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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 8, 2007****Members Present**

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. I would also like to welcome all of our visitors in the gallery today to listen to the budget address. Just for your information, we will be taking a short break immediately following the budget address to have a bit of a reception out in the Great Hall. You are welcome to join us there and welcome to come back and listen to Members' statements and oral questions as well after.

Orders of the day. Budget address. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

---Applause

ITEM 2: BUDGET ADDRESS**Introduction**

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege today to present the 2007-08 budget for the Government of the Northwest Territories. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly who worked individually and collectively through the standing committee process to contribute to the formation of this budget.

This is the last budget of the 15th Assembly. That makes it an ideal time to look back briefly at what we have collectively accomplished over the past three years. But perhaps even more important, it is time to look ahead with optimism, with confidence and with a keen understanding that the next few years will be a critical turning point in our history.

As a Member of this Assembly and Minister of Finance, let me begin by saying I am proud of what this Assembly has achieved. We put sound fiscal policies in place, invested wisely in infrastructure and took important steps to improve health care services and make sure our young people get the education they need. We have worked hard to build our economy and support communities, families and individuals all across the territory.

Our economy has been growing at a faster pace than the rest of Canada. More and better jobs are translating into higher incomes for people in the Northwest Territories. The important decisions we have made will help build a better future for our residents. They will allow us to move forward in achieving our vision of self-reliant individuals and families sharing the rewards and responsibilities of healthy communities and a prosperous and unified Northwest Territories.

At the same time, make no mistake, the challenges ahead are substantial and the blunt reality is that our territory cannot address those challenges alone, nor can we achieve the lasting benefits new economic opportunities could bring unless and until we are able to sort out long-standing issues with the federal government.

Just this summer, our hopes were raised when Prime Minister Harper visited Yellowknife and echoed many of the sentiments we have been expressing for years. He called for an end to the paternalistic policies of the past. He vowed to champion our cause in Ottawa and across Canada. He acknowledged that, in the past, Ottawa has done as much to frustrate northern development as to facilitate it. He noted that when development occurred, Ottawa was first in line to scoop up most of the revenues. He committed to a new deal on resource revenue sharing as part of the negotiations on territorial formula financing, and agreed that if our territory is going to take on more responsibilities and more control over our destiny, we will obviously need more revenues.

We have heard these words of support and hope for many years, along with a promise of doing the right thing for the Northwest Territories. Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty plans to bring forward a proposal to the federal Cabinet to raise our borrowing limit. Minister Flaherty has indicated he will also bring forward solutions for strengthened principal-based territorial formula financing arrangements in the next federal budget. We will be watching closely to ensure that this time, promises turn to action.

---Applause

Because, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the encouraging words before. We share a common goal of seeing the Northwest Territories become a self-reliant, self-sufficient and contributing member of Canada's confederation. I firmly believe that is also what Canadians want, and yet we haven't seen real action on the very thing that will allow that to happen; and that is reaching the agreement on how we can share the revenues from developing our natural resources to build a strong and prosperous territory.

Like so many northerners, I am growing increasingly impatient with the lack of real and tangible progress on an issue so absolutely vital to the future of our territory. Frankly, time is running out. We know that the Northwest Territories is poised for enormous economic growth. A third diamond mine will be completed this year. Two more mines, one diamond and one gold, are set to proceed through regulatory review. We are confident that the necessary reviews of the Mackenzie gas project will be completed and the project will proceed. The result will be unprecedented economic growth in the territory, an opportunity for us to fulfill the promise of a self-reliant

people and realize our potential as equal partners in this country.

That promise and potential are within our grasp, but only if we are ready, only if we have the right tools in place, including the right agreements with the federal government, to allow us to capitalize on the opportunity and turn it into a lasting benefit for people, families and communities all across our territory and for the rest of Canada.

This fall, I had a chance to talk about these issues with a group of people in both Yellowknife and Inuvik. These two round table discussions required our commitment to develop a macroeconomic road map for the future of the Northwest Territories. The discussions brought to light a number of issues we need to address. But what struck me the most was a sense that we need to get ready; ready to anticipate and manage the impact of growth, ready with the skills and education our people need to take advantage of the full range of new jobs economic growth will provide, and ready to secure more lasting benefits so this doesn't become one more of the boom and bust cycles we have all seen before.

That's why I believe these next few years will be a turning point and test for all of us. We have a window of opportunity to get ready for the economic boom that's on our doorstep. With the right tools and the right investments now, we can capitalize on the opportunities ahead. We can transform the Northwest Territories into a key economic driver not only for the North, but for all of Canada. Most important, we can make sure the benefits of economic growth flow first and foremost to the people of the North, not just for today, but for future generations, for your grandchildren and mine.

A Look Back

With that context in mind, let me take a few minutes to talk about some of the highlights of what Members of this Legislative Assembly have been able to achieve over the past three years.

In 2005, we implemented our fiscal responsibility policy, a policy that committed us to manage our fiscal resources in a sound and prudent manner and to invest wisely in addressing current and future needs. This policy continues to guide our actions today and one of the tangible outcomes of our responsible fiscal approach was a favourable Aa3 credit rating from Moody's Investors Service, which was recently upgraded to an even more favourable Aa1 rating.

---Applause

During the first three years of this government, we have increased funding for social programs by more than \$94 million for education, health and social services, housing and justice. This allowed us to:

- increase the number of doctors and nurses and improve health services;
- strengthen school programs and support for students;
- renew the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation; and

- launch a comprehensive review of income security programs.

We have also fundamentally reshaped the role of community governments through the development and implementation of the New Deal which puts responsibility for community decisions where it belongs: in communities and with people who are directly involved and accountable.

We've focused our efforts on achieving sustainable economic growth, on balancing support for large resource developments with a firm commitment to small business and traditional economic activities. Specifically:

- we established the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to focus our efforts on achieving sustainable economic growth;
- we consolidated our support for small business through a new Business Development and Investment Corporation;
- we completed the necessary socio-economic agreements with the Mackenzie gas project and the DeBeers Snap Lake project to ensure northern employment and business opportunities; and
- we've expanded support for tourism in arts and crafts and the traditional economy.

As well, we have ensured the protection of the environment continues to be a priority for our government. To that end:

- we created the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to provide a focus for the government's role in environmental stewardship;
- we implemented the Beverage Container Recovery Program; and
- we have advanced the species at risk legislation, with a draft bill expected towards the end of the 15th Assembly.

Nearly \$300 million has been invested in capital projects over the past three years, providing essential support for winter roads, bridges and paving projects, and new or renovated schools in nine communities.

Mr. Speaker, all Members of this Assembly should be proud of what we have achieved, the investments we've made, and the steps we've taken over the past three years have unquestionably benefited people and communities in all regions of our territory and I believe those benefits will only grow in the years ahead.

Budget 2007-08 Highlights

One of the biggest challenges of success is that we have to keep on being a success. That means there is no time to sit back, pat ourselves on the back and say our work here is done. In fact, we're only just beginning.

Our challenge is to take the successes we've achieved, build on that solid base, make the right strategic investments, and position the Northwest Territories for a more prosperous and successful future.

To that end, let me turn now to the highlights of this budget.

Based on currently available information, we are projecting an operating surplus of \$46 million for the current fiscal year, 2006-2007.

---Applause

This reflects the responsible fiscal approach taken by this government and Legislative Assembly; an approach that allows us to meet our obligation to repay this fiscal year \$290 million in corporate tax overpayments made to our government several years ago by the Government of Canada. Through prudent fiscal planning we have most of the necessary funds to repay this amount, with the requirement to borrow only \$8 million at the end of this fiscal year to cover the balance.

For 2007-08, we estimate our total revenues to be \$1.231 billion, an increase of over 4.3 percent over last year, although we will not know the final numbers for certain until the federal government's budget is tabled. The federal Minister of Finance has guaranteed that the territorial formula financing grant for 2007-08 will not be less than \$764 million. As I mentioned earlier, we are expecting proposals in the next federal budget that will outline new territorial formula financing arrangements.

In terms of spending, the budget for 2007-08 includes a net increase of \$89 million in spending; an increase of over 8.3 percent over last year. This includes \$55 million to increased social program costs, to meet higher fuel costs, and to maintain competitive wages for teachers, health care workers and other public sector employees, as well as \$38 million in additional spending on key priorities identified by Ministers and legislative committees.

We also recognize there is considerable uncertainty in our fiscal picture. I have committed to Members that I will consult with them on the allocation of any additional revenues resulting from the federal budget and return to this Assembly in May with a revised expenditure plan if required.

The budget also includes an estimated \$151 million for public infrastructure, including \$30 million to fund school renovations and construction and \$37 million for road transportation projects.

We expect to end the 2007-08 fiscal year with an operating surplus of \$44 million. The government's direct debt at the end of the year is estimated to be \$50 million, with a total debt subject to the \$300 million debt limit estimated at \$189 million.

Those are the key numbers. But what people listening to this budget today want to know is where will the money be spent?

This budget reflects our continuing commitment not only to responsible fiscal management, but also to ensuring every dollar we invest tackles the most pressing problems, addresses the right priorities, and helps position the territory for a better future.

Social Programs

This year's budget includes key investments in social programs, especially education, health care and social services.

As we heard at the round table sessions this past fall, investments in these key areas are critical to make sure people are ready to take advantage of the opportunities economic growth will bring. People said it's not just about money; it's about putting people first, making sure the economy works for people and that individual northerners, their families and their communities can benefit from all the opportunities economic growth can bring. That means focusing on education, making sure our children and young people get the education and skills they need to participate fully in the future of our economy, and it means building healthy families and healthy communities.

This budget reflects those messages directly. As part of this year's total budget for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment of \$286 million, we will invest:

- \$962,000 to complete the implementation of full-day kindergarten;

---Applause

- \$1 million to enhance childcare subsidies;
- \$3 million to increase student support;
- \$3.9 million to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio and provide physical education and trades programs in Northwest Territories schools;

---Applause

- \$301,000 to support the delivery of language and cultural instructor programs at Aurora College; and

---Applause

- \$175,000 to enhance literacy program and support.

---Applause

In addition, the budget allocates \$320,000 to enable the Department of Transportation to hire apprentices to work with journeymen in that department.

---Applause

We will also continue our investment in schools with new construction in Tulita, Gameti, Ndilo, and Yellowknife, construction of an Aurora College leaning centre in Fort Simpson, as well as planning for a new school in Inuvik.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Health and Social Services, a total budget of \$277 million includes:

- \$360,000 for an Aboriginal Wellness Program;
- \$137,000 to promote reduced use of tobacco;
- \$431,000 to support increasing costs for taking care of the elderly, people with disabilities, and services provided for long-term care;
- \$1.2 million to strengthen rehabilitation services;
- \$1.3 million for increased costs for physician and hospital services; and

- \$425,000 for non-government organizations to address increasing costs of providing critical services.

---Applause

Steps will also be taken to renovate parts of the Stanton Territorial Hospital and the Fort Smith Health Centre, and to consolidate the medical clinics in Yellowknife. The Department of Health and Social Services will also continue working with other provinces and territories to develop electronic medical records and expand the use of technology in the diagnosis of medical conditions.

Mr. Speaker, housing remains a key concern across the Northwest Territories. During the past year, programs offered by the NWT Housing Corporation have been restructured with a renewed focus on expanding the stock of housing in communities. In 2007-08, the Housing Corporation is allocating \$16.25 million for its affordable housing initiative, which together with the additional matching funds available through the federal Northern Housing Trust, brings the total investment to \$32.5 million.

---Applause

We expect this to result in the construction of an additional 168 housing units, some made available through the Homeownership Program of the Housing Corporation and others replacing older public housing units. Work will also continue during the year to streamline existing Housing Corporation programs.

This year, the Department of Justice will continue its work to strengthen community programs and services. This budget includes:

- \$428,000 to establish an RCMP detachment in Sachs Harbour;

---Applause

- \$688,000 to expand activities of community justice committees;
- \$233,000 to enhance legal aid; and
- an additional \$1.9 million to support RCMP activities across the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

In addition, social programs Ministers are working together on a number of important initiatives. The income security reform work will continue throughout 2007-08 and will build on the policy framework that is currently in place. As the detailed work proceeds, this Assembly may be asked to consider enhancing some key programs. At the same time, the 2007-08 budget provides:

- \$695,000 to address homelessness;

---Applause

- \$262,000 to support a pan-territorial sports strategy; and
- \$180,000 to support the healthy choices framework.

---Applause

It is worth noting that many of the initiatives described above will be done in partnership with community-based non-government organizations. These organizations are an important part of our network of social supports.

Governance

Turning to communities, as I mentioned earlier, the New Deal is a significant achievement of this Legislative Assembly. Through the work of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the NWT Association of Communities, and contributions of many elected municipal representatives and staff from across the Northwest Territories, we have reshaped the role and authorities of community governments.

Beginning in 2007-08 fiscal year, the government will flow \$22.5 million in formula funding directly to community governments...

---Applause

...to allow them to make critical investments in community infrastructure to meet local priorities. Community governments will receive \$90 million in direct funding, an increase of 10 percent over 2006-07. In addition to community infrastructure funding, this budget includes:

- \$4.1 million to increase contributions under the municipal funding formula;
- \$3 million to increase funding for water/sewer services;
- \$800,000 for the Municipal Insurance Program; and
- \$150,000 to support the development of community energy plans.

---Applause

Protecting Our Environment

Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility to ensure that the environment we enjoy today will be here for our children and our grandchildren. This budget includes:

- \$500,000 in additional funds to complete biophysical studies that will ensure we have the necessary data to monitor, assess, and mitigate the effect of proposed resource developments in the western Northwest Territories;
- \$500,000 in additional funds for the NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy to further our efforts to protect this important declining resource.

---Applause

Over the coming year, we will also invest in improving the efficiency of our regulatory approval process by building capacity within the Northwest Territories.

Supporting Economic Growth

Mr. Speaker, all of the investments I've just highlighted are critical for communities and for individual northerners and they will help create stronger communities and build the capacity of our people to live independent, productive and positive lives.

However, our future will not be secure simply by expanding government services and government spending. We need to build the kind of sustainable, balanced, and vibrant economy that will sustain communities and our territory, and create opportunities and hope for future generations.

Today, we look at the Northwest Territories economy and we see many positive signs. While much of our attention is focused on resource development projects, our goal is to see growth and development in all sectors of the economy. That was one of the clear messages from participants in the two macroeconomic round tables last fall. People want to see an economy that is balanced, sustainable, not just focused on resources, but including large and small businesses, tourism, and traditional sectors of our economy. That is critical to ensure there are long-term benefits and those benefits flow directly to Northerners.

This fall, we expect the third Northwest Territories diamond mine to come into production. This will provide additional opportunities for northern businesses and employment.

With respect to the Mackenzie gas project, our position is clear: we support the project, we want to see it proceed. But we must be assured that:

- construction and operation of the project will be undertaken in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner;

---Applause

- over time, the benefits of northern development will accrue to Northwest Territories residents;
- the project will be taken in a way that encourages exploration and development on as broad a basis as possible.

This year, we will spend an estimated \$1.7 million to support planning for the Mackenzie gas project to ensure that our people, communities, and businesses are adequately prepared to meet the demands and maximize the benefits that this project will bring to our territory.

This government is maintaining its commitment to tourism through the Tourism 2010 Strategy that was tabled in the Assembly last year. By renewing its investment of \$1 million, this investment will support marketing research, tourism training, infrastructure and product development, and will encourage the continued expansion and development of this important contributor to the Northwest Territories economy.

The hunting and trapping industry is important to many of our communities. The fur industry is experiencing a resurgence. In support of this growth, the budget for the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Price Program has been increased by \$200,000. Also, as part of this budget, an additional \$120,000 is being provided to the Community Harvesters Assistance Program; \$247,000 to the Fort Smith Metis Council Western Harvesters Assistance Fund; and \$211,000 to the Salt River First Nation Harvester Assistance Fund.

We know that developing our economy requires investments in infrastructure that will connect our

communities, provide access to our resources, and lower the cost of living and doing business in the Northwest Territories. An efficient and effective transportation system is essential to achieving this and we are doing our part. This budget includes more than \$47 million to fund improvements to existing highways and winter roads, to replace bridges and to undertake airport improvements.

Developing our energy potential and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is also critical. The 2007 Energy Plan will provide both a framework to guide future government decisions with respect to energy development, supply and use in the Northwest Territories, and an action plan to respond to the concerns raised by our residents. The planned NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy will complement the 2007 Energy Plan by calling for emission reductions to protect the environment. To support both of these important initiatives, we continue to pursue, through the NWT Power Corporation, opportunities to develop the Northwest Territories' enormous hydro potential, including the proposed expansion of the Taltson River facility.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, those are the spending highlights of the budget for 2007-08.

Revenue Initiatives

There is one more piece of good news for everyone in the Northwest Territories. This budget includes no tax increases.

---Applause

Frankly, we want to keep taxes as low as possible, particularly because the cost of living, working and doing business in the North continues to be significantly higher than the rest of Canada. As a government, we intend to maintain a fair and competitive tax structure, one that will generate the revenues we need to fund important programs and services, but which also encourages people to live here and businesses to invest in growing our economy.

Since last February's budget, we made two changes to the income tax system. Effective July 1, 2006, the NWT corporate tax rate for large businesses was reduced from 14 per cent to 11.5 per cent. In November we increased the dividend tax credit for Northwest Territories residents investing in Canadian corporations. Both measures will help make the Northwest Territories a more competitive tax jurisdiction. Our small business tax rate is still one of the lowest in the country.

One of the important steps we will pursue this year is an increase in the existing federal northern residents deduction. That deduction is designed to help residents of all three territories and northern regions of the provinces address our high northern cost of living. But the amount of the deduction has not been changed significantly since it was introduced in 1988. Meanwhile, the cost of living in the Northwest Territories has increased by an estimated 44 per cent. I have written to my provincial and territorial colleagues asking for their support to have the deduction increased to reflect current realities. Mr. Speaker, that's just one of the issues we'll take forward to the federal government in the coming months.

Challenges Ahead

I can't stress enough how important and how urgent it is to address and resolve outstanding issues with the federal government. We have been patient. We have made a strong and consistent case. We've seen two national reports on territorial formula financing, both of which supported our case and recommended changes we would welcome.

But in spite of that, we have no guarantees that key issues will be resolved quickly or to the benefit of Northerners.

While the federal government reaps the benefits of resource developments in our territory, we must make the necessary investments to build and sustain our economy, protect our environment and prepare our people, without many of the tools required to do so effectively. The result is that instead of allowing us to use our own resources to become less dependent on the federal government, they keep us firmly tied to their purse strings.

The facts speak for themselves. In 2005-06, the federal government received \$244 million in oil and gas and diamond royalties from our territory alone. We get no share of those royalties. This just doesn't add up.

A recent article by Russell Banta concluded that over the past five years, the federal government has taken \$923 million in resource revenues from the North, in addition to federal taxes; significantly more than the estimated \$700 million cost of the much needed Mackenzie Highway. Speaking of highways, the federal government is responsible for building new highways in our territory, and since 1987, not a single kilometre of new highway has been built in the Northwest Territories...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: ...despite our vast mineral and oil and gas potential and the revenues Canada reaps from our territory.

The federal government often talks about how much they spend in the North. And yes, in per capita terms it sounds like a lot of money. We appreciate their contribution and we depend on it far too much. But the reality is that while we received over \$18,000 per person in federal transfers in 2004, the federal government raised almost \$16,000 per person in revenues in the Northwest Territories. That's the part they rarely mention.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to close with two commitments to the people of the Northwest Territories.

First, I will do everything in my power to fight for resolution of three outstanding issues with the federal government: a better and more sustainable arrangement for territorial formula financing, an appropriate revenue sharing agreement to allow northerners to benefit from the development of our resources, and an increased borrowing limit so we can invest in meeting our critical capital infrastructure needs.

We've waited long enough. It's time for the rest of Canada to recognize the potential of the North, to understand that we can become a leading driver in Canada's economy and a thriving contributor to the rest of Canada, but only if we have the tools to chart the right course, make the

necessary investments, and capitalize on the opportunities ahead.

My second commitment is to put in place a new economic road map for the Northwest Territories. I intend to build on the excellent discussion that occurred at the round tables in Yellowknife and Inuvik. Later today, I will table a report outlining what we have heard so far. After the budget, the next step is to bring people together again to discuss key issues and help us chart the course for our economic future. By the end of this summer, we will have developed a policy framework to guide our decisions and help us make the right investments and the best choices in the months and years ahead.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, we have our work cut out for us.

The next two to three years will be a critical time for our territory. It will be a time during which we will chart a clear economic course; a time when major economic developments proceed and open up our territory to a host of new opportunities; a time when we establish a more productive relationship with the federal government and the rest of Canada begins to understand the importance of the North to the future of our country.

And most important, a time when we begin to see the future as we've always hoped and dreamed it would be: a future where our proud traditions and strong cultures, respect for our environment, and hopes for our children come together to create a proud and prosperous territory.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to meeting these challenges head on and to working with all of you to achieve the future we want for ourselves, our families, our communities and our territory. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The chair would like to recognize a couple of former Members of this House in the gallery. Mr. Leon Lafferty and Ms. Lena Pedersen are with us today.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: The chair will now call a short break so we can have a reception out in the Great Hall. You are all welcome to join us in the Great Hall. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: I will call the House back to order. Item 3, Ministers' statements. Item 4, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 4: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I previously shared in this House how pleased we are that there is now an office in Hay River for persons with disabilities. Although this is a first step, there are many other things that need to be accomplished to truly make a positive impact on our citizens who have physical or intellectual disabilities. We have issues related to

transportation. We have needs with regard to respite for the caregivers of persons with disabilities. Without support, these caregivers can despair and the alternative to offering support becomes a much more costly solution for this government.

We also have quite a number of people in Hay River who, because of disabilities, cannot function in a regular workplace environment holding down a full-time job. However, they are quite capable of performing certain functions with limited hours, limited expectations or some additional support from a designated co-worker if they have questions or concerns.

Mr. Speaker, how many of our government or private sector offices could find duties that could be performed by a person with a disability if we turned our minds to creating that opportunity for them? Often there are tasks, many tasks, that don't require the skills of the highest paid person in the office. Here in Yellowknife, we often see the adults who participate in the Association for Community Living Program and are out and about in our community contributing through contracts that they secure to provide different types of services while employing their skills. On a government-wide basis I think there is a lot more opportunity for this type of accommodation of persons with disabilities if we choose to create it.

Later today, I'll have questions for the Minister responsible for Human Resources about what is in place now and what could be put in place to ensure our best efforts to fully integrate persons with disabilities in our workplaces and in our society in a meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, I will also be asking the Minister questions on the September 2004 NWT action plan for persons with disabilities, which contains many excellent recommendations, but most of which, I'm sorry to say, have not been acted on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The Budget Address

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today is reflecting the budget address that we've just heard. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be part of the Assembly's work on this, especially on the advances and the decisions that have been made on spending in the social envelope. From talking with some of the leaders in the non-government sector who were here just a few minutes ago on the break, people from the education field, from the homelessness and disabled, I think we have shown that we have a responsible piece of work in front of us.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, on the side where we can't deliver yet is that this really is a management budget though. I'd like to think it's a good management budget. But we can't, Mr. Speaker, really start to extend our reach and be a visionary Assembly. We cannot be an Assembly that can push the envelope of development and opportunity and potential that we have, Mr. Speaker, until we see a

devolution deal and a resource revenue sharing deal and a formula financing deal, as the Minister I think has so clearly pointed out in his budget. Those are the things that are holding us back. But in the meantime we have a budget that is demonstrating that we are doing, I think, a reasonably good job and effective job of managing.

Mr. Speaker, I would reflect, and I haven't quite had time to do all the math here yet, but I do reflect on the budget that this Assembly first passed back for the fiscal year 2003-2004 was just over the billion dollar neighbourhood. We are now in the \$1.25 billion neighbourhood, Mr. Speaker, an increase of 25 percent in expenditures. That is quite a step for this Northwest Territories to be taking in such a short period of time. Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Congratulations To Newly Elected Chief Of Deninu K'ue First Nation

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I just want to use my Member's statement to send my congratulations to the newly elected chief of the Deninu K'ue First Nations, Mr. Bill Norn. He was elected yesterday...

---Applause

...by residents of Deninu K'ue.

Many here may know Bill Norn. He has been active in community politics over the past 10 or 15 years, and I look forward to working with Bill on many community issues of importance and developing better working relationships with some potential partners in industry on economic development projects that are currently being negotiated in the Fort Res area so that communities, specifically the First Nations and Deninu K'ue, can become primary beneficiaries of employment and economic opportunities as they arise.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to provide my full support for any initiatives that the Deninu K'ue First Nations wish to pursue, be it First Nations governance, economic development or capacity building, so that the community can realize some tangible benefits over the near future. I'm confident that this new leadership can be more positive and proactive in all these areas.

I'd also like to welcome a new face to the DKFN council, Mr. Philip Beaulieu; Peppy, as we all know him. He's also been elected as a new councilman. I look forward to working with him also.

Two other seats were filled by the incumbent, Raymond Simon, and our ex-chief Robert Sayine also took up the vacant councillor's seat. His many years of service as chief of the Deninu K'ue First Nations will not soon be forgotten. Robert, you know, we were all very appreciative of your commitment to improving the lives of our First Nations people in Deninu K'ue and in Akaitcho and the NWT, specifically in the community as a whole while you were a chief. On behalf of all my constituents in Fort Resolution, I want to say mahsi cho, Robert, and enjoy the

not-so-hot seat on council as counsellor today. Thank you, mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As MLAs, we often hear from constituents with concerns regarding their treatment by government administrators. A person denied access to a social program might suspect the decision was based on false information or the decision-maker was biased against them in some way. MLAs have limited resources to investigate these concerns. We can approach Ministers on these issues; however, admin programs are designed to remain free from political interference. I'm here to make sure frameworks are in place so people will be treated fairly, although this probably isn't much comfort to a constituent who's caught up in a system, because we all know that no policy is perfect and no law can completely guarantee fairness.

There are only two other jurisdictions in Canada without an established ombudsman office to deal with these kinds of complaints. The Northwest Territories is fortunate to be serviced by ombudsmen-like offices in the areas of access to information, protection of privacy, language rights, and equal pay. However, there are many concerns about administrative fairness that fall outside the scope of these offices.

Ombudsmen offices promote fairness, openness, accountability. They can independently investigate complaints and can help the parties to resolve their differences and come to a better understanding. In some provinces, their mandate includes community governments and a wide variety of public agencies by providing independent scrutiny of administrative practices. They increase public confidence and trust in the workings of government.

NWT citizens are subject to a wide variety of government decisions that affect many areas of their lives. They need access to an independent body that can look into and help resolve complaints about fairness.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it's time we catch up to the rest of Canada and establish an ombudsman office in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Premier later today. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Transfer Of GNWT Employees To The Tlicho Government

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, we are now one and a half into implementation of Tlicho Agreement, but most of the North Slave regional office did not go into Behchoko as the Monfwi centre. I realize that the Department of Executive may be working on plans transferring the North Slave regional staff located

in Yellowknife to the Tlicho region. We need to know how many North Slave positions work on Tlicho files, work for the Tlicho region and make decisions on Tlicho issues and business. We need to know about the government plans to transfer them into our region. We need to ensure that the Department of Executive consult with Behchoko Community Government to Tlicho Community Services Agency and Behchoko Development Corporation before finalizing its plan.

The government needs to reveal its plan on office and accommodation needs on its consideration for a new office complex that could truly function as Monfwi regional centre, centralizing all GNWT service for Tlicho region building to government. (Translation ends)

...as of yet. I realize the Department of Executive may be working on plans on transferring the North Slave regional office located in Yellowknife to the Tlicho region. We need to know how many North Slave positions work on Tlicho files, work for the Tlicho region, and make decisions on behalf of Tlicho issues and businesses. We need to know the government's plans to transfer them into our region. We need to ensure the Department of Executive consults with the Behchoko Community Government, Tlicho Community Services Agency, and Behchoko Development Corporation before finalizing its plans, Mr. Speaker.

The government needs to reveal its plans on office accommodation needs on its consideration for a new office complex that could truly function as Monfwi regional centre. Centralizing all GNWT services for Tlicho region into one building would make the government more accessible and services user-friendly, Mr. Speaker. At the same time, such a move would open an opportunity to bring offices and services of the Tlicho Community Services Agency under one roof as tenants of Nishi-Khon complex. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi cho.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, it is time for this Government of the Northwest Territories to acknowledge the importance of Behchoko as the capital of Tlicho Government. Basically such recognition will mean the Tlicho becomes a stand-alone region with appropriate headquarters. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The Budget Address

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my friend and colleague Minister Roland for his final budget that he presented to this House for this 15th Assembly. Particularly well done, I think, in the main estimates will be the budgets for Health and Social Services and the

Department of Environment and Natural Resources. I would also like to note how capable the Minister has been at steering the fiscal ship of state through the tricky waters that we have to navigate, keeping us from the mythic debt wall that he's talked about at great length, as has his predecessors.

When he was on this side of the House, he would ask very pointed questions about why is it that all these estimates and latest projections change, sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly, sometimes even hourly? Why is it that Cabinet always gets these bags of money that drop out of the air onto their tables, out of the blue for no apparent reason? There has got to be something going on here.

Now, for the last three years, he has become very capable of responding to those particular issues, explaining, in fact, why their projections can change monthly, weekly, or even hourly, and why it is that this bag of money or that bag of money dropped out of the air onto his desk, usually through some kind of long-term planning and good budgeting and planning on the part of the Minister. I would like to commend him for all the work that he has done. He has had the job on both sides of this House, one as an informal critic, one as the Minister.

Clearly, we have a stay-the-course budget. The key piece, as he noted in his budget, that we all have to pay very close attention to is going to be what happens when the federal government tables their budget. We will see what they mean when they talk about the fiscal imbalance, what they're going to do with the formula. Are they going to have any specific mention about resource revenue sharing and devolution? We've done the job we have to do and the Minister is to be commended, as I say, but clearly our job is going to be to see what the federal government says and whether, in fact, we can gather here in May/June to see if we have to adjust how we are going to do our budgeting for the rest of our time. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak today about an issue that I have raised in this House on numerous occasions over the past three and a half years. That issue, Mr. Speaker, is the construction of a city bypass road from Highway No. 3 to the Kam Lake Industrial Park. Mr. Speaker, some of the excuses that I have heard over the year as to why it has not been concluded is there have been concerns over land access, rights-of-way, the alignment, cost, the servicing of the new road. Mr. Speaker, what we need to do as a government is work out a mutually beneficial agreement with the City of Yellowknife to see that this road is constructed as soon as possible.

The Government of the Northwest Territories benefits because this road will open up access to the west side of the Yellowknife Airport property. The city needs land to develop and, from a public safety standpoint, the residents of this city should have an alternate route into and out of the city. I have spoken previously about the possibility of

a major incident or an accident at the Yellowknife Airport and the fact that it would essentially cut the city off from road access. Add to that the possibility of an accident or an incident on the top of Kam Lake Road near the North Slave Correctional Centre, and the residents and businesses in my riding in Kam Lake Industrial Park would essentially be cut off from access.

The construction of this bypass road is long overdue, Mr. Speaker. It will be an integral piece of public infrastructure and, as a government, we have a perfect opportunity in front of us to partner with the City of Yellowknife to construct this road.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where the negotiations are at. I would also like to know why this project is not getting the level of attention that it deserves and it requires. I have been a member of the Governance and Economic Development committee since I arrived here at the Legislature in 2003 and I know this subject was brought up numerous times by myself at the committee level. Recommendations go forward to the government, and for whatever reason they fail to act on those recommendations. It is a surprise to me that again in this year's budget there is no inclusion of any money to partner with the City of Yellowknife on this much needed piece of public infrastructure. You can look around the city, you see the trucks, you can see them driving around. It is ice road season. We need a bypass road in the city of Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly have questions for the Minister of Transportation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The Budget Address

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my Member's statement today to speak on parts of the budget that I heard Minister Roland present before us. I am pleased to see that there is more money going into student support. I think that is a good move that we have to continue to encourage our students, especially with the students that are going to school up North as opposed to going to school down South where there is a different cost of living. That is a good move and, hopefully, a lot of that money comes to the students that are going to school up here.

I am pleased to see the money going into the Language and Cultural Instructor Program. I think that is also another good move. The money for hiring apprentices, I think, with all the opportunity that is coming down, it is good to see more money going into hiring apprentices so they can be used on the pipeline when that goes ahead. I am always pleased to see money going into fur harvesters, people that continue to try and live a traditional lifestyle. I have always been a big supporter of that.

If you look at a map of the Northwest Territories and there are a lot of dots where each community is, and we talk about connecting the NWT and connecting the dots but we don't seem to do it. I was surprised to hear that not one kilometre of road has been built since 1987. I mean

four months, that should be long enough to do one kilometre.

---Laughter

It just blows me away, Mr. Speaker, that, as was mentioned in the budget address, \$923 million in the past five years has gone to Ottawa. We need a highway to connect the NWT, \$700 million, we would have \$223 million change left over. It is a real injustice to the people of the Northwest Territories that we have to go to Ottawa to beg for our own money. That is not acceptable.

I am pleased to see a little stronger tone being taken in the last two budget addresses as to trying to go after the money from Ottawa that rightfully belongs here and we all know it. They continue to control the purse strings and we have to go begging for what is rightfully ours. Mr. Speaker, I am frustrated with this. I think the leadership across the Northwest Territories should be frustrated with it and try and unite and go down there and get a deal that will work for everyone. Then we can come back in the Northwest Territories and bicker amongst ourselves as to how we are going to divide it. But first we have to get the money, because \$923 million over five years is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The Budget Address

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am told that the federal government does pay attention to what is said in this Assembly so I just want to add my reaction and my initial response to the budget delivered by the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, obviously the first part of the budget has to do with doing the best we can within the money we have. I think it was a very good job; however, this is without knowing the certainty of what is to come and I guess a lot will be, hopefully, revealed to us in the next upcoming budget of the federal government. So this budget is dealing with the status quo. However, the focus on this budget is really on the latter part, which has to do with the glaring missing piece and that is the important role the federal government has to play in our political, fiscal and economic future. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I believe this is an opportunity for the new Conservative, or old new Conservative government, a year-old Conservative government. This is an opportunity for them to do something on triple files we have, which is on devolution, resource revenue sharing and fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has worn out the phrase that they have done more in one year than the previous government did in 13 years, but I say to them, not so fast, Mr. Harper. As the new NWT tourism slogan says, look up, Mr. Harper, way up north. Look way up north and this is where the actions are at, where the real action is. If you want to be remembered as the greatest Prime Minister that ever lived, there is a lot of work here for you to do. The first thing you might want to do is read the budget address today.

Mr. Speaker, I want the federal government to know once again that this is where the great questions of our time are converging and where we can really find the right answers for. This is where the largest resource development projects in the world-class scale in oil and gas development, hydro projects, meet the biggest environmental questions of our time. That is a challenge, but it is an opportunity for Mr. Harper to really make a difference. This is also where the rural and urban balance can be really tested and won. This is where the aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people as equal and strong partners could truly be the masters of our own future. Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement?

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I do believe this is where the leadership around this table and the leadership that we have in the North could really truly work together with the federal government to make this happen. I believe that the Minister of Finance has done a fine job in presenting our case for the second time in a row, as Mr. McLeod has already suggested. I think we have presented our case. I await, along with everybody else, the response from the federal government, breathlessly. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 7: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize two people in the gallery today. Darrell Beaulieu, the CEO for Denendeh Development Corporation and Margaret Gorman, chief financial officer for the same corporation. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't often get to recognize people in the House, but today I have the special pleasure of recognizing my wife, Shawna, and two of my sons, Samuel and Mitchell. As well, I would like to recognize the president of the UNW, Mr. Todd Parsons.

---Applause

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize someone we don't always see here that I just noticed, Chief Charlie Furlong from Aklavik and our very own Hilda Camirand who is taking some time out and can watch us from the gallery. Also, I would like to

recognize the strong woman social advocacy in our community, Arlene Hache and Lydia Bardak. Thank you.

---Applause

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a respected senior who is often with us, Mr. Ed Jeske. He is accompanied by Vivian Squires, who is the executive director of the Yellowknife Seniors' Society. I would also like to recognize a constituent, Ms. Barb Wyness, who is with Todd Parsons from the UNW.

---Applause

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to recognize all of the guests we have in the audience here today, a special budget day and one that hasn't been recognized yet, Mr. Mark Bogan, who is an advocate for fathers' rights and equal shared parenting, who is with us today. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to recognize Chief Charlie Furlong from Aklavik who is also the chief negotiator on the self-government table for the Gwich'in, so welcome, Charlie.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: On a budget day that I think will long be remembered as a good day for homelessness, I want to recognize also Lydia Bardak and Arlene Hache, members of the Homelessness Coalition. As well, in my capacity as Minister of ITI, I had the pleasure of dealing with Darrell Beaulieu as the chair of BDIC. I want to recognize him. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize some of the folks in the gallery, constituents Mark Bogan and from the Union of Northern Workers, the president Todd Parsons.

---Applause

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of friends in the gallery today, but I would like to make special mention to just a couple, although they know I would like to recognize them all, but this time I would like to recognize Mr. Ed Jeske, one of our special seniors in Yellowknife Centre, he is also shepherded by Vivian Squires with the YK Seniors and Mr. Jeff Corradetti who is sitting right in the front who is taking a keen interest in the transportation issues as well as the Legislature as a whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Legislative Assembly. It is always nice to have an audience. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 8: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I was talking about the availability of opportunities in the workplace for persons with disabilities. There are many recommendations contained in the NWT action plan for persons with disabilities related to employment. I would like to ask the Minister of Human Resources if, first of all, he has a role to play in this and what kind of progress has been made on some of these recommendations. One of the recommendations is to develop and deliver regional community employment programs for persons with disabilities that support them to seek and be successful in employment. Then it makes a reference to some North Slave activities under support of activities, but one of the actions required is to pilot this in two more communities other than the North Slave. I would like to ask the Minister if he could update us on the progress on such pilots. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware that this program has been moved beyond the one pilot, but it has been offered in the North Slave at this point. I have met with the Council for Persons with Disabilities and we have agreed that we are going to move forward to take a look at this disabilities plan and update it and we will take a look at those areas where we need to continue to improve on our offerings. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, this report is from September 2004. This is now February 2007. I think this is a very

important area of work that needs to be accomplished in our government. Would the Minister commit that one of the pilots that they will undertake to be in Hay River? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will take a look at that suggestion. I know, for instance, the Department of Human Resources has tried to lead by example. The office in Hay River has one position identified for a person with disabilities and they have gone out of their way to make sure that they can present an example to other employers about how persons with disabilities can be accommodated. At headquarters, the department here has also identified positions for persons with disabilities including one position for a person with significant disabilities. So we do believe that it is possible to improve on what was happening out there.

As Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, I have also agreed to work with the council to ensure that we are moving forward and updating this plan. I will work with them. I will make sure they are aware of the Member's request that Hay River be looked at as one of the pilots. We will work collaboratively to see if that can be followed. Thanks.

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

Supplementary To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I speak specifically of Hay River because that is the constituency that I represent. One of the other actions that is indicated as a recommendation in this report is to educate NWT employers about the benefits of including persons with disabilities into their workforce. I would like to ask the Minister if a workshop to that effect has ever been held in Hay River. If not, could he undertake to commit that one will be? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as far as I am aware, the only workshop that has been held was held in the North Slave region. I will certainly take a look at where we can expand this sort of information and report back to the Member on what the options might be.

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

Supplementary To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister detail for us if there are any government financial resources available to private sector employers who could take the opportunity to incorporate

persons with disabilities into their workplaces if that extra monetary support was required for additional support for that person in the workplace, perhaps someone to help monitor their work or just some extra costs that might be incurred? Are there any financial resources available to encourage that as an incentive? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 273-15(5): Workplace Integration For Persons With Disabilities

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There aren't any programs specifically aimed at providing extra support for employers to hire persons with disabilities. I think it would be wrong to say that a person with disabilities costs a company more money. I think that there are an awful lot of ways that people can be creative. I know that within the Department of Human Resources, both in Hay River and in Yellowknife, there have been ways found to accommodate disabilities without any increase in costs. I think that people with disabilities can be as productive as, in many cases, people without disabilities. So I would encourage all employers to take a look at what they can do to make sure that their workplace is accommodating to persons with disabilities. Thank you.

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

Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to my earlier Member's statement about the GNWT relocating its North Slave regional office that deal with the Tlicho to Behchoko creating a Monfwi regional headquarters. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. How many North Slave positions exist that deal specifically with Tlicho files or serve the Tlicho people in the region? (Translation ends)

I would like to just highlight what the Minister has spoken on the budget session today, the role of the community government, as he highlighted as a New Deal which puts responsibility for community decisions where it belongs, Mr. Speaker, in the communities. So I would like to ask the Premier how many North Slave positions already exist that deal specifically with Tlicho files or serve the Tlicho people in the region? Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Member that all of the people who work for the Government of the Northwest Territories and reside in the Tlicho region will work exclusively for the Tlicho. Those who reside in other centres, in Yellowknife for example, I am not sure if any of them work exclusively on Tlicho issues, but I will undertake to find that out. I suspect that they probably work on files covering the whole North Slave region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the difficulties, hardships and the unfairness created by continuing to serve Tlicho from Yellowknife or Yellowknife headquarters, thus creating some more miscommunication dialogue or that is happening in the community, but I would like to ask the Premier a leading question though...I would like to find out from the Premier if he can explain the plans of the Executive to relocate the North Slave position to Behchoko. I do believe the plan had been initiated late last year by the Executive. Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following our session last fall, I have asked the regional director with trying to determine which positions are dealing with Tlicho issues exclusively or primarily and coming forward with a plan of how we might consider transfers. Mr. Speaker, that review will take a few weeks to complete. We will have to come to Cabinet and eventually we will be sharing it with the Tlicho administration and the MLAs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for his positive remarks. Mr. Speaker, as we can see, this will be a great opportunity for the Government of the Northwest Territories to demonstrate how serious it is or to take on the implementation of the Tlicho Agreement. So, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to ask the Premier the commitments being made on decision to move the North Slave regional positions to Behchoko. Could that happen by fall of 2007? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if we could implement the moves before then because we do have issues to deal with. One, of course, being office space, as we have talked about, and the other being issues around human resources, whether we can transfer people arbitrarily, whether we have to look at their current situation. So, Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm right now that it could be done, but I assure the Member that we will make every effort to get the report out within the next few weeks and hopefully before this House concludes. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question would be on the plan that is coming due in the next couple of weeks. Is that part of the consultation

with the Tlicho Community Services Agency, the Behchoko Community Government, and also the Behchoko Community Corporation? Have they consulted with those parties? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 274-15(5): Relocation Of North Slave Regional Office

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, no, we haven't yet discussed it with the Tlicho. What we want to do is look at what is possible first. I wanted to take that to Cabinet. If there is agreement at the Cabinet table to do that, then we would move ahead with discussing from that list of possibilities what would realistically be transferred. Mr. Speaker, money, of course, is always an issue; how much is it going to cost us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my questions today to the Minister of Transportation. It is in regard to the city bypass road that is proposed to be constructed from Highway No. 3 to Kam Lake Industrial Park. The reason I am standing up here today is this is opportunity number six or seven that I have had to stand up in the House and question the Minister of Transportation on the status of this much needed bypass road. Again today, I am here and I am going to ask the Minister of Transportation again. Where on the radar is the bypass road if it is not included in any of the budget documents that were presented today? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just with respect to the bypass road for the city of Yellowknife, and the Member is well aware, it is viewed typically as a City of Yellowknife initiative. However, our government has been in discussions with them to help facilitate the planning of that bypass road. The recent incidents of the past couple years where the exit to Yellowknife was shut down is, of course, a concern. But I would like to report that there is some progress in discussing this project with the City of Yellowknife officials. As the Member is aware, as well, the project had been held up with the issues surrounding the land and the Akaitcho process and now that land transfers have happened, the discussions with the city can continue, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of public safety should be first and foremost in the mind of the government when it's dealing with this road. I know it's a municipal bypass road. I've argued in

the past that it could have been included in negotiations with the federal government or included in plans like Corridors for Canada, and included as part of the highway system because we only have one road into and out of the capital city. We can't forget that public safety should be our primary concern here.

I'd like to ask the Minister, and obviously it's going to have to be a partnership between the city and the GNWT, how much is the Department of Transportation going to put on the table to make sure that this road gets completed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The most recent meeting with the officials was last week and both the city and our government have agreed, of course, to continue moving the project forward. But there are many issues that have to be resolved yet and one of them is what the Member had requested, which is the funding of the road. Actually, ownership is also a big question, O and M, adjacent land use, as well. They have to be considered. As we move forward, there's many considerations that have to be taken for this project. There's hope that significant progress can be made in the next few months in regard to these issues, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation if, in fact, he may, as negotiations go on here, I think the deal has to be mutually beneficial, as I mentioned in my statement, to both the City of Yellowknife and the GNWT. I'd like to ask the Minister if he would entertain coming back to committee and letting us know what is being proposed so that we may have some input into the process. Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be pleased to update the standing committee, to brief them on what progress has been made as this develops. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to again ask the Minister of Transportation if in fact the committee will be made apprised of the negotiations and how the deal is going to be structured between the City of Yellowknife and the Government of the Northwest Territories to see to it that this bypass road finally does get constructed. Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 275-15(5): Bypass Road For The City Of Yellowknife

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, I'd be prepared to sit with the Member and the standing committee once we have more details to provide to them. Thank you.

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

Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my questions to the Minister of Finance and I refer to the budget at page 10 under the heading of "The Challenges Ahead," but I think it could be titled "Mr. Roland's Letter to Mr. Harper" or "Talking About the Missing Piece." Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I learned something new here. It's quite amazing that we're a jurisdiction where we really cost the federal government two thousand a head, I mean, we must be one of the most fiscally self-sustaining and responsible citizens of Canada. I also learned from here that in fact the federal government has not paid, has not put in one single kilometre of new road in the Northwest Territories since 1987. That is unbelievable in light of the fact that most of our communities have no road connection, that we have millions and millions of dollars being produced in revenue for the federal government in our mines and the difficulties they have with the ice road. Is this going to be the same scenario for when we have oil and gas industry? I'd like to know in what part of his discussion with the Minister, the federal government, any potential new revenue or new partnership with the federal government on road building. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of where we would get additional funding or how we would approach this with the federal government, we have on a number of occasions, whether it's the Minister of Transportation or the Premier, when we travel to Ottawa raise the issue of projects. Seeing that our existing relationship with them is very specifically tied to the formula financing, we go down with project-specific requests. One of the ideas that the Premiers have had discussion with or what we've heard is the possibility of trying to build a Mackenzie Valley highway with the help of the federal government.

There has been investment in the Northwest Territories, but it's been to repair existing infrastructure or, for example, cross streams with bridges. We've had help with the federal government on that side, but ultimately to take on a massive project we will need the federal government to come to the table. What we see when we lay out this information is the fact that the money is there, it's a matter of channelling it back to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's generally accepted that the new Conservative government is very business friendly. If not for the public government, in the interest of economic development it's just not fair for the diamond mines to have to contemplate building on the roads to extend the ice road because of the weather conditions and such. They can't rely on it and it's not fair to ask the industry to build roads to do their economic development project and is this something that we're going to expect the oil and gas company to do? Certainly we're going to need roads to carry around Novel housing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know why is road building to these resource projects, hydro project, oil and gas, something that's been in the books for so long. Why do we not have an agreement on federal government coming into play to build the road, especially when it's their responsibility to build new roads? Why do we not have an agreement on that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess I can't give a definitive answer as to why we don't have an agreement. We've approached the federal government on a number of avenues raising this issue and what seems the cleanest and neatest, as we look to what the solutions are, is that it's not new money. It's taking the money taken out of the North and putting it, reinvesting it back here in the Northwest Territories. One of the issues we've always had come to us is the fact that the Northwest Territories is such a small population and that's why I provided information on the per capita amounts, whether it's how much the federal government transfers here and how much they take out in dollars with taxes, and on top of that you add the royalties. It's a matter of reinvesting the money from the Northwest Territories and having it spent rightly where it belongs, and that's where the resources are taken from. So we've approached that. We will continue to work with the federal government. In fact, we were hoping that this budget coming up with the federal government will in fact identify how they will deal with provinces and territories on non-renewable resources. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm still not clear. I guess this is a different way of looking at it, because the Prime Minister was here and the first thing he did was to be present for the opening of the first diamond mine in Nunavut. This government is very pro-pipeline development, and it is a federal government job to build new highways. I'm assuming that where the pipeline project is going to happen is going to require new roads. So it's not fair for the diamond industry to spend hundreds

of millions of dollars just to get their stuff over there. I'd like to know why it is and will the Minister of Transportation or whoever put this project, road project, as part of the project in negotiations for the pipeline development? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact is, with our resources, as the Government of the Northwest Territories our goal is to connect communities first with what limited resources we do have. That will be the issue. We looked all across jurisdictions, whether it's Canada and other countries. Large resource development tends to build their own infrastructure to where they need to go. So that's something that is always going to be part of the equation. In fact, we've partnered, for example, with oil and gas companies on extending winter roads or building them to a higher quality when they are going into the areas they are working. So we work in partnership with them and we continually use that as one of the avenues. But ultimately for new highways in the Northwest Territories, as I have laid out, and airports, it takes the federal government to come to the table. We've approached them on the specific issue of how we think we can achieve that and start building a Mackenzie Highway. But ultimately, it takes the federal government to come to the table and I think we have some workable solutions. It's not a matter of taking new money out of the pot, it's a matter of redirecting the money that comes out of the Northwest Territories and resource revenues. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I would expect that any new roads being built will go through our communities, not just new roads connecting from the mines to the gas development project. If the federal government will come forward with building new highways to these projects, it would allow us to connect our communities. It's still not clear to me if it is the federal government's responsibility to build new roads. If we need to build new roads to connect these resource development projects, why has this not been advanced forward to make it part of the social economic impact benefits agreement or any kind of new investment, if not for the people or the government, the industry?

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

Further Return To Question 276-15(5): Funding For New Territorial Highways

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a government, when we talk with large corporations looking to develop their specific areas, approached them on possible avenues where we can partner up together and it's been no different. When the talk of the Mackenzie gas pipeline came up, there was talk of roads. The proponents to projects are concerned about the environmental footprint and what will be considered in that review, whereas they see public highways as being

government responsibility. So our discussions have to go back to the federal government, which we have and we think we have a workable solution. It's a matter of sitting down with the partner that holds the purse in this case. So we are continuing that avenue of working it and we will continue to work down that path. Thank you.

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

Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for Mr. Roland, Minister of Finance. They relate to some of the ongoing saga, or one of the ongoing sagas of our Legislature, and that is our pursuit of a new territorial financing formula with Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, last October, when we last met here in a fiscal update, the Minister advised the Assembly that the current interim TFF, as it's known, arrangement with Canada is scheduled to end on March 31st of this year. So the question I wanted to ask, Mr. Speaker, was are we going to see a new and better deal concluded with Canada on a go-forward basis for April 1st of this year?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in discussions with Minister Flaherty, the federal Finance Minister, on this specific issue along with provinces and other territories, the commitment is that this budget coming up will include issues dealing with formula financing specifically for our territory. We expect that as we've discussed around the Expert Panel report that's now termed the O'Brien Report, much of that will be included. Ultimately it's in the details of what is actually presented in the budget. So we are hoping that the fix will actually be put in place through this next federal budget and, in fact, it will mean a more stable revenue source as well as a better fiscal relationship with Ottawa. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, the next federal budget, we are lead to believe that it may be delivered somewhere in the third week of March. We are all breathlessly anticipating that. Are we going to have a say in this, Mr. Speaker, or is this going to be decreed by Ottawa that this shall be the new territorial financing agreement? What kind of latitude do we have in accepting and concluding this deal, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all the provinces and territories, along with ourselves, have had discussions with the federal Finance department, as well as Minister Flaherty, around what

equalization for provinces mean and what formula financing would mean for our territory. We have used both the Expert Panel report the federal government initiated, that being the O'Brien report, as well as the Council of Federation Panel on Fiscal Imbalance, their work. We've used both of those reports in our discussions and put them on the table. I think it's beginning to show. In fact, the term of the O'Brien report being the basis of some of our discussion is a good thing because we welcome many of the changes that have been suggested in that report. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, some of the ongoing sagas here has been our efforts to reach a resource revenues sharing deal and a devolution deal with Ottawa. Now all of these involve significant changes and exchanges, flows of money, large sums of money over time. I was wondering about the linkages that there would be with these revenue deals and with the financing formula. With the linkages that understandably have to be there, will we be able to see a formula financing deal that makes sense for us if we don't know how a resource revenue sharing deal is going to work, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 277-15(5): Territorial Formula Financing Arrangements

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of equalization and territorial formula financing at the federal/provincial/territorial table has discussed how resource revenues would be treated in that sense. It's been a hotly debated subject. Some jurisdictions are in agreement with the reports. The O'Brien report discussed a potential 50 percent inclusion/50 percent exclusion. For us in the territory, if we were to get an exclusion from that or an inclusion, as we see it being established in provinces under equalization, that would have to mirror closely to what the territorial government would start seeing. So for us, we think the possibilities are, as the Finance Minister puts his budget forward, could be a solution in that budget that could affect us in the Territories and hopefully in a positive way. Thank you.

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

Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today will be directed to our Premier. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I raised my belief, and the belief of many people I know, that an independent ombudsman office would be a great leap forward in public confidence and transparency. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier would be, has the government ever considered establishing an ombudsman office in the NWT to specifically deal with the types of complaints I made mention of earlier today in my Member's statement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are positions like that of ombudsman in several other jurisdictions. The first step we would want to do is take a look at how that system is working. Hopefully if we were to move forward, we would build on the experience of others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Premier for his point on working towards, or encouraging, public confidence and trust. Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to speak to a provincial ombudsman office. I also had a chance to speak to the Premier privately about a sad story where an ombudsman office would have played a serious role in dealing with the concern. So the Premier knows where I am coming from when I speak to this issue. Therefore, I would like to ask the Premier would he commit to looking into and creating a discussion paper on the possibility of creating an ombudsman office and that information be released before the end of this government's term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, we will take a look at it. I will have my staff look at the experiences across the country. We will do an assessment of the costs, various options. It's possible if we were to move in this direction, we could do it cooperatively with other functions; for example, human rights. We may want to do it as a stand-alone before we move ahead. Mr. Speaker, the earliest I could see us doing this would be in time for the business planning for the upcoming budget, for the 2008-09 budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker it's quite obvious the Premier recognizes the importance of this issue and also the gravity of public confidence when something like an ombudsman is established in our public. Therefore, I ask the Premier one last question, which is if there is some difficulty in developing a discussion paper, can I get the commitment of this Premier today to include it in some type of transition document to the 16th Assembly if some of this information can't be brought forward in time before this 15th Assembly dissolves? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 278-15(5): Need For A Territorial Ombudsman

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes, we will either include it in our preparations for the next fiscal year after this one, business planning, or, as the suggestion, in a transition document. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. Written questions. The Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 9: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 40-15(5): Learning Centres In The Tlicho Region

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

1. Since its inception, how many ABE students have attended the Aurora College program in Behchoko?
2. How many of these students have completed their programs? How many have received certification? At what level are these certifications?
3. What programs besides ABE have been offered to help those students currently in the workforce or who are wishing to upgrade their skills to enter the workforce?
4. The college has cited attendance being a challenge with this program. What was the average rate of attendance for this program on a yearly basis?
5. What was the average rate of attendance per program for September to December 2006?
6. Has the Department of Education or Aurora College investigated why attendance has been a problem in this program? Have they met with community leaders to develop an action plan? When and how many meetings, Mr. Speaker? If not, why not?
7. What changes has the college made to improve the level of programming in Behchoko?
8. Will the department conduct a review of the current Aurora College programming in Behchoko including courses being offered, evaluation of instructors, relevancy of the programming, et cetera?

Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Replies to budget address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 15: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 85:15(5): Charting The Next Course: Interim Report On Consultations

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Charting the Next Course: Interim Report on Consultations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 21. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may proceed with first reading, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 19: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 21: Appropriation Act, 2007-2008

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

---Carried

Bill 21 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 20: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 21: Appropriation Act, 2007-2008

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make operations expenditures and capital investment expenditures for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 21 has had second reading. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to Committee of the Whole. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 24: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, February 9, 2007, at 10:00 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. Replies to Opening Address
10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
 - Motion 17-15(5), Provincial Rule Changes to Implement Designated Budget Days
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, An Write-off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
 - Bill 22, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2006-2007
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act
 - Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 9, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 15:57.