judges at a higher level within Canada, this is probably more of an opinion, but I would like this thoughts on is the Territories still going to look at a similar thing in the future? Right now we talk about the appointment of a judge and right now there is different ramifications and different meanings, but the process of selecting a judge is going to be handled differently now in Canada. How is this reflected and have an impact on the justice system in the Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I will admit that we haven't done a detailed assessment of that, but I am thinking that if we were going to move to a similar vehicle or mechanism, we would probably have to change our legislation to enable us to do that. So it's not something we've contemplated. We are not considering vetting the candidates in the way that the federal government has done and I find it interesting. We are certainly paying attention to see how it works, but not something we have contemplated at this point.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I find it also very intriguing that the new federal government is moving in this area. Maybe sometime in the future we will ask more detailed questions on the justice system and if it will follow suit as the big guys in Ottawa are doing and see if we can step up to the plate and look at some similar process in the future. That's just a thought here. I am going to leave it at that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, as noted by the Minister in his opening comments, the NWT Judicial Remuneration Commission has been obliged to sit every three years to look at judges' salaries and benefits. It's going to be extended to every four years now, so we will, to some extent, get some more economy from the cost of this

commission. That's really the point why I wanted to put a couple of things on record, Mr. Chair.

In 2001, as the Minister advised, this commission wracked up a bill of \$200,000, and in 2004 the cost was over \$300,000. I certainly don't want to get myself on the bad side of any judges, Mr. Chairman, but spending this amount of taxpayers' money to determine the salaries and benefits of this very necessary part of our democratic system seems to me excessive. I would welcome any stage, any step that could be taken to realistically control this expense and yet give us the confidence to know that judges in the NWT have been fairly paid and yet respecting the independence that they need to have. If I have a question here, Mr. Chairman, it is, aside from going from a three to a four-year period for striking this commission, are there any other criteria or guidelines that we have been looking at to make what -- again, it's my opinion -- is an excessive cost for determining this pay scale, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, obviously we wanted to make sure this was done in the most cost-effective manner, as well, which is why we are extending the time in between commissions. There is a Supreme Court of Canada Commission that speaks to the need to have an independent commission established that sets judicial pay. I think if we were to try to step in and limit the budget of that independent commission, we would run into problems because we would be interfering with the independence of that commission. So this is one way for us to make sure we do this in a cost-effective manner. Obviously the money is spent on pension consultants and on actuaries and needs to be spent. That work needs to be done, but we think it can be done less frequently. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In this profession, like any other profession, it's like when salaries and things are reviewed, we start from certain baselines and certain assumptions and thresholds that are reasonably well recognized. Could something of this nature be contemplated here, or are we really sort of starting from scratch every time we look at salaries and benefits for judges? Does this kind of time and expense have to be invested every time we go around the circle, or is there a certain amount of formula and ratio and percentage that can be applied to this, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, really these were the first two commissions set up and there was a need to establish baseline and, of course, do this work in terms of actuarial projections and pension comparisons. That work has been done. So we think most of the work has been done now and it's really a matter of if salaries go up, in line with that, pensions go up and other things are triggered. So there isn't the necessity for as comprehensive an approach each time out now, and we think there will be a significant cost-savings. In addition to that, extending the period between commissions we think makes sense. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just referring to the area of non-resident judges, now we are suggesting that...or now it's been pointed out in the Minister's comments that they have to relocate to the NWT, which is not an issue. Do we have any type of time or something that specifies reasonability on this? For example, if we appoint an Alberta judge who is qualified to become a territorial judge, do we not say you have to become a resident of the Northwest Territories within six months of your appointment? We specify certain things. In one of the clauses, a chief judge can lose maybe their appointment as chief judge if they have been ill or absent for more than 40 days. So why wouldn't we put anything specific if we don't have anything specific? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Can I have committee be quiet, please? There are people talking in the background. Mr. Minister.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We think it is specific in that residency has to be established immediately. You can't sit unless you are resident. If there would be some problem and some delay in having the judge move to the jurisdiction, they couldn't sit until they are resident and arrive here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In that particular case, could they still work as a non-resident judge?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we are only talking about appointments to the Territorial Court here. If they were a Court of Appeal judge used, I guess they could continue to do that, but in order to be a Territorial Court judge, you have to be resident here. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't belabour that point. I was just curious. Is there anything that is very specific that points out if a Territorial Court judge is appointed to, for example, Inuvik or Hay River, that they have to be a resident of those areas? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I don't think there is anything specific to the act that speaks to the community of residency. It could be a term of the employment, but I don't think there is anything in the act that speaks to specific community. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, although I am not 100 percent on this, I was pretty confident that Alberta had a rule whereas you had to be a judge in that residential area. So I don't know the specifics because this is obviously not my area, and I

concede that, but why don't we have a district representation point to be made there? So if you are the territorial judge in the Beaufort-Delta northern region of the Northwest Territories, why wouldn't we make it one rather than having a particular judge moved to Yellowknife and then fly back and forth? What stops that? For example, I think it took quite some time before we had the Hay River judge take up residency in the community of Hay River. I don't even know if they are there now. That being said, it doesn't seem unreasonable to have some type of requirement that if they are going to be a justice in a particular area, to ask them to live in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: I don't think that's an unreasonable ask and could be worked into the terms or conditions of employment. I think the act does speak to...If Cabinet makes the appointment of a territorial judge and indicates where that judge must reside, then that must be followed. So that's how that is accommodated and dealt with. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad we brought a lawyer here today because I have a legal question from the Minister's point of view. Would we be restricting someone's constitutional right for mobility by instructing that? Although to me, my stomach tells me if we appoint a justice at the Territorial Court in Hay River, then we should be asking them to live in Hay River and my stomach tells me that that is the right decision to suggest and build into their contract. But the question of a constitutional perspective is, do we restrict them on their mobility rights and freedoms as a Canadian citizen? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we don't believe it contravenes the Charter. It would be one of the conditions of employment and the potential candidate is free to either take a job or not take a job. There could be presumably many conditions of the employment that they would either agree with or not agree with and they would make the determination on that basis, but it's not unconstitutional. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Of course, I am again, being a non-lawyer, struggling with that point where we could put restrictions on their employment. Could the Minister maybe reaffirm in a clear way that we will make that an absolute of their contract by saying they have to live in the region that they are representing? Again, if we have someone in northern territorial justice, maybe in the Inuvik court, sitting on that bench, that they have to be a resident at least in the Beaufort-Delta, and likewise if someone is a South Slave judge sitting on the bench in Hay River, that they have to be a resident of the South Slave? Could we get that firmed up in some type of commitment from the Minister, other than we could make

that part of their contract? Could we get it down to some real tough words? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, what I will say is Cabinet will continue to deal with this on a case-by-case basis. If we are making an appointment to the bench expecting that a justice will live in a certain community or region, then we will indicate so in the conditions of employment and they will have to comply with that. There could be any number of scenarios where the condition could be they reside in the Northwest Territories and we don't want to specify a location. We could change the model. Mr. Chairman, there are a number of scenarios, but if we think it's important for a judge to live in a certain community, we will specify that in the contract, in the terms of the employment and we expect, because it's laid out in the act, that the judge will comply with that. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to that, I would actually like to see the case-by-case reversed where it is a must and if it's considered to be deemed reasonable, the case-by-case would be the opposite. We tell them they have to live in that area if you are going to be a justice in that area. The case-by-case is taken into consideration and if it seems unfeasible at that time, or unwarranted due to circumstances that go far beyond reasonability. So I would like to hear it the other way around. I know the whole world is full of non-typical isolated incidents where we need to consider other options. I would like to hear it in the reverse that we will make it part of the mandate that the appointment of a judge in a particular area, that they will be truly a representative of that area and deal with case-by-case, if it's a need. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, what I can tell the Member is, that is not laid out in that manner in the act. It does indicate that where there's an appointment that specifies the location in which a territorial judge must reside, then they must do that. If no location is specified, then there isn't that requirement, Mr. Chairman. So we would have to change the act. I am not proposing that we want to do that at this time. I think we can arrive at the same ends by having the condition placed on terms of employment and Cabinet can do that. There is probably nothing to stop the Member from taking this up with his committee and if they want to champion an amendment to this act, then we would consider it at that point. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will go back to the earlier suggestion. It sounds like it's a legislation problem as opposed to anything else. At this time, I will accept, seeing as there is probably not a lot of support on this issue at this time, but I will accept the Minister's position where we will make an effort to do that. I will take that as a small, but very important victory.

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

MS. LEE: Just on that, because I was listening to it, I think the Minister should be more...I don't know if he can be so certain about Cabinet's ability to write this into the contract. I would like to see him do more research on that. The thing about it is that a judge is not necessarily an employee. It's an appointment. It is not as easy to remove a judge. They do have complete independence once they are appointed. I think there might be some more questions about mobility.

We have doctors and nurses who come up here, they sign contracts to live somewhere and they are allowed to move around. We do have mobility rights here, so I just wanted to add that to the mix if the Minister is looking at...I think he might want to do more legal research and admin research on that because I think it's fair to say judges aren't necessarily 100 percent employees. We may not be able to impose the kind of conditions that we could to an employee, and we couldn't impose that many mobility conditions on employees anyway. There are laws and rights that Canadians have that go beyond employee contracts, so I just want to...It is more complicated than it appears. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, we don't think we are violating any mobility provisions under the Charter. Our act is clear and it does say that we are an appointment, under subsection 2, specifies the location at which a territorial judge must reside. Then the territorial judge shall act in accordance with those specifications. So if a judge accepts as one of the conditions of employment the provision that they must reside in a certain community, we expect them to live up to that. If they don't, then they are, in fact, violating that section of the act. I wouldn't expect that they would do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Does committee agree to go clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 12.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 14.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 15.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 16.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 18.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 20.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Clause 21.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does the committee agree that Bill 12 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Bill 12 is now ready for third reading. At this time, I would like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Can the Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the witnesses?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order, please. We are on Bill 15, Court Security Act. I would now like to ask the Minister responsible to introduce Bill 15. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to come before Committee of the Whole to review Bill 15, Court Security Act. The purpose of the bill is to implement security measures for the protection of people who attend or participate in court proceedings. The new act would do this in four ways.

First, no weapons would be allowed in court areas unless specifically authorized. Second, the areas where judges and court clerks work could be established as restricted personnel zones by regulation. Third, certain areas in courthouses could be established by regulation as restricted equipment zones. Use of cell phones, cameras and recording equipment would be limited or prohibited in these zones. Finally, Mr. Chair, security officers would have the legal authority to enforce these security measures and it provides clear penalties for non-compliance.

Legislation restricting what people can do on court premises is in effect in eight provinces across the country. This bill will not change the way courts operate. Court circuits will continue and trials will still be held in communities. This bill sets out in legislation specific security measures that can be put in place in any court facility.

Security measures provided in this bill would apply to Supreme and Territorial Court sittings in all NWT communities. It would authorize security officers to screen people in court areas for weapons. It does not mean that everyone going to court will be searched. It gives security officers the authority to evict anyone who possesses a weapon or who refuses to be screened for weapons.

As I said earlier, Mr. Chair, the purpose of the bill is to keep people safe when they attend court while permitting the court to function effectively. For example, RCMP officers will be able to carry their side arms. Weapons that form part of an exhibit for trial will be permitted to enter the court premises. I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have about this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. I now would like to go to Mr. Braden of the Standing Committee on Social Programs which reviewed the bill to make committee's comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs helped hold the hearings on Bill 15, Court Security Act, on December 5, 2005, in Yellowknife; on December 6th in Enterprise and Kakisa; and on December 7th in Fort Providence and Behchoko. Clause-by-clause review of the bill took place in Yellowknife on January 31st.

Some committee members and members of the public expressed general concerns that the act might be used as a justification for relocating trials from small communities to large centres, Mr. Chair, and to justify building a new courthouse in Yellowknife at the expense of investing in justice programs for small communities. Members also

had concerns about how the act would be applied in small communities. For example, many people, especially elders, habitually carry knives or other tools that could be considered weapons. The committee hopes that court security personnel will use their discretion appropriately in these cases by either allowing people, especially elders, to keep their tools on them if they do not pose a threat, or by respectfully asking them to leave their tools outside the court area.

The committee would not want to see people treated with unnecessary harshness or charged under the act where they may just have been unaware of or have misunderstood the rules, rather than having any intention to cause harm.

Following the clause-by-clause review, Mr. Chair, a motion was carried to report Bill 15 to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole. That concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 15. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Seeing as we already have the witnesses in the Chamber with us, I would now like to maybe perhaps get the Minister to reintroduce the witnesses for the record.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Reg Tolton, the assistant deputy minister of Justice; Rebecca Veinott, legal counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. Welcome, Mr. Tolton and Ms. Veinott, to the proceedings. General comments. Are there any comments on Bill 15? Clause by clause? Okay. Clause by clause, committee. Page 2, Bill 15, Court Security Act, interpretation, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Weapons in court areas, clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Restricted personnel zones, clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Restricted equipment zones, clause 7. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just looking for a bit of an explanation why clause 7 is written in such a way. It says no person shall use a camera. I have seen someone take pictures of the carvings we have had in our courthouse and they have been told to leave or stop

taking pictures. In essence, why are we so heavy handed when it comes to a situation like that where we have carvings on display and whatnot? Good patrons may want to take photos. So maybe if the Minister could provide a little explanation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, I think that is the judicial directive at this point. Of course, they can insist that is how they are going to run their courtrooms. This law, I think, brings some clarity to some of those issues. We acknowledge that it is different across jurisdictions. We want to make sure that the intent here is to make sure that there aren't published pictures or airing of live recordings of witnesses that might not be respectful to their need for privacy. We wouldn't think in a case may not be in the interest of freedom of the press. So, Mr. Chairman, there is a need to strike a balance. We recognize that. It's our intent here to make sure that when necessary, the court security have the ability to restrict things like cameras and tape recorders in certain parts of the court premises.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. Anything further, Mr. Hawkins?

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I am sort of not seeing the discretion here. Maybe the Minister could speak to that because, for example, our courthouse is well known for its carvings, the ones that we still have. In essence, people would go see them. The tourists, for example, would probably or could foreseeably want to take a photo of these things. I guess I am looking for the details on the discretion side of this equation where somebody has taken a photo of the carvings and they are not all of a sudden attacked by security and hauled off. Where is the discretion in this situation? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I am just trying to get some clarification of what might have happened in this incident, but I would think probably would likely to happen right now is if somebody is interested in taking pictures of the artwork or the carvings, then the judges would allow them. Of course, I don't know what happened in the situation, Mr. Chairman. I guess we can't legislate all of the potential inevitabilities, but we think we've got a good bill here that allows for when it's in the interest of the privacy of people in court, their privacy will be protected. I think that's what we are striving to do here, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Security officers, clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Offences and punishment, clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Regulations, clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Commence, clause 12.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): To the bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree that Bill 15 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bill 15 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank Minister Bell, Ms. Veinott, Mr. Tolton, for being with us this afternoon. Have a nice evening. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I motion that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. 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, committee.

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

ITEM 17: 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; Committee Reports 5-15(4), 6-15(4), 7-15(4); Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2; Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act; and Bill 15, the Court Security Act, and would like to report progress that Committee Reports 5-15(4), 6-15(4) and 7-15(4) are concluded and that Bills 12, 15, 18 and 20 are ready for third reading. 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 Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 18: THIRD READING OF BILLS

Bill 17: An Act To Amend The Public Colleges Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 17 has had third reading. Third reading of bills.

Colleagues, before I proceed to orders of the day, it is my duty to advise you that both myself and the Deputy Speaker will be absent from the House for the next couple of days due to unavoidable personal responsibilities. The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act requires the House to elect an active Speaker at the commencement of any sitting day when both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are absent or unable to act. As such, the Clerk will call the House to order tomorrow and preside over the election of an acting Speaker. I wish you the best in the remaining of your important deliberations.

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 19: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 1, 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 16, Tobacco Control Act
- Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2005-2006
- Committee Report 8 - 15(4), Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General to the NWT Legislative Assembly for the Fiscal Years Ended March 31, 2002 and March 31, 2003

17. Report of Committee of the Whole

18. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act
- Bill 15, Court Security Act
- Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007
- Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, No. 2

19. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 1, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 18:27 p.m.

