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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 9, 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 morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Ministers' statements. Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 61-15(5): Apprenticeship And Occupational Certification Week**

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. As this is Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Week, I would like to celebrate our success in this area.

In the 2005-2006 school year, the Northwest Territories certified 20 people in designated occupations. Sixty-seven northerners achieved journey status, while another 41 journey-certified northerners achieved their red seal, inter-provincial certification.

---Applause

Throughout the week and into March, each regional career development centre will be hosting Apprenticeships and Occupational Certification Award ceremonies. Sixty-three awards of excellence will be presented to the candidates who have achieved the highest marks in their respective trade or occupation. I have sent congratulatory letters to the award winners on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories. I hope Members will join me in congratulating their constituents who have achieved these levels of excellence.

I would also like to recognize our many partners in trades and occupational certification, particularly the employers who participate in the program and without whom the program could not exist. The Apprenticeship Program is one of the most successful public/private/partnership programs in existence.

Mr. Speaker, given the potential for new jobs in the trades in our hot northern economy, I hope many more young people will choose to pursue a skilled trade after they graduate from high school. Those who do have tremendous opportunity for financial success and a fulfilling career.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ministers' statements. Honourable Minister of ENR, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 62-15(5): NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Summit

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an historic meeting occurred in Inuvik from January 23rd to January 26th. This meeting was held to identify key actions that we can take over the next four years to help barren-ground caribou herds recover.

Leaders from the Northwest Territories wildlife co-management boards, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern Saskatchewan and Alberta communities attended the Northwest Territories Barren-Ground Caribou Summit. More than 180 delegates attended the gathering. This included elders, representatives from the tourism, oil and gas and mining sectors, as well as government agencies that have a role in managing the barren-ground caribou of the Northwest Territories.

Several MLAs were also in attendance. I would like to thank Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Braden, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Pokiak and Mr. McLeod for their support and participation in the summit.

Mr. Speaker, for three days and nights, delegates spoke passionately about their desire to preserve this very important resource. This summit allowed people to share their experience and knowledge. Delegates told us that communities have noticed a difference in caribou numbers, which is supported by the results of surveys and information on calf survival and condition in recent years. I was very impressed with the spirit and willingness shown by all delegates to work together and put politics aside to help the herds recover.

Many delegates spoke of sacrifices they made in the past when caribou herd numbers were low, and they said sacrifices are again needed.

At the summit, delegates identified a number of key actions under these four themes: engaging partners, information for management, managing human activity, and addressing hardships.

The top priorities were:

- protect calving grounds in NWT and Nunavut;
- reduce all harvest;
- bring traditional knowledge into decision-making;
- bring youth into the conference;
- develop management plans for each herd;
- hold an aboriginal conference for harvesters;
- develop codes of conduct for harvest; and

- hold regional harvester conferences.

Many of these priorities are reflected under the NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy, which formed the basis for discussion at the summit.

We will share the results from the summit with all partners and wildlife co-management boards in particular. These co-management boards, established under the land claim agreements, have the primary responsibility for wildlife management in their settlement areas.

We will also work with all partners to implement the following immediate actions:

- Meet with Nunavut to begin discussion about protecting calving grounds.
- Improve the way the department shares information on caribou.
- Stop posting data from satellite collars on the Internet.
- Continue implementing recommendations from wildlife co-management boards on harvest levels and seasons.
- Help communities and regions work with their neighbours to cooperate on management issues.
- Expand and improve public education about the status of herds and hunting ethics.
- Develop a closer working relationship with industry and share more information and collaborate on caribou and other wildlife monitoring.

I have appreciated the support from this Legislature in providing additional resources during the past two years to implement the NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy. More resources will be needed for the next few years to implement priority actions from the Barren-Ground Caribou Summit and strategy.

I must also acknowledge the considerable support from the following funding partners for caribou management activities: Wildlife Management Advisory Council, NWT; Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board; Sahtu Renewable Resources Board; Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Board; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; Diavik Diamond Mines Incorporated; BHP Billiton Diamonds and World Wildlife Fund, Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the leaders who have taken to heart their stewardship role of this important resource for the people of the Northwest Territories; in particular, the wildlife co-management boards, which have made some very difficult decisions over the past two years, and the Tlicho Government, which held a special session on caribou with community members and elders last week.

I look forward to continuing to work with all partners to ensure that we have caribou forever. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Underage Drinking And False Identification

MR. BRADEN: Merci, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak this morning about the issue of underage drinking in the NWT. It relates, Mr. Speaker, to problems that are arising from an unusual place, and that is the issuance of our temporary driver's licences.

It is well established that we are now going through a transition to a much more secure and up-to-date system of identification with our driver's licences. One of the consequences of this, Mr. Speaker, is that people are issued a temporary licence while the permanent one is being processed. It was brought to my attention by a constituent, Mr. Speaker, that the temporary licences which are issued are actually just a plain piece of paper with a photograph and some information on them. It has been discovered by underage persons that these are very easy to tamper with and have become quite popular as proof of age at liquor establishments. I understand that this is even going down into other parts of Canada, in fact as far as Vancouver.

Our temporary driver licences have become an issue with this kind of underage drinking. So where I would like to seek some more information, and I will do that at the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, is are we aware of this problem? What are we doing to counteract it? Underage drinking, of course, is a very serious issue at every level of our society and in our communities. If there is something as inadvertent or unexpected as this may be, we still have to do something about this. As well, Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of going through a revision to our Liquor Act, and I will want to make sure that these provisions are well addressed as we go through this anticipated piece of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Process For Acquiring Canadian Passports

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the rules regarding the requirement for passports have recently changed. This has put Canadians, including northerners, in the same position as everyone else planning to travel to the U.S. or abroad. I don't often travel out of Canada. I had an expired passport, so when the need for a passport presented itself recently, I inadvertently got caught up in the rush. I want to share my experience in the hope of helping northern constituents who find themselves needing a passport on short notice.

Through the persistence of my constituency assistant on the phone to the passport office, I found out that you can get a passport on 24 hours' notice. What you have to do to accomplish that may not be readily known to people. I travelled to Edmonton where I got a room in the Westin

Hotel, because it is right beside the Canada Place Building where the passport office is located on Jasper Avenue. We walked to the Canada Place Building around midnight. There on the window of the building was a sign saying, passport line forms here. There was no one around. We were tired. It was cold. So it seemed a little silly to stand there to secure first place in a non-existent line. So we went back to the hotel and set our alarm for 3:00 a.m., at which time Rick got up to go check the line.

---Laughter

Would you believe that by that time, at 3:00 a.m., there were already 25 people in the line? I don't know how long they had been there, but some of them were in sleeping bags sleeping on the sidewalk. So we hastily grabbed our canvas lawn chairs and got in the line. Between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m., when the doors opened to Canada Place, at least another 500 people had joined the line, behind us I am happy to say. When they opened the concourse at Canada Place at 6:00 a.m., the warm building was a great relief because it was about minus six out. I made the mistake of dozing off in my lawn chair. Don't do that because a security guard on his rounds noticed this and shouted from a far distance, wake that woman up. She is not allowed to sleep in a federal building. I thought, well, good morning to you too, sir.

---Laughter

The passport office opened at 8:00 a.m. and we were out by 9:00 a.m. with a receipt to come back the next day at noon to pick up our passport. So, Mr. Speaker, there are some things to note. To get an expedited passport, you must bring all necessary documentation and proof of a paid for ticket to a foreign destination. You have to pay an extra \$80. So altogether you need around \$150. They do not care about your reason for travel. In other words, it does not have to...

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Groenewegen, your time for Member's statement has expired.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude 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, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some people are under the impression that it needs to be a family or medical emergency. In fact, it does not have to be an emergency. You just have to have a paid for ticket as proof of the date of when you will travel. I have to tell you when you come back to pick up your passport, you don't have to stand in that long line again. You just go to a much shorter line and grab your passport.

So I just wanted people to know that, because there is a lot of misinformation out there. The Northwest Territories doesn't have a passport office that issues passports, so Edmonton is the nearest place if you need one in a hurry. And don't forget money, a lawn chair, and some warm clothes. You are going to be outside for awhile. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Safety Lights On Trucks

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Highway No. 3. Last November, a vehicle carrying a family from Edzo ran into the back of a semi trailer which had stopped without warning on the road. Fortunately, nobody was killed, although there were serious injuries. It would be good if there was a light. Sometimes, it would be good to have flashing lights to make them visible from a great distance. Later on, I will ask the Minister that question, Mr. Speaker. (Translation ends)

In November, there was a serious accident on Highway No. 3. A vehicle carrying a family from Edzo ran into the back of semi trailer which had stopped without warning on the road. There were no flashing lights. Visibility was poor at that time due to blowing snow, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, no one was killed, although there were serious injuries. I am sure it was a very traumatic experience for the people involved. Blowing snow and other weather conditions that make it hard to see are common across the Northwest Territories. This, combined with steady truck traffic, especially now when the winter road is opening for the mining companies, makes it very dangerous to travel on the Highway No. 3, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the accident I talked about in November was preventable. Maintenance vehicles like snowploughs have flashing lights to make them visible from a great distance. Why couldn't a large truck also be equipped with flashing rear signal lights to give following traffic more warning of turns and stops when visibility is low, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, new requirements for large trucks to use safety lights in poor visibility conditions will go a long way towards preventing these accidents. I would urge the Minister of Transportation to look seriously at this suggestion and any other opportunities to improve the safety of the Highway No. 3 and other roads connected. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Responsibilities Of Corporations Involved In Resource Development

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister indicated the great urgency and support to get the Mackenzie gas pipeline built. I have been in support in a qualified way of this project. Mr. Speaker, last year Exxon boasted all-time record profits: \$39.5 billion, the most in history. They would tell us and have us believe that the project in the Northwest Territories with its vast reserves, still with oil at \$60 a barrel, is marginal. They have told that to us, to the people that would listen. They have made it sound like the federal government has to play a role to help them make this project a reality. Mr. Speaker, I am all for the federal government playing a role, but that role has to be clear: it has to be to help build the Mackenzie Valley

highway all the way up to Inuvik and to Tuk to assist in the development of the pipeline. I say...

---Applause

... an absolute and categorical no to any kind of corporate welfare for Exxon or Imperial Oil.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to recognize the doubling of the greenhouse gasses. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has released a recent report that makes it, to me, very clear that this is not a debatable issue. The North is heavily impacted, more than other parts of the country. It is very difficult for us to stand up and decry the impacts of climate change and global warming and all that it is doing to us if we are just going to let a project go ahead that is going to double our greenhouse gas emissions and have no kind of offsets planned. We have to come up with some way to do that. The diamond mines are working with us to get hydropower to their facilities. Imperial Oil, as far as I know and can see, has turned a blind eye to the whole issue and would prefer to ignore it, but we cannot as inhabitants of this land. Today in the paper it reported Canada is in last place of all G8 countries in terms of doing anything in terms of meeting greenhouse gas emission reductions. We are part of Canada so we have to take, I think, a proactive step. Imperial Oil has to take a proactive step. We are doing lots of things with hydro and those other types of initiatives...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger, your time for Members' statements has expired.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have to step up to the plate, as does Imperial, on what do we do to offset the doubling of our greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, it is going to be time soon for Imperial Oil to make up its mind whether it wants to proceed with this project or not. If it does not want to proceed with this project, it should say so and step aside so that other arrangements could be made to get the gas and oil to market. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On 2007 Northern Women's Leadership Conference

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the Status of Women Council of the NWT and the Native Women's Association of the NWT will be hosting Joining the Circle 2007 Northern Women's Leadership Conference. This important gathering will bring women leaders and youth from all across the NWT and NGO groups to discuss and make recommendations

to this government on present and future economic, political and social development in the Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the topics for presentations and workshops would include leadership, advocacy, economic security, social equality, public policy and human rights, just to mention a few. There will also be a mini-campaign school where participants of the conference could run for office and learn the mechanics of running a successful campaign.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my pleasure to inform you that the keynote speaker of the conference is here today with us. Rosemary Speirs is the past and founding chair of Equal Voice, a multi-partisan action group whose sole aim is to increase the number of elected women in all government levels and all jurisdictions across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, while Canada is an economically privileged member of the G8, we rank 46th in the world in terms of the number of elected women, right behind Singapore, Uganda and even Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, I am confident that with the work of Equal Voice and this conference we will be able to make some progressive changes in that regard. I would also like to take this opportunity to urge the government and Members of this House to act on the recommendations and suggestions that will come out of the conference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Seniors' Housing Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to raise another issue related to seniors and seniors' housing and programs. I am aware that there is a senior citizens' Home Repair Program and the seniors and/or disabled preventative maintenance initiative and the elders on-the-land initiative, which are targeting the sectors of seniors who own their own houses in the communities. I am also aware that many seniors have taken advantage of these initiatives which require seniors to submit applications, go through the actions of getting approval, and this can take up to one or two months, or one or two years in the process, depending on who you are and who you know within the department.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to raise, though, also includes seniors who own their own homes and those who have problems with furnaces burning out, water and sewer pipes freezing up, or electrical problems which could cause fires. All these types of problems require immediate attention, especially in the middle of winter. Many of the seniors cannot get assistance from the local LHOs due to the fact that they are not in a public housing unit and they cannot receive any immediate assistance from the Housing Corporation due to cumbersome timelines between applying and approval.

Later today, I will be asking the Minister responsible for housing what the department can provide to seniors in terms of immediate assistance, and I am talking one or two days, or seven days, five working days, Mr. Speaker, for seniors who own their own homes and who have run into these minor but important problems which require

immediate attention; if they can get immediate assistance on a timely basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement On Best Wishes To Nunakput Residents

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I would like to send belated birthday greetings to my brother James Pokiak. The older brother, I would say, who had his birthday on February 7, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years, a number of elders from Nunakput have been hospitalized for medical reasons. At this time I would like to wish a speedy recovery to Mr. Andy Carpenter, the former mayor of Sachs Harbour, who is now retired and is presently recovering in the Inuvik Regional Hospital; also, to his wife, Wendy Carpenter, who is also with him in the hospital. Many of us here know that Mr. Carpenter has been a long-term serving mayor of Sachs Harbour and has been a very strong advocate of the RCMP presence in Sachs, so, hopefully, he will be around in July when it happens, I guess. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, another elder that is recovering and just returned back to Ulukhaktok is David Kuptana. I am glad that he is back in Ulukhaktok, because during the Caribou Summit there was information that he was medevaced to Edmonton, so I am glad to hear that he is back in Ulukhaktok.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and congratulate a few people here that have accomplished certification: Anita Pokiak of Tuktoyaktuk, who is the community health representative, has done her CPR training. I wish her well. She can now do some CPR training in Tuktoyaktuk. Shirley Elias, who we saw in the gallery the other day, the community health worker in Ulukhaktok, congratulations to her on her recent training. Also, Roland Kikoak of Tuktoyaktuk, who got his certification in the environment monitoring program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement On Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am going to talk about caribou. Firstly, I want to state for the record that I respect wholly the aboriginal harvest of this great resource and I would defend that as a fundamental right of our aboriginal people here in the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

Preservation of the herd is vital, Mr. Speaker, to everyone. So is the truth, Mr. Speaker. What I do take issue with is how, as an MLA, I have been treated by the Department of ENR and the poor communication that, in effect, has limited my ability to represent my constituents in my riding. I have two of the three major caribou outfitting businesses in my riding, True North Safaris and Adventure Northwest. On December 7th, the Governance and Economic

Development committee sat down with the Minister and his staff to discuss caribou. Their presentation that day was void of any mention of drastic cuts to tag allocation contained in a proposal that was, in effect, in the process of being delivered to the Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Board.

As we all know, the outfitting industry is in a fight for its very existence today. The most interesting theme throughout this fight is the fact that ENR has not, to date, publicly explained nor defended their assertions that the numbers are dropping like they say they are. As a Member of this House and someone who represents aboriginal harvesters, outfitters, and non-aboriginal harvesters, to me getting the numbers straight is paramount to taking any action to remedy the situation.

The question is, why? Why can't ENR defend the numbers when we're talking about the importance of caribou on the livelihood of so many people in our territory? Why is it that, as an MLA, if I can't get answers, how is the public supposed to get their questions answered? Why has ENR dodged the basic question of how many caribou were here in the Northwest Territories in 1980 and how many are here today?

According to their own website, Mr. Speaker, and information on it, in 1980: 65,000 Bluenose, 140,000 Bathurst, 110,000 Beverly, 39,000 Qamanirjuaq, for a total of 354,000. In 2006, again using only GNWT numbers: 2000 Cape Bathurst, 20,000 Bluenose West, 66,000 Bluenose East, 128,000 Bathurst, 200,000 Ahiaik, 296,000 Beverly, 496,000 Qamanirjuaq, for a total of 1.2 million caribou. The number of 1.2 million is a number derived by adding up the current government estimates...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramsay, your time for Member's statement has expired.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number of 1.2 million is a number derived from adding up the current government estimates of caribou herds in the NWT based on their own website. Mr. Speaker, if you add to that the number of 1.534 million, which is the number ENR gave to the federal government in 2005 for a surveyed base count on chronic wasting disease, Mr. Speaker, the numbers do not add up and ENR has not come to the table with explanations. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Obstructive Sleep Apnea

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to draw attention to the fact that today is Red Friday, a day Canadians are asked to don red to show support for members of the Canadian Forces, and I happen to be wearing red, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, obstructive sleep apnea, or OSA, is an all too common medical disorder caused by a blockage of the airway during sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times during the night and often for minutes or longer. Left untreated, OSA can cause high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases, memory problems, weight gain, depression, lethargy, and headaches. Poor sleep quality as a result of OSA may be a factor of many workplace and traffic accidents.

Over the last several years, the number of NWT residents requesting diagnosis and treatment for this service of sleep apnea has quadrupled, Mr. Speaker, from 40 in 2001 to 166 in 2005. Fortunately there are effective treatment options for OSA, but they come at a price. The CPAP and BiPAP machines commonly used to treat sleep apnea start at around \$1,000. Patients also require assistance from home health care companies to set up the machine and provide training on use of the machine. While some employers and government health benefit packages do pick up the cost for this treatment, not everyone is covered by this program so we have many people who fall through the cracks.

Given the seriousness of this condition, Mr. Speaker, and the cost to both the patients and the health care system if it's left untreated, I believe it is critical that we need to ensure that everyone who needs sleep apnea treatment gets it. It's time that we start taking care of all of our citizens, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious condition that needs to be addressed.

Later today, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions, at the appropriate time, for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I actually had another statement I planned on doing today, but I changed my mind again. I see the need to continue to speak on the resource revenue devolution sharing that we're supposed to have with Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. The more thought that I give to this, the more that I feel that we are getting the wrong end of the stick and I think that it's time. And if I have to stand up here for the next two weeks and speak about it, then I will, because the message has to get to them that we need to get a deal and we need to get it done soon.

I see some numbers floating around, Mr. Speaker. Revenues from the gas projects over the next 25 years could generate \$700 million a year in revenue or royalty. That's over 25 years. What's going to happen? Are we going to have to negotiate for the next 25 years and on the 26th year the government will say, oh, yeah, okay, you can have 100 percent? So we hire people to figure out what's 100 percent of nothing, because that's what we'll get after 26 years. The big money is when the gas starts flowing and we have the diamond mines going. We have another one opening. Mr. Speaker, this is something, and I've heard someone say that we have to get our House in

order. I believe that strongly. We have to get our House in order and be united because it's the only way we're going to get anything done. They keep pitting us against each other here while they continue to let the money flow to Ottawa. This, Mr. Speaker -- I said it yesterday and I'll say it again for the next two weeks -- is not acceptable. We should see that.

The responsibilities for our resources rest with DIAND. Again, we have the capability, I believe, now to look after and make our own decisions, look after our own resources. That comes with the devolution part of it. We can handle it. We can handle it, Mr. Speaker. We have the capability now.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is we need leaders in the NWT to believe so strongly in something that they're not worried about their own future, but they're concerned with the future of their children, their grandchildren, and getting what's right. Mr. Speaker, getting what's right is keeping the resource money for the NWT, have it stay in the NWT and not always go to Ottawa. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement On Passing Of Danny A. Gordon

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the House of the passing away of a well-respected elder in the community of Aklavik, Mr. Danny A. Gordon. Danny A. was born to the late Alex and Hope Gordon on Barter Island in Alaska on July 16, 1935. He relocated to Aklavik in 1944 with his parents and his family.

Everyone who came in contact with Danny A. knew the knowledge that he had of the cultural traditional lifestyle of the Inuit and Inuvialuit people. More importantly, being raised on the land that he travelled over many years, he passed this knowledge on to many people in the community, especially the young people, his grandchildren, his nephews. Then the opportunity he had to share this knowledge with people who asked for information, he felt freely to give it.

I think, also, Danny's contribution to the community of Aklavik was well known in regards to his performance as one of the Aklavik drum dancers and singers. He performed for many dignitaries throughout Canada, across North America and also internationally. I think it's knowing that Danny left us a better place by performing and sharing this information with us.

But more importantly, Danny took the time to teach the younger people of the songs, the dances of the Inuvialuit people that were going to be preserved for future generations. He always had fun teaching the young people and he made learning also fun and also to allow everyone to take a chance to learn. He also had an opportunity to perform here in the House. He will be missed by all. He has affected the lives of many people that have met him, especially the young people, the community of Aklavik, and his passing will be greatly lost by the people in Aklavik.

The funeral will take place in Aklavik on Saturday, February 10th. Mr. Speaker, my condolences go out to his wife, Annie B., and the family, and also his family members in Alaska and his relatives throughout the Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea. In closing, Mr. Speaker...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Krutko, your time for your Member's statement has expired.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, in closing I'd just like to say thank you very much, qujannamiik, mahsi cho, for the family for sharing such a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and, more importantly, friend. He has greatly shared himself by way of performing, sharing information, but, more importantly, leaving us in a better place than when he came. With that, I'd like to again send my condolences out to the family and wish everybody a safe trip. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

It gives me great pleasure to recognize a constituent of mine in the gallery today, Dawna O'Brien is with us. Dawna's here to take part in the Status of Women's joint circle this weekend.

---Applause

Also with her -- I don't see her right now -- is Starla Hudson.

---Applause

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize in the gallery today my daughters: Candace Dawn Lafferty Villeneuve and Diedra Mabel Lucille Villeneuve. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize and welcome to the House Ms. Rosemary Speirs, who is a formal journalist, very well known and respected. She's also the recipient of the Governor General's Persons Case Award in 2005 and she's the past and founding chair of Equal Voice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I also recognize Ms. Elaine Keenan-Bengts has joined us in the gallery today.

---Applause

Ms. Keenan-Bengts is the Protection of Privacy Commissioner.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services in regards to foster parents. The foster parents provide an invaluable service to Health and Social Services and to communities across the North. It's a service that would be very hard to duplicate and it's a service that, in reality, is inexpensive compared to other very high-end, high-cost services that we have to fund. There was a review being done of foster care services, foster parent services, with an eye to try to standardize and rationalize and better reflect the cost of being a foster parent and to encourage and be able to retain foster parents. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if he could update this House as to the status of that work, please. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member's correct; there was a review done working with the Foster Family Coalition of the NWT and the department was a part of that. We recognized, in fact, that the service they provide is an important one. The work was done in a number of areas. One, looking at standardizing rates across the NWT, as well as looking at what's the actual amount paid to foster families as a basic supplement. The Department of Health and Social Services has brought that forward as one of their new initiatives but, unfortunately, at this time it's not included in the budget that we have before us. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister if he could highlight some of the recommendations and results of that report. I'm not sure if the Social Programs committee or the Members on this side of the House have seen that report, but I'd like to ask the Minister if he could highlight some of the key findings and recommendations. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's three key areas that we're looking at and that could be brought in a number of phases, but until we get approval to proceed, at this time it's a plan that we'd like to see go forward, but we have to get the necessary funding. One is to look at standardizing what we consider the age of the child as they proceed or progress through a foster family process. The second is looking at the daily basis or rates that are needed. In fact, for example, right now in the foster family situation as a foster family deals with a child they would deal with a worker who would categorize if the child needed special care and that would change the way the funding is flowed to that family. That's almost a case-by-case, an individual worker doing the definition of what is needed. We plan to standardize that and come up with one rate across the board. There's work that needs to continue to be done in this area. We feel it's important enough to have included in going forward. Hopefully we can see that addressed in the near future. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to have the Minister clarify somewhat, if he could, the issue of rates. One standard rate would be very difficult, in my opinion. You'd need a range. There are regional differences, cost differences, care needs of the children are not all going to be the same. So I'd just like to ask the Minister if that kind of recognition is going to be built into the scale that is going to be brought forward as a way to better compensate foster parents. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, indeed we talk about a basic rate as where we'd start from, but we'd also look at, for example, the cost of living index is one of those things that would play a factor as it does in many of our programs that we already deliver on part of people across the North. Looking at our income support programs is one of those ways we can include it. So that has been incorporated into it, but what we find now is there's so many different ways out there. There's a need to come up with a basic amount, deal with some of the special needs areas and adjust it according to costs across the North. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally for the Minister, I would like to ask the Minister if the report has been shared with the Social Programs committee and, if it hasn't, would he be prepared to do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 279-15(5): Support For Foster Families

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware if it's been shared with the committee and if it hasn't, I'll gladly provide it to them. Thank you.

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

Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is in following up to the budget yesterday. I guess my questions could be answered by the Minister of Finance or Premier; I'll leave it to them. I'm reflecting more on the budget. Yesterday I talked about it. It's something that we repeat all the time about the importance of the role and the need for the federal government to step up to the plate and we have made very successfully, for many years I think, a case for our economy, our numbers, our potential, our resources in the North, and the money that the federal government has started making, actually. We are almost taking as much as we're giving.

Another missing piece in the budget that I think is important that was not discussed as much, and there's no mention of that in this report, is the fact that we may not have unanimity or consensus within the leaders in the North to present a united front to lobby together. So I'd like to know why it is that there's no mention of that requirement in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unanimity by northern leaders is certainly desirable and something we would want. At the same time, every leader has a right to represent the issues from their own perspective. Mr. Speaker, we don't have unanimity here when we bring this issue to Ottawa. I regret that we don't have that. I wish we did. We make a lot of effort to do it, but for various reasons, it doesn't happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have taken this issue on directly with Ottawa ourselves through devolution and resource revenue sharing. We have also taken it on in cooperation with all of the Premiers across the country. First of all, with the Premiers' report, the Council of the Federation report and there was the O'Brien report. There was the federal report on fiscal imbalance. We have gone forward. I have attended probably five or six Premiers' meetings where we tried to get unanimity among all of the Premiers to have one position. That has proven to be impossible.

Mr. Speaker, I wish we could get that, but we can't. It has left us at a situation now where it is very much up to the federal government and the Prime Minister to make the decision. He has, in a recent speech this week, said that he was going to make that decision with regard to fiscal

imbalance and straightening out how that is right across the country, including us, in the upcoming federal budget. He was very clear in his statement of that. That includes both the formulas, or equalization in the case of the provinces, and also resource revenue sharing. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a national problem. It is an issue. I wish we had unanimity among all of the leaders, but there are a lot of different agendas at play. I have given up thinking that we will ever get to the point where we all agree. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess when I speak of unanimity, I don't mean all the leaders in the North agreeing to all of the finer points. I think leaders with common interests and common objectives and agreement on the bigger picture could agree to disagree on some of the finer points, but agree on some of the major ticket items so we can move our agenda forward. I am not specifically thinking about intergovernmental Premiers' agreement, I am just thinking about the in-house agreement among northern leaders. I guess we could say we wish this could happen and that could happen, but we don't get marked on wishes. We get marked on results. I am concerned about something that I hear all the time from aboriginal leaders in the North, which is that the communication is not clear, aboriginal leaders are not at the table. I think we are not going to get a result unless we do something about this. I would like to know if the Premier could tell us what the latest is on that, on his effort to bring all of the leaders together, aboriginal leaders in the North. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last face-to-face meeting I had with all of the regional aboriginal leaders and our government was on December 5th. At that time, we had agreement on principles. This is a statement of principles by all of the leaders who were present. One of the leaders, the Akaitcho, said he wanted to take it back to his elders and get more consultation before he would confirm, but at the table he said, no, these look fine to me. The only other regional leader who was not there, or the region that was not represented, was the Deh Cho. They were fairly clear to me that they felt that they would prefer to work on their own process. But the other leaders, from the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, were onside. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I should also say that the Tlicho leaders were not there either, although MLA Jackson attended the meeting but not representing them. So we had two who were not there and couldn't confirm. We are now, Mr. Speaker, going through a process of holding workshops in every region, at the request of the aboriginal leaders, to help the leaders at the community level and in the region to better understand this. That is where we are at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Short supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that basis then, we have the Premier of this government and all past governments have worked on getting support from Premiers on economic reports, academia. I think there is a sense or we need to at the latter part of any Assembly that you want to get things done. Is the Premier saying that he is working on the premise that he has enough support from the aboriginal leaders to push for that AIP on resource revenue sharing that he mentioned I think in this House about his hope, or in the media perhaps, that he has hoped that he will have an AIP signed in the next month or so? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Amongst the leaders who were at the December 5th meeting, there was agreement that we would work toward an agreement-in-principle for the end of March. I had those same discussions earlier this week with Minister Prentice. He again indicated a willingness to work with us on it. He realizes there are some outstanding issues bilaterally between ourselves and the federal government that have to be resolved. We are going through negotiations on those. There may be some issues to be resolved yet from the aboriginal leaders, but everybody is willing to work toward that end of March deadline.

There is nothing magical about it, but I do want to move this one step ahead. After 20 years, we need to move to an agreement-in-principle during the life of this government. I am going to continue to stay focussed on that one. Yes, I believe we have enough leader support right now to continue on with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that it is the wish of all of us, to see that sort of movement by the end of March. Mr. Speaker, I am wondering, I understand the difficulty of coming with everybody agreeing to everything in the North, but on the basis of what he has gotten out of that December 5th meeting and understanding that lots of...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a question, Ms. Lee?

MS. LEE: Thank you. ...that there is a communication problem and participation program, what measure is the Premier taking to communicate as much as possible step by step on what progress he is making? We, the Members on this side, are not even aware of step-by-step communication content. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 280-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement-In-Principle

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to meet with the Members at any time to answer questions or meet in committee or whatever to give you the step-by-step, if you want it week by week, update on where we are at. With aboriginal leaders, our staff in the devolution office is doing the regional workshops as we speak. They met yesterday with the Tlicho. They met last week with the Sahtu and the South Slave Metis. So, Mr. Speaker, we are doing as much as we can here. Certainly, I will be ready to answer any questions and update people.

Mr. Speaker, just by way of update, the last discussion I had with Minister Prentice was focussed on having a meeting about March 10th as the next meeting on this with the Minister of DIAND. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for Mr. Roland as the Minister of Finance and the agency or the department responsible for the sale and administration of liquor in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, as I referred to in my statement, it was recently brought to my attention that we were having some problems controlling the sale of liquor to under-aged people who were attempting to buy it. I and a few other Members of the Assembly will perhaps remember how creative we might have been when we were at that stage too, and the efforts that I tried were never successful. However, it seems that something may have happened inadvertently with the issuance of temporary driver's licences in that they are very easy to tamper with or forge and are being accepted at liquor outlets. Is the Liquor Commission aware of the problem of underage persons altering temporary driver's licences as proof of age? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue was raised with the department as well as the Liquor Commission and, in fact, have become aware that these temporary licences are being used in that manner. So we have taken the necessary steps to ensure that this does not proceed. In fact, temporary licences will no longer be used as proof of identification when they go to our liquor establishments. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just recently in this Assembly, we passed some very stringent controls on the sale and access to tobacco products; however, it seems that we have not got nearly those kind of controls or regulations on the sale of liquor. Arguably, liquor is a

much more damaging and dangerous controlled substance than tobacco. What controls, Mr. Speaker, are in place to monitor the actions of liquor stores with regard to purchases by underage customers?

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

Further Return To Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the side of the companies that contract with us for the sale of our liquor products, there are processes through our contracting arrangements to deal with that. The bigger issue, I guess, is in the existing Liquor Act there is no real penalty for anyone who would alter an identification piece that they would provide as proof of identification. That is one of the other areas that we have to look into. In fact, as we are in the rewrite of our Liquor Act now, that is something that we can look to incorporating and strengthening within that process. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

MR. BRADEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What kind of conditions are in place with the contractors who operate our liquor stores, Mr. Speaker, to be aware of persons who are underage and attempting to purchase booze? Are there training programs? Are there monitors? Are we checking into this? What are the consequences for this? What are the consequences for stores, for liquor outlets, not being on their game when it comes to watching out for this kind of thing? Are there any consequences for those contractors, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 281-15(5): Underage Drinking And False Identification

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the areas of training for staff within the stores is something that does happen. In discussions with the Liquor Commission, we have, in fact, requested that this be stepped up. As well, the requirement now is that not only if a person comes to the till and asks or goes to purchase a product, at that point it was up to the staff to request a piece of identification if they felt someone was under the age of 19. We have now requested that anybody who appears to be under the age of 25 will be requested to show identification. We are taking some of those steps at this time to try and reduce the risk of underage purchases happening. Thank you.

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

Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask some questions to the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation about some of the seniors' programs, or seniors' programs that are just not available, I guess, and if you would consider making it a program for seniors; some kind of a program that is responsive and simple for seniors to use. Like maybe a seniors'

emergency hotline or something similar to that nature. Mr. Speaker, I am getting a lot of inquiries from seniors who just need a furnace repaired or a nozzle changed and they don't have plumbers in every community or electricians available immediately or any qualified maintenance people in the small remote centres that can do the job tomorrow, or today, or next week. Therefore, there are delays and they have to move in with family members. Is there any appetite for the Housing Corporation to develop a program where they can respond to a senior who owns their own home but doesn't qualify for any emergency repair program, the seniors' maintenance program? Are there any options for seniors to use in the Housing Corporation list of programs that they have that they can alleviate all these small, minor problems, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Housing Corporation has been reviewing its programs and its services. As I have told Members in committee, we are simplifying the programs to make it much easier for everybody to apply for assistance on home repairs or remediation. We are going to have one program so it's very simple for everybody to be able to apply. That will be the first step, because we have such a list of different programs that people didn't understand it. Second is we want to work more closely with the local housing organizations, who are responsible for public housing units, for them to be able to assist, or work, or facilitate repairs on homeownership units, where people have their own unit.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if we could ever get it down to a few days in small, remote communities because every situation is a little different. We don't want to put a woodstove, for example, in a house that isn't designed for it. It could be a firetrap if we do that. So some of them will take a little bit longer and every situation is different. Where we can, we will respond quickly where we need to. It may take a bit longer for safety reasons or other reasons. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was at the committee meeting where they did brief us on the consolidation of all these programs to make it more accessible. During that briefing I didn't hear or see anything related to any program review or changes that are going to make these programs more responsive. I am just wondering if the Minister would entertain the thought of maybe having the district offices having some qualified plumbers and electricians readily available to go out and make these minor repairs for seniors who own their own homes and are stuck with other family members due to the fact that they just don't have qualified staff in the community. I know we have a Public Works department, we have a revitalization of this Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program and we're getting

more apprentices in government. So can we entertain the thought of having qualified staff at the district level who can jump on a plane today and go and fix their furnace tomorrow and be done with it?

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

Further Return To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The direction this government took years ago was to try to do the maintenance, the repair work and so on, using private companies, private entrepreneurs, in order to build up that level of expertise in the communities where we wouldn't have to rely on flying people in to do a minor repair on a furnace, for example, at great cost. If that is not working, then I am prepared to look at having some people who would be tradespeople at the regional levels or wherever, to be able to do what the Member is talking about, because it is important that we not have somebody out there with a faulty furnace that goes on for weeks because we can't get a repairperson to come and do it because they're busy with all the other economic activity in the Territories. Mr. Speaker, I'm ready to look at it. I can't make a commitment on it. It may not be feasible, but we have to respond quickly to repairs, particularly those that involve safety and the comfort of seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is good to hear that it is going to be seriously considered. I know a lot of the economic activity that the Member did point out really ties up a lot of qualified staff at the district level, not to mention at the community level where it is very, very limited. I know feasibility is always a big question, but I am also aware that many of these seniors' programs that are available for NWT senior citizens are not all...The funds are not diminished all year. Sometimes there is leftover funding, like in the Seniors' Home Repair Program or the Emergency Repair Program. I am just wondering if maybe the corporation could consider just moving the monies around and possibly with the hiring of apprentices and journeymen certificate carpenters to have them available at the district level and using that money to subsidize their wages, travel or anything like that. Is that a possibility? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Housing Corporation already moves money around if it has to at the end of the year, in particular, for surplus. We don't want to be holding back in one region because they ran out of money while another has a lot. Mr. Speaker, we are working on plans for increasing apprenticeship, as well. So we have that expertise. As the Member noted, it is our heated up economy that does take a lot of the tradespeople out of the regions and makes it very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to respond to one comment by the Minister in his Member's statement this morning and that is it depends on who you know and how fast you get service. I would like to say, that is not, absolutely not, part of our way of doing business and if that ever happens, then I want to know about it. It does not matter who you are, where you are, everyone is entitled to equal service. The president, his staff and myself will make sure that happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to get off the topic of seniors with respect to who you know, but unfortunately it does happen and it does come to my attention that a lot of issues get sidelined and others get the attention that they require. That's something that is unavoidable here in the NWT, I guess.

With respect to funding arrangements, I know that the Housing Corporation does move around money and the Apprenticeship Program is actually starting to move forward again and it's going under review. I know the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program is under review right now with the Labour Code applications and stuff like that. So when they are doing this review, can they include this option of providing the Housing Corporation with qualified staff and taking them under the wing of the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program? Is that a possibility before this review actually goes forward? I know there is going to be some community input and that's going to be included in a lot of information that is going to be coming out of the community level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 282-15(5): Housing Programs For Seniors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the Member. I referred to him as Minister in my last statement. I didn't mean to offend him.

---Laughter

No offence meant there. Mr. Speaker, certainly as we review the Apprenticeship Program and other programs for training, then, yes, we will be looking at people who are interested, people who are qualified, people who want to take up certification in trades. Hopefully we have some good people in the Housing Corporation and other regions who would take this up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Mr. Speaker, earlier today in my Member's statement about the accident on Highway No. 3 last November due to poor visibility conditions, I am talking on behalf of other Members and also to the residents of the Northwest Territories. A lot of the people using the road are from

Gameti, Whati, since the road is leading to their communities. Every day they travel on Highway No. 3. That's why I want to ask the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Speaker...(Translation ends)

...the Honourable Mr. Menicoche, would the Minister consider requiring transport trucks using NWT highways be equipped with flashing rear safety lights for the safety of people travelling on Highway No. 3? Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member's questions about safety considerations with respect to large commercial vehicles on the highway and blowing snow, I will just take this opportunity to say drivers should always remember to drive to the conditions of the road. Drivers must always slow down and pay extra attention when the visibility is poor. However, we are looking at some legislative changes to our Motor Vehicles Act. Some of the private legislative proposals are to have clean and clear taillights as commercial vehicles do travel down our highways. It has been in consideration for a couple of years now. I believe the Member is asking for additional safety lights, Mr. Speaker. Adding extra equipment may be beyond the scope of our government as it may be a National Safety Code requirement and getting manufacturers to install additional lights on their vehicles. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the plan that the department is working on changes to the legislation. However, I would like to ask another question of the Minister. Has the Minister identified any other measures that could prevent accidents involving transport trucks in blowing snow or other poor visibility conditions on Highway No. 3?

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

Further Return To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The legislative changes are designed to look at that for the commercial vehicles to slow down or actually check their vehicles on a periodic basis to make sure their lights are clear from snow and mud build-up. This is one of the ways we are doing it. Currently, the Member is right; there is no specific pieces of legislation that requires them to remove the snow and ice on a periodic basis. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he would agree to review the conditions that lead to last November's accident on

Highway No. 3 and report back to this House on the measures he will take to improve safety and prevent future accidents. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister that there was an accident last week again. How many more accidents are we waiting for to get a report? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can work with the Member and look at the number of accidents that are happening on our highway, particularly the section he's talking about, to see if there is definitely a trend that is occurring on this section. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's willingness to sit down with us. I would like to find out from the Minister how soon can that take place? My chief from the community of Behchoko is waiting patiently to have an expedient meeting with the Minister dealing with these issues or planning stages. Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 283-15(5): Safety Lights On Trucks

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can initiate discussions with the department and have a review of the accident that occurred within the last year and get back to the Member on that. Mahsi.

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

Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to embark on a subject which may take a little time or it could take a lot of time during this session. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. It has to do with the new formula for arriving at funding for municipalities, known to us now as the New Deal. Some communities are starting to analyze these numbers and calculate these out and they are starting to think that maybe the New Deal is not as good as we might have thought initially.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that my community of Hay River, our community of Hay River, has been cut back in is in the area of support for the subsidization of water and sewer delivery services. That reduction is very close to \$200,000. So just to start off, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister why was that support to the community of Hay River reduced by \$200,000?

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

Return To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the New Deal has been an initiative we have embarked on since the beginning of this 15th Assembly, this new government. It's really proven to be popular and successful in providing new dollars to communities. As part of the whole strategy, we needed to review a number of funding programs that we had and change the way we provided capital to the communities. Up to that point, there was no capital provided to the larger centres and we have incorporated, we reviewed the Water and Sewer Subsidy Program and changed the formula. We have looked at the way things were calculated historically. It was very difficult for communities to understand and there had been a lot of interference or political decisions that allowed some communities to have more money put into the pot really not following the formula. We have also looked at operations and maintenance and had to review that. Some of these programs, Mr. Speaker, hadn't been reviewed since '96 when the O and M was reviewed or the water and sewer was reviewed. So we decided to create a new formula that people could understand, people would be able to follow.

It's really fairly simple. We have costs that are fixed costs and we looked at each community and have been able to calculate each community's infrastructure or the water treatment plants, the sewage lagoons and everything else and were able to cost factor into a formula that is set and calculated even before one drop of water is produced. Then we factored into the variable costs, where we looked at the fuel, is it a blended system, is it trucked water, and have been able to calculate the variable costs. We factored in also the ability to raise revenues and applied that. This is a new system where people will understand. I think there are about four communities that have seen reductions.

In the case of Hay River, there was an allocation outside of the Water and Sewer Subsidy Program that was to the tune of \$200,000 that we could not justify and we have removed it.

We've also been increasing this program. If you look at the dollars involved, Mr. Speaker, from the time this government came into play, we've increased the funding to the Town of Hay River by 91 percent. So we have increased one area, but we've decreased in the water/sewer subsidy. The program dollars are flexible enough so that money can be used from one pot to compensate for the other. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for that explanation. When the Minister talks about accepting the variable and fixed costs of delivering water and sewer services in the community on a trucked basis, is one of the variables that is considered the geography of the community in terms of how it is spread out? Hay River is an unusual community in the fact that if you start from the West Channel and go all the way to Paradise Valley, for which the town is now responsible to deliver trucked water and sewer services,

we are looking at about 30 miles. I don't think there are any other communities that are in that same situation. Is that one of the variables that was considered in coming up with the formula for Hay River, or was it just a cookie cutter approach? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, when we looked at the different variables that needed to be calculated, we looked at some of the uniqueness. Mr. Speaker, the Town of Hay River pays for contractors to do that work, the same as the community of Kakisa, Enterprise and the Hay River Reserve. Now those communities have received increases because of the formula. But in terms of calculating dollars, we have to remember that in this new formula, we've taken the capital out of the Water and Sewer Subsidy Program and put capital in a different pot. That can be used for cross-subsidy for the water and sewer. So if you look at the town of Hay River and calculate the capital that would be required and can be transferred over, we estimate there could be \$140,000 that could be transferred over from your pot of money. There is also money from your O and M that has been increased considerably that can be used. There is also, still in the budget, fiscal assets that they are calculating.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've sent our staff in there to explain the formula, to sit down with the council, and we can do it again if there is still some concern. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is talking about taking money from a different pot that is arrived at through a certain formula and cross-subsidizing the water and sewer subsidy costs in Hay River. He's talking about cross-subsidizing. Is there anything in any of those other pots of money that Hay River is getting that is extraordinary, or are we on par with everybody else?

It's an interesting concept, but just let me make it an analogy. That's like saying you are re-evaluating someone's job and saying here is the new evaluation, here is the increase, but because you are getting an increase, we are going to stop, as your employer, paying your insurance or benefits in some other way. You are making more money overall, so, therefore, you can pick up your own costs of that contribution. That is what it seems like. Going back to my question then, is Hay River on par in every other way? We aren't getting anything extraordinary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Hay River is certainly on par now. They were for many years getting extra money that other communities were not receiving. In fact, some communities were receiving no subsidy at all. So they are on par now. They have received 91 percent increase over the last three or four years. When you factor in the federal government money they receive, the town council's budget has increased by 110 percent, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, part of the reason I believe Hay River was getting more money is because there were certain parts of the corridor that were annexed and taken into Hay River. At the time, the government recognized those additional costs because of the corridor annexation and put money into the subsidy to reflect that. Is that not why Hay River was getting more money? What has changed? Hay River still has to take care of the corridor. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 284-15(5): Water And Sewage Subsidy Reduction

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, under the previous formula, Hay River should have been receiving \$316,000. They were receiving \$566,000. We are not sure how and why there was more money being provided over and above the Water and Sewer Subsidy Program. We have increased that amount from \$316,000 to \$366,000. Now they are on par with every other community in the Northwest Territories. There is a lot of other dollars that are being packaged up and provided, too.

Mr. Speaker, when we looked at providing money to the communities, one of our considerations was to lump all the money together and just give it as a block fund and say here are your dollars, this is for water and sewer, operations and maintenance and everything else. We wanted to make sure people understood how the budgets were flowing. We did not expect communities to put blinders on and say you have given a million extra dollars, but you took \$200,000 here.

Mr. Speaker, these dollars are flexible. There are no restrictions on O and M dollars. You can use it wherever you want. There are costs for capital in the Water and Sewer Subsidy Program that has to be rolled out and put under the capital program, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a very open and transparent system we brought into play here and I think the communities, for the most part, are welcoming it. There are still some communities that have questions and we will be glad to continue working with them. Thank you.

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

Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of ENR, Minister McLeod. First off, I would like to thank the Minister and the various renewable resource boards across the Territories and others who were involved in putting on the Caribou Summit in Inuvik. Mahsi.

If the numbers of caribou are declining, Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to say we do need to take action. But from where I stand, the numbers have not been fully vetted publicly or proven one way or the other. Biologists have argued over the years in terms of how many caribou herds there really are. In 1954, there were 16 herds; in 1986, there were four identifiable herds: the Bluenose, Bathurst, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq. Presently, ENR says there are seven herds: Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West, Bluenose East, Bathurst, Ahlak, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq. The first question I have for the Minister today is does the Minister of ENR and the Department of ENR know what the total population was of the four identifiable herds in 1986? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have information going back to the 1980s on the different herds, for the three different Bluenose herds, Bluenose East and West and Cape Bathurst, Bathurst herd, Beverly, Qamanirjuaq and Ahlak herds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear the Minister say what the total population of those four herds was in 1986. I would like to hear that answer. When you add the seven herds up that are identifiable today by ENR biologists, what is the total population of caribou in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could give the Member the total population for 1980. I think it was 387,000. Mr. Speaker, we don't have a comprehensive total for 2007 or 2006. When our surveys were done this past year, we did the surveys for the three Bluenose herds. We also did the Bathurst. We plan to do the Beverly next year, so we only have information on the Qamanirjuaq and Ahlak from 1996 and 1994 respectively.

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

Supplementary To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when you add up the numbers, the latest numbers from the seven herds, you get a number of about 1.2 million animals. That is the number that is in question. Also, in 2005, the Department of ENR arrived at a number of 1.534 million caribou that they gave to the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre that was doing a survey study in terms of what the number of caribou were in the Northwest Territories. How is that number of 1.5 million arrived at? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, some people are taking the liberty to take our survey numbers from 2006 and then adding numbers from historic times such as 1996 and then lump them all together. Mr. Speaker, we have the numbers for the three Bluenose herds. We have the numbers for the Bathurst herd and we know that these herds have been reduced by a range of either between 30 percent and 80 percent. If you factor in that it is an average of around 50 percent and took the other remaining herds and those numbers from 1996 and reduce them by that much appropriately, it will come well under 1.2 million, Mr. Speaker, I can reassure you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are so many questions when it comes to the numbers that it is impossible to ask them all in this forum, but, again, I will ask the Minister this: How is the Department of ENR arriving at a number of 1.5 million animals? How can the Minister say that the herds are declining to the extent that they are declining when they are giving numbers like 1.5 million to organizations, suggesting that there are that many animals here in the Northwest Territories? How is that possible? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 285-15(5): Accuracy Of Caribou Population Estimates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure. I would have to go back and see what number or what organization the number was referring to, but the Member is completely aware that we don't have the resources to go out and count every herd that comes through the NWT or calves in the NWT. We have counted the ones that are of concern to us. Next year, we will count the Beverly herd. We have to, at some point, make a decision based on the information we have. We don't have the resources to go out and count every herd. Not every herd is in the NWT. We have to work with other jurisdictions. If we are going to wait for all of those things to come into play and come into line, we will be waiting for a long time, Mr. Speaker. We have to make decisions now. We know the caribou herds are dropping. We know the caribou herds are declining. The people of the

Northwest Territories are asking us to take action. We are responding accordingly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I talked about the obstructive sleep apnea. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is: What diagnosis and treatment services for sleep apnea are currently available to all NWT residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, diagnosis is available to all residents within the territory that would need a service in any area of health care. In this particular area, we have a process established through our regional facilities as well as the Stanton Hospital on how we would approach this. Initially, a client or patient would go in to see the local physician or doctor to discuss this matter and then be sent in for further analysis if it was found that there should be some further tests done. That would be done here at the Stanton facility. At that point, decisions would be made as to what actions would be required following that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituent has been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea, Mr. Speaker. He has to wear a mask at night in order to breathe. I can tell the Minister today that that is certainly not a pleasurable lifestyle he is living. It has been a significant setback to his personal life and his family life. Mr. Speaker, he is not covered by this process for treatment. OSA has increased by 400 percent in the last few years. Where does this constituent now go that our government doesn't cover treatment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of coverage for the equipment needed once a diagnosis has been confirmed and direction has been taken, again, the process starts and we have testing. It can be done in Inuvik, Hay River and Fort Smith. If there is, again, a positive movement that this patient would need further testing, it is done here in Yellowknife and then an internal medicine specialist would review those results and make a decision. There are a number of areas that people are covered through this. First Nations or Inuit persons are covered under Health Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. The

Department of Health and Social Services administers the Metis Health Benefit Program that would cover these areas and then a Specified Medical Conditions Program under the Extended Health Benefits Program will cover some costs as well as the insurance cost of employers. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, health care is a defining principle of Canada. It is what makes us Canadians and what makes people envy Canada so much. Mr. Speaker, my constituent has been diagnosed and they fall through the cracks. Every one of those examples of coverage you had just mentioned, this doesn't apply to this constituent. Noting again that it has increased 400 percent, the OSA problem, would the Minister agree to look into ways of making sure that this constituent can get fair and reasonable coverage, because this is a horrible problem he is now dealing with? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of coverage, the Member is correct; a number of our program areas, we have people in the territory that fall through the cracks, but it is not to say that they fall through the cracks and aren't receiving as good a coverage as any other resident in Canada. In fact, this program is based on programs that are delivered throughout the country. So we mirror that in a lot of ways. Unfortunately, there are people who do fall through the cracks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have 166 people acknowledged that have OSA in 2005. The Minister knows that. He pointed out all of the groups that receive coverage. How many people are not receiving coverage? How much are we really talking about? We shouldn't be leaving anybody out there who will fall through the cracks, so we can't be talking about a lot of people. How many people are missing out on treatment, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 286-15(5): Obstructive Sleep Apnea

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not all people, once they go through this process, end up needing all of the equipment. We just have to work with that. The fact is there are some people who fall through the cracks. Our program is developed and is no different than any other jurisdiction in Canada. We do have additional coverage again through programs that we've established in this area. The actual number of

people who are not receiving or are not being provided help, I'll have to get that information from the department and give that to the Member. Thank you.

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

Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been negotiating with Ottawa for years on the resource revenue sharing agreement and were willing to share; they're not. So my questions today are for Premier Handley. I'd like to ask the Premier if there's any other avenue we have besides trying to negotiate with Ottawa, because this has been carrying on too long and I'm afraid that it's just going to carry on a lot longer until a lot of our resources are taken out of the territory and we have nothing left. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right; we have been negotiating devolution and resource revenue sharing for at least 20 years, and every government has been frustrated with a lack of progress in this area. It has become increasingly important because of the wealth we're getting from Norman Wells oil and also from the diamond mines, and hopefully from the natural gas in the Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we don't permit or issue certification or licences and so on; that's all federal and that's frustrating to us, too. But we don't get to decide whether a project goes ahead or doesn't go ahead. The federal government controls that. They control the environmental assessment process. They take the wealth out of it. It's Crown land, federal Crown land, not our land. So we all end up losing and we're sitting here watching what's going on. We don't have a direct way or direct alternative to negotiations. In fact, it isn't even a fair negotiating session because we don't have much to negotiate with other than our persuasion and our pleading with them and with the Canadian public. We've gotten the Premiers across the country onside and the Finance Ministers across the country onside with us. We've made a lot of progress here, but still they hold the cards.

Mr. Speaker, the only other alternative for us would be for us to try and have our own tax system or something that would be loaded on top of what the federal government has, and that is not a good signal to set out to industry so we don't want to go there. So, Mr. Speaker, I am counting on this federal government to take steps that no other government has done and do what nobody else has done for the last 20 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Premier for his answer. He's right; it is frustrating because Ottawa does hold all the cards, and he made an interesting comment talking about our land. I mean we always believed this was our land and then we find out today that it's not. It's not a very good signal that Ottawa is sending to us. I'd like to ask the Premier, would we have the power to introduce legislation that states whatever resources, revenues, are generated in the NWT, stay in the NWT? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, our advice is no, we don't, that federal legislation would always be paramount to whatever we would try to put in place. In fact, the Minister of DIAND, through the NWT Act, would be able to veto if we tried to do something like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Time for question period has expired; however, I'll allow the Member supplementary questions. Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary To Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of DIAND seems to hold all the power in the Northwest Territories and that's not fair because he wasn't elected by the people of the Northwest Territories; we were. So I think it's time we take a strong stand. Not just us in this Assembly, but all the leadership in the NWT. It's time we take a strong stand, tell Ottawa this is our land, and if they don't want to negotiate right away, then I think and would the Premier be willing to declare our independence?

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 287-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member again is correct. The Minister of DIAND is in effect the Minister responsible for the Territories, all three territories in fact. We are a government. We have limited authority, because we don't have authority over land and water and resources. That's what devolution is all about, is trying to change that so we have the same authority, same responsibility, same rights as do citizens living anywhere else in the provinces. We have a right to that as Canadians. Mr. Speaker, we need to unite, we need to get together, we need to understand that and not keep frustrating the process by our own little competition back and forth about who's going to control what pieces before we have anything to control. Unfortunately, when it comes to resource revenue sharing and devolution, we get too caught up too often in fighting with ourselves rather than working together. Our latest effort with the aboriginal leaders is to get over that. Let's agree on principle. Let's get the resources to the North. Let's

agree on getting that authority in the North and then we can figure out how to divide it up after that. That's what self-government is all about. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the way.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's time yet to declare ourselves a separate republic, but I'll take that under advisement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod. Thank you. Time for question period has expired. Written questions. The Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 41-15(5): Caribou Population Estimates

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

1. What was the total population of the Bluenose, Bathurst, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds in 1980?
2. Of the seven identifiable herds -- Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West, Bluenose East, Bathurst, Ahiak, Beverly, Qamanirjuaq -- what is the total population of these animals in 2006?
3. How did the department arrive at the number of 1.534 million caribou that was supplied to the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre in 2005?

Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Replies to the budget address. Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 10: REPLIES TO THE BUDGET ADDRESS

Mr. Miltenberger's Reply

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity today to talk about the budget, about the economy, and where do we go from here.

The Minister, yesterday in his statement, referenced the challenges going forward. Those focussed almost exclusively on resource development and there was limited reference to the issues related to the environment as it pertains to resource development, and there was very limited reference to one of the great big economic stressors that we have and those are the expenditure issues.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, we're looking to build a sustainable society and a strong economy. There are two fundamental building blocks to do that. One of them is a healthy environment and then you get healthy people.

Mr. Speaker, there are two components to the budget. There's the revenue side and there's the expenditure side. As we look at all the issues of resource development, we have to do a better job factoring in the effects of the environment. We know from the Caribou Summit that

there are things happening to the animals, to the land. We know there are things happening to the water.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change that released their report demonstrated very clearly that in the North we are going to be paying a big price. So as we look to the future, as northerners we have to gather and ask some very basic questions. How fast do we want to develop? What pace can we sustain? What is in the best interest of northerners as we do this? How many diamond mines do we need at any one time? How much oil and gas exploration can the land sustain? We can't just focus on what's happening in the Northwest Territories; we have to look around us at jurisdictions that impact on us. Specifically the one I want to talk about is Alberta.

We know that they are engaged in a very aggressive resource development agenda, that there are severe and significant concerns of what impact that's going to have on the Northwest Territories with the water, with the land, with the animals, with the air with the long-range pollutants. When we talk about caribou, we're not just talking about barren-land caribou here, we're talking about the woodland caribou. There is major habitat disruption and destruction going on. If you overlay in Alberta the agriculture, the forestry, the mining, the oil and gas, the irrigation, there is blessed little left in Alberta that's not going to be developed, and we have to take a page and recognize what can we learn from that. Is that the type of agenda we want in the Northwest Territories? I would submit to you that it's not. I would submit to you that it's unsustainable. Neither the federal government nor the Alberta government, working together for seven years, have been able to come up with the cumulative impact of the massive development that's going on in Alberta.

We in the Northwest Territories are no better off. We cannot tell people or demonstrate what is the cumulative impact of what has happened and is going to happen around us. When you look at even the recent past, Giant Mine, Pine Point, the proposed pipeline, four diamond mines, the fact that there's leases across the North through all the wintering grounds of the caribou, through the calving grounds of the caribou as well. So we have some very serious questions to ask in debate as territory as we go forward. We cannot look project by project anymore.

The challenge then, Mr. Speaker, is for us to look at those questions, to identify those questions and to come up with ways to answer them. Our life depends on this; our land depends on this; the future of our children depend on this. What is in the best interest of northerners? That is the challenge on the revenue side. We can generate the wealth that people are lined up, businesses are lined up, to come to the Northwest Territories to extract the resources and make the maximum benefit of what is there. The Mackenzie gas pipeline is a case in point. Our job, as legislators, as residents of this land, is to make sure that we take the broad view that allows us, for the sake of our children and our grandchildren and those far into the future, that we have made the right choices. There is no need, in my mind, to rush to develop every resource we have in this land as fast as we can as soon as we can. If we do not benefit, then we should not proceed. If we do not get a devolution agreement and a resource revenue sharing agreement, should we continue at any kind of breakneck pace to extract the resources and have all those royalties, as my colleague from Inuvik said, go south? It is poor business. It is poor

stewardship. It's something I don't think we should be doing.

If we do get a devolution agreement, then we can better control the pace of development. Right now, we rely on the federal government and that is the unfortunate reality.

As we look at what tools do we have, independence is not there. But I would suggest that this territorial Legislature should consider having a carbon tax in place, all the instruments necessary to use should we need it. I think it's a very clear message. It's one thing to worry about the bad message that we're sending to business, but we can't stand here year after year with the hundreds of millions verging on billions of dollars that have been taken out of here, that we have no control and no ability to get our fair share of. Every diamond, every barrel of gas and oil that goes is gone. It's not retroactive. We've already lost 10 years with the diamond mines that we will never get back.

One of the other things that is going to be very critically important to us as we move forward is how do we work with the aboriginal governments as we try to defend and protect the land, environment and the people of the Northwest Territories when we deal outside our jurisdiction? I would suggest to you that up to this point it's been the aboriginal governments that have carried the can, carried the freight, carried the weight, to go to other jurisdictions like Alberta to meet and make the case that we are downstream, we are downwind, and we are very worried about what you're doing in your jurisdiction and the impact it's having on us in our land.

The federal government has been almost non-existent at a policy level. They don't know what's happening in Alberta and we cannot count on them to protect our interests. They are responsible for the water and the land in the Northwest Territories and where are they? They can't even come up with rules and regulations for barges, single-hulled, beat up old barges where 40 million litres of fuel are sitting on one of the most sensitive waterways in our land, with no way to know what's happening, that would not be allowed on land in any stretch of the imagination. They tell us there's nothing we can do and they are responsible. We drink the water, the fish live in it, the marine ecosystems are all relying on that water, so the federal government is not there either. So we have many challenges ahead of us.

There are things we can do in addition to a carbon tax. I believe we should be looking at a new hydro policy that's going to allow us to lay out a plan into the future five, 10, 15 years if we have to, 20, that will say, in the areas where we have hydro, we want to make sure that as a government we use that surplus in all our buildings to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. In those communities that have capacity for hydro, like Whati, we have to come up with a policy and a funding arrangement that does not leave it entirely under the regulatory regime of the PUB, but where we can work with the Tlicho Government, for example, and the people of Whati, and the public, and the GNWT, in a partnership arrangement to look at putting in the small hydro that's going to allow us to deal with some of these issues.

No talk about our budget, our economy, Mr. Speaker, would be complete unless we look at the expenditure side, because we can generate all the revenue, we can double our budget and we would still spend it all, and we would still tell people we need more. That is because, Mr.

Speaker, we are spending it as fast or faster than we can make it, and a big chunk of those expenditures come down to how we do business and how people make personal choices.

I want to first talk briefly about the personal choices. I know, having been Health Minister for five years, Education Minister for a bit, that people make choices and that our costs are driven. Sixty-five cents almost of every dollar is spent on social programs. I don't have enough money in the budget to ask the government to say can you chipseal Highway No. 5, because the money is being taken up elsewhere. Every community, every business, every region has a list of issues where they could use the money to do good things. But there's four simple things that are driving our costs. It's the smoking; it's the abuse of alcohol and drugs; it's the lack of a proper diet; and, getting enough exercise. Those four things, Mr. Speaker. As northerners, if we started looking at those, our costs as a government would drop almost overnight. If there was no more alcohol abuse starting today at five o'clock, tomorrow you would notice a difference, and we would notice less pressure on our systems, on our jails, on our family shelters, family violence shelters. We would start having babies born healthy. We would have kids going to school with a full stomach, and awake because the parents were there for them.

So we have a responsibility as we ask and look to generate more revenue. As a government we have to be more effective. We've talked in this House, we've all torn out our hair and gnashed our teeth, for example, about our capital projects that come in consistently over budget, the way they're timed, they way they're estimated and the way they're implemented. As a government, we have a responsibility to change that process so that we do not waste 20, 30, 40 percent of our capital budget on inefficient planning.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MR. MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, we also have to make very serious efforts on implementing our building standards; tough northern energy-efficient building standards that are going to help us conserve. That is doable and it shouldn't just be for government buildings, we have to be able to do this across the North. We have to cut our reliance on petroleum products. Oil is \$60 a barrel now. It may go down a bit, but it's going to continue to rise. There's a plateau that just keeps moving up.

In addition to putting in hydroelectric power where we can, clearly, conservation is going to be a huge issue as a way that we can help be more efficient, cut our greenhouse gasses and be a responsible citizen, a political citizen.

Mr. Speaker, there are targets coming, be it with this Conservative government or the next federal government. There is too much proof that we have to have targets to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. We have a plan now that is mainly paper and it's going to be time for us to put all these pieces together as we look at the budget and we look at our economy and we look at the challenges ahead.

Revenue issues, expenditure issues, we want a sustainable society and a strong economy. The challenge is there. The key for us always comes back to the big ticket item of devolution and resource and revenue sharing. If we get there tomorrow, it gives us a whole range of different options and control over the issue and

the problems and the solutions. If we don't, I would suggest that we seriously have to consider proceeding in some of the areas that I have outlined.

I think the people of the Northwest Territories recognize that we have to get together to deal with these tough issues, cumulative impacts, what's best for northerners, how fast can we develop and what is best for all of us and our children. We can no longer avoid that. We know how well the Caribou Summit worked when we brought everybody together. We did the front end work to give people a chance to identify the issues, see the information and come together to talk and look at resolutions. We came out with good recommendations.

I would suggest to you that while it may be late in the life of this Assembly, that the 16th Assembly, as one of their first courses of action, is going to have to ask those questions and lay out those answers so we can map out the road to the future. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. At this time, before we go on with orders of the day, the Chair is going to call a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Back to orders of the day. Item 10, replies to the budget address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 7-15(5): Standing Committee On Accountability And Oversight Report On The 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to present its Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process. This report covers both the committee review of the 2007-2010 draft business plans, which took place in September 2006, and the review of 2007-2008 draft main estimates, which took place in January 2007.

2007-2008 was the second budget cycle with pre-budget consultations, which the committee undertook in late summer of 2006. The committee presented its report on those consultations last October and looks forward to the tabling of the government's response later in this sitting.

This was also the second year committees used a shortened process to review the draft main estimates. Committee members continue to support this approach as we feel that detailed discussions on the proposed budget should take place in the Legislative Assembly, on the public record rather than in closed-door meetings.

Our shortened review of the draft main estimates, conducted on January 15, 2007, included a fiscal update from the Minister of Finance, as well as an opportunity to receive information on changes made to the budget since last September's draft business plans.

Motion That Committee Report 7-15(5) Be Deemed Read And Printed In Hansard In Its Entirety, Carried

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that the Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: A motion is on the floor. The motion is in order.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 7-15(5): Standing Committee On Accountability And Oversight Report On The 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process

Department Of Executive

The committee met with the Premier on September 28, 2006, to review the draft business plan for the Department of Executive.

The committee noted that the Department of Executive is proposing to spend \$13.161 million in operations expense for the fiscal year 2007-2008. This represents a small decrease of \$36,000 from last year's main estimates.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007/2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Joint Boards And Agencies Review Initiative

Early in the life of the 15th Assembly, Cabinet and the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight had agreed to form a working group to review the NWT boards and agencies. As a result of this successful collaboration, a boards and agencies policy was adopted in June 2005. The full implementation of this policy will significantly change the mandates/operations of existing boards, as it will establish a governance framework for board operations, provide criteria for board classification and a process for creating new boards.

In 2005 the Joint Working Group on Boards and Agencies suggested that a boards and agencies unit be established to fulfill the mandate of the initiative by implementing the boards and agencies policy and the governance framework. Cost estimates to establish this function are \$300,000 for the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that \$300,000 for the establishment of a boards and agencies unit will be included in the budget of the Department of Executive in order to fully implement the boards and agencies policy and governance framework as agreed to by the Joint Working Group.

Department Of Aboriginal Affairs And Intergovernmental Relations

The committee met with the Premier on September 28, 2006, to review the draft business plan for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations.

Committee members noted that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations is proposing to spend \$7.450 million in operations expense for the fiscal year 2007-2008. This represents a small increase of \$122,000, or 1.66 percent, from last year's main estimates entirely due to forced growth for wages and benefits.

Financial Management Board Secretariat

The committee met with the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board on September 19, 2006, to review the draft business plan for the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

Committee members noted that the Financial Management Board Secretariat is proposing to spend \$18.626 million in operations expense for the fiscal year 2007-2008. This represents a slight increase of \$343,000 since the main estimates in 2006-2007. The secretariat is also proposing to spend \$7.5 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008 for the replacement of the government wide financial information system.

The committee offers the following comments:

Growth Of The Public Service

Members have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the growth of the public service, especially with the recent news that the NWT's population may be decreasing. The creation of new positions that do not provide front-line services is of particular concern.

Members recognize that at this point in the life of the 15th Legislative Assembly, it is too late to conduct a full review of the GNWT workforce. However, we believe that the next government should consider undertaking a zero-based review of GNWT positions early in its mandate.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the government include in its transition document a recommendation that the next government undertake a zero-based review of public service positions early in its mandate.

Funding To Front-Line Organizations

During the 2006 pre-budget consultations, the committee was disappointed to find out that pressing issues for frontline organizations, such as the need for better funding arrangements, improved partnerships and support, have not improved much since last year. Even though the government established new third-party funding criteria to provide guidelines to GNWT departments, little has changed, with inconsistencies persisting and few multi-year funding arrangements in place.

The committee recognizes that funding must be distributed equitably amongst organizations, allowing them increased financial and program stability based on predictable funding arrangements.

Front-line organizations have repeatedly raised concerns regarding insufficient project funds, lack of forced growth funding, lack of funding to provide wage parity, training and adequate supervision and support for staff, inadequate project administration and core funds and delayed receipt of funding from signed contracts and contribution agreements. Furthermore, the lack of multi-year funding results in insecurity and the inability to do longer-range program and operational planning or to participate in policy and program development and consultations.

Government needs to be mindful that volunteer boards with representation from across the NWT govern these front-line organizations. The lack of certainty and security for their commitments to staff, office space and clients wears them out, as does the burden of annual audits, contracts and contribution negotiations. The GNWT should be demonstrating support and good faith towards these volunteers.

While the increase in funding for community justice committees, forced growth allocation to the first tier health and social services sector front-line organizations, and multi-year funding agreements with a few organizations are steps in the right direction, more is needed. There are also concerns about unequal treatment of organizations based on whether they are in a contribution agreement or have a contract arrangement with the government.

The government needs to live up to its commitments to improve the support for front-line organizations, including the full implementation of the third-party accountability framework, the completion of binding government-wide policies and the revision of the Financial Administration Act and regulations. Most importantly, the government needs to fully engage in the Finance Action Working Group that was created through Volunteer NWT to improve coordination between GNWT departments and non-government organizations.

Failure to address these concerns sooner has brought many front-line organizations to a crisis point. It is not acceptable for the government to halt all action now and label this a transition issue for the next government. Proposed revisions to the Financial Administration Act and associated regulations and policies should be ready for the next government to consider by the time this government leaves office.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the GNWT continue to work to fully implement the third-party accountability framework, develop required legislation and policies and engage with the Finance Action Working Group to improve coordination between departments and front-line organizations.

Department Of Human Resources

The committee met with the Minister of Human Resources on September 20, 2006, to review the draft business plan for the Department of Human Resources.

The committee noted that the Department of Human Resources is proposing to spend \$31.591 million in operations expense in fiscal year 2007-2008. This represents an increase of \$2.354 million, or 8.05 percent,

since the 2006-2007 Main Estimates due to increased cost for salaries and benefits, medical travel for GNWT employees, database administration and PeopleSoft licensing.

The Department of Human Resources is also proposing to spend \$217,000 on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008. This amount will be used to complete the PeopleSoft human resources management system upgrade.

Department Of Finance

The committee met with the Minister of Finance on September 19, 2006, to review the draft business plan for the Department of Finance.

Committee members noted that the department is proposing to spend \$11.461 million in operations expenses in fiscal year 2007-2008. This substantial increase of \$3.508 million, or 44.11 percent, since the 2006-2007 Main Estimates is mostly -- \$3.2 million -- due to the increase of short-term interest expenses beside higher costs for insurance premiums and salaries and benefits.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Financial Relationship With Canada

The standing committee believes that the NWT has a bright future. However, its ability to use the unfolding opportunities to the benefit of the population will also depend on the GNWT's capacity to make timely investments in infrastructure and people. Therefore, the committee continues to support the Finance Minister in his efforts to secure a fair formula financing arrangement with Canada, and to have the arbitrarily imposed borrowing limit of \$300 million increased.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 7-15(5) And Move Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 7-15(5) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 7-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12th, 2007. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Lafferty is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 7-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12th, 2007. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 7-15(5) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday. Reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Committee Report 8-15(5): Standing Committee On Governance And Economic Development Report On The 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development's Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process. The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development is pleased to present its report on its 2007-2008 pre-budget review process. This report covers both the committee's review of the 2007-2010 Draft Business Plans, which took place in September 2006, and also its review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates, which took place in January 2007.

The GED envelope includes the departments of Municipal and Community Affairs; Public Works and Services; Transportation; Industry, Tourism and Investment; and Environment and Natural Resources.

General Comments

ITI And ENR Position Growth

Since the beginning of this Assembly, the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development has encouraged departments to streamline programs, amalgamate divisions and control position growth, wherever possible, in order to conserve resources. When the former Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development was first split into ITI and ENR this Committee stated in its report that, while we appreciated the government's restructuring of RWED into the two new departments to improve program delivery, and while we also appreciated the difficulty in trying to quantify the cost of restructuring versus the cost of lost opportunity, the fact remained that the creation of Industry, Tourism and Investment cost the Government of the Northwest Territories \$1.765 million and the creation of Environment and Natural Resources cost the Government of the Northwest Territories \$1.074 million in ongoing costs. We recommended that the government investigate how to mitigate this expenditure.

The committee is disappointed, two years later, to find there has been a combined growth of 28 positions over and above the 17 new positions that were approved for the initial reorganization. In fact, it appears there were actually 26 positions created as a result of the reorganization. This position growth is remarkable considering 15 positions were transferred to the Financial Management Board Secretariat, Human Resources, and the Business Development and Investment Corporation.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has expressed an interest in a zero-based review of positions in this government. The increase in positions in the Departments of ENR and ITI is an excellent example of why such a review is needed.

Motion That Committee Report 8-15(5) Be Deemed Read And Printed In Hansard In Its Entirety, Carried

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that the Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: A motion is on the floor. The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 8-15(5): Standing Committee On Governance And Economic Development Report On The 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process

Municipal And Community Affairs

General Comments

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 26, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$114.7 million in operations expenses and \$32.1 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle.

New Deal For Community Governments

The New Deal is a proposal from MACA to the communities, which is to provide communities with greater control and decision-making over their infrastructure, including planning and decision-making for capital projects.

The Governance and Economic Development committee has been cautiously supportive of this initiative. For example, we know that capital projects can run into difficulty and unexpectedly require expensive advice in the form of legal, engineering and contracts expertise which communities will need the capacity to manage. The committee is pleased that MACA committed to working with the NWT Association of Communities to make the New Deal a graduated process for communities. The committee is also pleased communities will receive increased funding to help them budget for long-term capital projects.

The committee appreciates MACA has several reports it uses to review the financial status of community governments. However, since we will no longer be

reviewing the communities' capital appropriations, Members of the Legislative Assembly will need to have a level of comfort that public funds are being spent responsibly and the New Deal is providing communities with sufficient expertise and adequate funding for control over their infrastructure. For instance, Members are aware there are already problems arising with the revised water and sewer allocations. We have also been unable to review the baseline assessment study because it has been delayed. The baseline assessment study will look at every piece of community public infrastructure, including environmental liabilities, in every community, to evaluate the state it is in before MACA transfers those assets. These are the early days of the project and there is still outstanding information.

The committee is requesting ongoing and precise reporting on the progress and outcomes of the New Deal.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recommends the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs keep the committee updated with details of capital spending, including a performance and evaluation mechanism to assure the Legislative Assembly that the New Deal is really working and improving community access to infrastructure.

Community Energy Planner

Municipal and Community Affairs is funding the Arctic Energy Alliance for one community energy planner position to support and assist communities in developing and implementing individual community energy plans. Through its obligations under the Canada-NWT Gas Tax Agreement, MACA has an interest in ensuring that there is technical support to communities to develop these plans.

The committee looks forward to reviewing the community energy plans. If well executed, they should be able to address the significant energy consumption and cost of living issues facing the communities.

These plans should become living documents with appropriate funding attached so they can be implemented and do not sit gathering dust on government shelves.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recommends that community energy plans be included in the government's Energy Strategy and receive adequate funding for implementation.

Public Works And Services

General Comments

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 21, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department Public Works and Services.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$52 million in operations expense and \$8.4 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Pile Inspection And Repair Program

At present, PWS is maintaining 60 buildings with an age of 30 years or more. Many of the wooden piles supporting GNWT infrastructure are reaching the end of their service life. PWS has established a formal Risk Management and Safety Program to ensure safe occupancy and operation of GNWT building infrastructure.

The Governance and Economic Development committee supports this initiative. The committee does not want to see any injury or harm come to the occupants of these buildings, or expose the GNWT to greater liability. We must make the necessary investment to maintain these buildings as long as possible as there is insufficient funding for replacement in the capital plan.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recommends the Pile Inspection and Repair Program continue in order to address the building condition and safety issues identified in the building condition reports.

Department Of Transportation

General Comments

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 25, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Transportation.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$88.3 million in operations expense and \$47 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Highway No. 3

After 23 years and \$200 million, the committee is disappointed by the poor condition of Highway No. 3 between Yellowknife and Behchoko.

Highway No. 3, in certain places, is more suited to a roller coaster than regular traffic. The department states the roller coaster effect or heaves and dips are a result of melting permafrost in the area. Repairs have had to be made on an ongoing basis. The department has no mechanism to go back and have the repairs made under warranty because the time period has lapsed. A longer warranty would have increased the cost of the road.

Although a considerable amount of federal dollars went into completing Highway No. 3, the committee is concerned continued repairs for Highway No. 3 will drain the budgets of other highways also in much need of repair.

Recommendation

The committee recommends the department supply them with a projection of future repairs and the costs that will be required to make Highway No. 3 safe to drive. The committee would also like a report on all of the challenges encountered in building and repairing Highway No. 3.

Department Of Industry, Tourism And Investment

General Comments

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 26, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on the January 16 and 17, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$38.9 million in operations expense and \$1.8 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget planning cycle:

Tourism

The committee commends the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for their work on the Tourism 2010 Plan. The committee further commends them for acknowledging tourism requires a greater investment from this government. The 2010 plan endeavours to increase investment in tourism from \$104 million to \$140 million by the year 2010.

This goal is very admirable but it does not go far enough when compared to the millions of dollars the government has invested in resource development.

For example, including last year's increase of \$400,000, \$2.7 million is available for tourism marketing. By comparison, the Yukon spends upwards of \$7 million, and Las Vegas alone spends \$150 million. The Canadian Tourism Commission only spends \$100 million for all of Canada. A recent article in the Globe and Mail stated that more people visit Banff in a summer week than visit all three territories in a year.

Further, there is only \$300,000 budgeted for tourism infrastructure. With fierce competition for infrastructure dollars, this number is unlikely to change any time soon. There has also been insufficient funding for transportation projects, such as chipsealing the highway to Fort Smith and the extension of the runway at the Yellowknife Airport, which are also keys to tourism growth.

The tourism industry is under duress. Aurora Tourism is struggling because of increased competition from Alaska and the Yukon, and limits on non-residential hunting of caribou will have a detrimental effect on outfitters. The tourism industry as a whole is affected by the new requirement for American tourists to have passports, the federal government's cancellation of the GST rebate, increasing insurance premiums and labour shortages.

Since the beginning of this Assembly, the Governance and Economic Development committee has been a strong

advocate for a diversified and sustainable economy. The committee supports hunting and trapping not only because they are hallmarks of aboriginal culture, but also because they are activities that identify this territory as unique and distinct from other places. Renewable resources such as agriculture and commercial fishing can take place outside the larger centres in the Territories and, therefore, contribute to smaller local economies. Tourism is also a key element in a diversified economy that supports local economies and can be environmentally friendly.

Recommendation

In order to ensure a diversified economy for the Northwest Territories, the Governance and Economic Development committee recommends increased investment in tourism.

Product Development

During their pre-budget consultations, the committee heard from members of the public who suggested the GNWT should provide more resources for product and infrastructure development and marketing. The Minister of ITI has echoed these sentiments.

The committee discussed the possibility of creating an interpretive bison centre with the Minister. This project would not only be a great tourist attraction, but also a practical solution to some of the issues on a problematic section of Highway No. 3. For instance, the highway between Fort Providence and Yellowknife has some long stretches without any services.

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development would like to thank the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for their commitment to performing a feasibility study on this project.

Socio-Economic Agreements

The committee was concerned about the lack of support for northern businesses. For instance, over \$240 million leaves this territory annually with migrant workers who live in the South and work in the North. The NWT loses revenue in real estate, in municipal and territorial taxes, in goods and services and transfer payments. This hurts northern residents and businesses.

The committee met with the representatives of BHP Billiton, Diavik Diamond Mines and DeBeers to discuss these concerns and was impressed by the lengths to which these companies go to meet the requirements of their socio-economic agreements and to attract workers to the Northwest Territories to work and to raise their families. The mines say they are working very hard to meet the targets of their socio-economic agreements because of growing competition for the limited NWT labour force.

Components of their northern hire policies include retention bonuses, priority training opportunities with northern preferences, scholarship programs and housing assistance for senior employees.

The mines also say they offer assistance to aboriginal suppliers to attain joint venture partnerships and break down large contracts in order to allow smaller northern

businesses to compete. They even encourage suppliers to move to the North.

The socio-economic agreements are required of the mines by the GNWT. They stipulate conditions such as targets for training, employment and business opportunities.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recommends that future resource development companies sign socio-economic agreements similar to those of the mines.

Department Of Environment And Natural Resources

General Comments

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 22, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007. Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$57.1 million in operations expense and \$2.4 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Waste Management Strategy

From November 1, 2005 to October 31, 2006, over 16 million ready-to-serve containers were collected through a system of community-based depots. ENR reports this means that so far this year, two out of every three containers sold in the NWT do not end up in our landfills. Building on this success, ENR will soon undertake public consultations to identify additional waste types for recovery. Examples might include batteries, electronic waste and/or or plastic grocery bags.

The committee applauds the department for their success but encourages them to go much farther.

As we have suggested in prior reports, the committee believes a program similar to the beverage container recovery should be considered for fuel drums, and that ENR should consider an increase for the return deposit on these barrels in order to encourage the public to collect and return them.

There is also another recycling opportunity for waste tires. Waste tires can threaten not only the environment, but public health as well. Tire fires can contaminate groundwater and surface water and are also virtually impossible to extinguish. Waste tires are also an ideal habitat for the breeding of mosquitoes. For these reasons, the Governance and Economic Development committee supports environmental initiatives that would rid the NWT of this problem. A mobile tire shredder could even travel between communities, turning dangerous waste into a useful commodity.

Finally, the committee knows there were concerns in the past about charging a deposit fee on milk containers but would recommend the containers be considered for recycling again.

The committee is looking to ENR for leadership and innovative solutions to our waste management problems. ENR needs to take even greater actions to encourage businesses and the general public to recycle.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 8-15(5) And Move Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 8-15(5) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 8-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12, 2007. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 8-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12th, 2007. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 8-15(5) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12, 2007. Reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Motion That Committee Report 9-15(5) Be Deemed Read And Printed In Hansard In Its Entirety, Carried

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that the report of the 2007-2008 pre-budget review process of the Standing Committee on Social Programs be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 9-15(5): Standing Committee On Social Programs Report On The 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process

NWT Housing Corporation

Introduction

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, as members of the Accountability and Oversight committee, were involved in the new pre-budget consultation process with the people of the Northwest Territories in late August of 2006. Hearings were held north and south of the lake, and gave ordinary northerners and non-governmental organizations the opportunity to provide input to MLAs on the priorities that the budget should focus on.

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on Wednesday, September 25, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Members considered the draft main estimates, including the changes to the budget of the NWT Housing Corporation since the committee reviewed the business plan in September, on January 16, 2007.

The committee noted the total operating budget for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation for 2007-2008 is planned at \$119.270 million. Of this total amount, the corporation proposes \$68.060 million in revenues or non-cash items, and a GNWT contribution of \$51.210 million.

The following outlines committee members' issues from their review of the 2007-2008 budget-planning cycle.

Pre-Budget Consultations

Housing and lack of available land in the communities were once again major issues brought forward by residents during the pre-budget consultation process.

Members of the Accountability and Oversight committee heard that the lack of available and affordable rental units in communities like Fort Liard are impacting on the ability of the Dehcho Education Authority to hire and retain qualified teachers.

The committee heard many complaints about the way in which the NWT Housing Corporation delivers housing programs in the communities and how contractors are not always living up to their obligations. Members were told of examples where contractors had moved on to the next Housing Corporation contract without doing the final finishing work on the previous contract. Homeowners are finding it next to impossible to get some contractors to finish the work on their houses.

The Social Programs committee has discussed the issue of contractors not fulfilling the terms of contracts with the Minister and has received assurances that with the hiring of new technical officers in the regions and an improved inspection process, the issue of contractors not finishing should be resolved. However, contractors that abuse the process should note that if they continue to not fulfill the terms of contracts with the NWT Housing Corporation, they run the risk of being not allowed to bid on subsequent contracts.

Seniors also raised many issues during the pre-budget consultation process. The biggest concern is the gaps in services between seniors who choose to stay in their own homes and those seniors who are in Housing Corporation units.

Seniors living in Housing Corporation units do not pay any rent or major utility costs, and have all maintenance issues handled by their local housing authorities, whereas those seniors living in their own homes are responsible for the cost of utilities and paying for the upkeep of their homes.

Leaving aside the heating and power subsidies and home care, there is a shortage of government programs that encourage seniors to stay in their own homes.

On a positive note, the Housing Corporation, as part of its program consolidation, has changed the eligibility requirements and income thresholds to access their repair programs. For example, there were many seniors that were not eligible for the previous Repair Program because they had already accessed funding through the Housing Corporation. Under the new Repair Program, the fact that you have accessed funding in the past is no longer a factor, and eligibility is determined by income and the nature of the problem.

This should make it easier for lower-income seniors living in their own homes to access funding for repairs, especially those residents who were among the first homeownership clients of the Housing Corporation and are now seniors.

Members also heard from seniors living in public housing who are more than willing to pay rent based on their income. There are cases of northerners retiring and liquidating significant assets, like their homes and businesses, so that they can move into public housing. This does not meet the intent of public housing, which is to help those who cannot meet the obligations financially or physically of running their own homes. It is anticipated that this will be dealt with through the Income Security Program review currently under way under the leadership of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The committee plans to continue monitoring the issues that were raised during the pre-budget consultations and will be incorporating them into a transition report for the Members of the next Assembly, to make them aware of the situation and the steps taken by the Housing Corporation and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to alleviate the problems.

New Mandate And Structure For The Delivery Of Housing In The NWT

Much of the discussion at the committee level over the budget planning cycle has focused on the new mandate and structure for the NWT Housing Corporation.

There was a breakdown in the committee consultation process that has been addressed and remedied. Members of the committee were provided the opportunity to comment on the program redesign and were pleased that a number of their suggestions were incorporated into the final product that was announced at the start of this session.

Federal Funding For Social Housing And Non-Market Communities

The issue of declining funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to maintain existing public housing stocks remains a concern of the committee. In 2006-2007, the first year that there was a significant drop in CMHC funding, we lost \$328,000. The decreases will vary from year to year, but the end result is the total lapse of CMHC funding by the year 2037-2038. Again, the Minister is encouraged to work with his provincial and territorial counterparts to lobby the federal government to reinstate funding for the building and delivery of social housing.

The effect of the declining CMHC funding is exacerbated by the reluctance of the current federal government to live up to the terms of the Kelowna Accord, which would have provided significant funding to meet the housing needs of aboriginals.

Again, the Minister, as the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation and as the Premier, is encouraged to work with his provincial and territorial counterparts and aboriginal governments to see this agreement fulfilled.

Land Issues

It is noted that since the review of the last main estimates, the Housing Corporation has been resourced to increase the number of employees involved in the development and acquisition of land to build housing units at both the headquarters and regional level.

It is hoped that these new positions and the importance that the Housing Corporation is placing on acquiring the necessary lands to deliver their programming will result in more building lots in the communities.

However, it must be made clear to aboriginal and local governments that they have a role to play and must cooperate in the development of lots in their communities. The committee understands that under the Northern Housing Strategy, if lots cannot be developed in a community for whatever reason, the corporation will have no choice but to move new housing to communities that do have available lots.

This issue will be mentioned in the transition report to the next Assembly so that progress can be measured.

Mortgage Arrears

Since 1995, the figures on mortgages in arrears have gone from 40 clients owing \$106,164 to 463 clients owing \$6,853,539 million. This is a disturbing trend that shows no sign of abating. If we do not take immediate action, it will become unmanageable in a few short years.

The committee has been briefed on the steps that the corporation is planning to take in dealing with clients that are in mortgage arrears and has given its support. The focus of the plan is to work with each client to develop a repayment plan. In those cases where a person is unable to work out a repayment plan, they will be asked to sign the asset over to the Housing Corporation and begin paying rent. As long as a person is willing to follow one of the defined processes, and meet the criteria to live in public housing, no one will put out in the cold. It should be made clear, however, that just as a person can be evicted

from social housing for not meeting the terms of their rental agreement, so can a person be forced out of their home if they are not meeting the terms of their mortgage agreement.

One of the goals of the 15th Assembly is the development of self-reliant people. Homeownership is an important part of self-reliance. By not taking remedial action with those who are behind in their mortgages, we are encouraging dependence and, worse, we are putting these people further and further into debt. The lack of action is also unfair to NWT residents who either have a mortgage in good standing with the Housing Corporation or who paid the taxes that allowed the corporation to lend money for mortgages in the first place.

This issue will also be outlined in the transition report to the next Assembly. The committee will be strongly recommending that the 16th Assembly support the NWT Housing Corporation's plan to address mortgage arrears.

Program Redesign

The Housing Corporation has decreased the number of programs that it delivers and has consolidated the remaining programs into four programs areas. The intention is to simplify the application process and to make access to the programs easier for low-income homeowners.

Income thresholds and base house prices have been established for each community in the NWT, and sliding scales that clearly define the amount of assistance that is available have been developed.

The committee was very concerned that the Housing Corporation was going to continue its "step" scale for assessing assistance levels, in which there were some very sharp drop-offs in eligibility. For example, a person earning \$50,000 a year would be eligible for \$85,000 in assistance and a person earning \$50,001 would only be eligible for \$75,000. Losing \$10,000 in eligibility for earning one dollar more was seen to be extremely unfair and could be a disincentive to work for some people who were considering buying a house using a NWT Housing Corporation program.

Members were pleased that the Minister agreed with the committee's concerns and has introduced a sliding scale that is directly tied to income and has no drop-off points. So under the new sliding scale, if you made \$50,000 you would be eligible for \$85,000 and if you made \$50,001 you would be eligible for \$84,499.

In addition, the corporation will be introducing an appeal process for those who feel they were not treated fairly by the application process. This appeal process will be modeled on the Student Financial Assistance Appeal Committee. It is a two-step appeal process, with an appeal committee that will make a decision in 15 days or less, and, if the person is still not satisfied, an appeal board that will make a decision in 45 days or less.

The committee's concerns over the appeal process centred on the methodology that would be used. The SFA appeal process is seen by committee to be both fair and timely.

Department Of Health And Social Services

Introduction

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on Thursday, September 21, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Members considered the draft main estimates, including the changes to the budget of the Department of Health and Social Services since the committee reviewed the business plan in September, on January 16, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$277.395 million in operations expense and \$10.109 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 budget-planning cycle.

Non-Governmental Organization Funding

The committee was pleased that the department has provided extra funding for forced growth for some of the first tier non-governmental organizations that provide programs and services to NWT residents. While Members are sure that each affected NGO will be pleased they are receiving additional funding, it is not clear whether the funding will be adequate to meet the actual forced growth costs being experienced by the NGO.

It is the hope of Members that the examination of NGO forced growth requirements would become part of the annual business planning exercise for the department.

Another aspect of our relationship with NGOs is that most operate under short-term, one-year agreements. Many of these are renewed, but only through annual, exhaustive renegotiations and full-blown audits that sap the energy of NGO volunteers and bureaucrats alike, and chew up scarce administrative dollars.

Members and committees have long advocated multi-year contracts where continuous services delivered by NGOs with good track records are the norm. Ministers have assured us that FAA rules do allow it. It is time the government direct its staff to proactively seek out these opportunities and act on them.

Homelessness Funding

The government has finally incorporated the funding that it has been providing to address short-term winter homelessness into the base for the department. This allows the department to provide funding to the SideDoor Youth Centre in Yellowknife and the Turning Point Shelter in Inuvik to deal with the homeless during the coldest months of the year. It also provides funding through the homeless contribution program to help communities with homeless programs, and the homeless travel assistance fund, which will pay for a person to return to a community where they have supports that include a place to stay.

There is also an additional \$200,000 included in the base funding that was not present in previous supplementary funding. The initial approach of the department was to allocate this fund to do community needs assessments in 2007-2008 and roll out the funding to the communities in

subsequent years. The committee is pleased to have been able to work with the department and reach an agreement to put the funds toward the contribution funding allocation for community programs so that communities would be able to access the funding for the programs that meet their needs. We would like to thank the Minister and the department for working with the committee on this funding allocation.

Dementia Facility And Other Territorial Long-Term Care Facilities

Members continue to support the building of a dedicated territorial dementia facility in Yellowknife. The committee believes it is important to keep patients in long-term care as close as possible to their families for as long as possible. The recent and ongoing renovations to long-term care facilities will accomplish this.

However, it is clear to Members that there is a need for a territorial facility that can accommodate high-need dementia patients who can no longer be safely cared for in a regional long-term care facility.

The department is encouraged to continue working with the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors in developing a reasonable facility that can meet the needs of northerners.

Dietary Needs Of Northern Residents

There is the potential that the declining caribou herds will have an impact on the ability of residents in some communities to eat a healthy diet. In isolated communities, it may be too expensive for residents to replace caribou with store-bought meat, and the availability of other country food may be limited or foods not readily adapted to the local diet or culture. The committee believes there is a clear need for the government to develop contingency plans.

The department has agreed to provide the committee with a draft summary of options in the near future.

The committee will continue tracking this issue and will discuss the impact that potential conservation efforts will have on community health. This issue will also be mentioned in the transition document to the next Assembly.

Revitalization Of Social Worker Profession In The NWT

During discussions on the business plan, Members expressed concern about the state of the social work profession in the NWT. It was acknowledged the Northwest Territories is well served by members of the profession, however, many of these professionals, particularly at the community level, are nearing well-deserved retirement. The problem is there is reluctance on the part of northern students to consider social work as a profession. In some years, Aurora College has been unable to deliver the Social Worker Diploma Program because of a lack of interest. The committee notes that the Social Worker Program will be delivered at the Yellowknife Campus this year.

The department's response indicates that it is willing to work with the other departments that employ social workers and the Department of Human Resources to

come up with a strategy to meet the needs of the social worker profession.

The committee notes that there is important ongoing work relating to the on-the-job safety of social workers, a review of the Social Worker Program at Aurora College and, in conjunction with the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada, the development of a legislative proposal and the regulation of the social worker profession in the NWT.

The committee looks forward to the results of these important initiatives and progress on the development of an interdepartmental working group.

Members strongly encourage the department to be aggressive in staffing these positions. Recent media reports seem to indicate that audiologists are in high demand and that the NWT's pay scale may no longer be realistic or a sufficient incentive to attract experienced and qualified candidates. The department, within the context of the Collective Agreement, will have to look for solutions to this dilemma.

Once the teams are in place, it is expected that wait times for rehabilitation services should be dramatically reduced and that services to children in the school system will improve. It is extremely important that the rehabilitation teams establish a close working relationship with schools, educators and child psychologists.

The one area of concern for the committee was the workload that the Yellowknife-based team would have in meeting the needs of the residents of the Tlicho, Sahtu and Deh Cho regions. Some members of the committee believe there should be regularly scheduled visits to each community within these regions, while others would prefer the workload to determine the service patterns. The department is encouraged to monitor the workload of all the rehabilitation teams to ensure there is a proper distribution of resources and that extra help is provided to those teams that require it.

Department Of Education, Culture And Employment

Introduction

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on Monday, September 22, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Members considered the draft main estimates, including the changes to the budget of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment since the committee reviewed the business plan in September, on January 16, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$286.150 million in operations expense and \$40.445 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 budget-planning cycle.

Early Childhood Development (Day Care)

Since the review of the business plans in September, the department added \$1 million to the base for early

childhood development. This new funding is being split between \$600,000 in funding for the start-up and operation of licensed childcare centres and family day homes, and \$400,000 to increase childcare user subsidies. This funding will be welcomed by licensed day care operators and should alleviate some of the immediate strains on the system.

However, there are still concerns in communities over the lack of suitable facilities to locate day care programs. Increasing funding for start-up costs may help a few communities reprofile existing facilities to house a day care program, but will not help communities that have no suitable facilities in the public or private sectors.

The committee will be tracking this issue and offering comments in the transition document to the next Assembly.

Language And Cultural Instructor Program At Aurora College

During the review of the business plan, committee members expressed their concern that the Language and Cultural Instructor Program was not being delivered on a full-time basis at any of the Aurora College campuses or in any interested communities.

If schools are to be successful in delivering aboriginal language and cultural activities in the schools and out on the land, it is important that the people leading the classes have an understanding of classroom theory as well as being grounded in their traditional knowledge.

The committee is pleased that the department was able secure funding to run a two-year LCIP program beginning in the 2007-2008 Aurora College schedule.

Capital Projects Costing

Members remain concerned with the increases in costs for capital projects. It is clear that the only role for legislators is to approve the initial start to a project. The numbers and project scope that are approved at that time have no relation to the final actual costs or project. Two examples would include the Deh Cho Bridge, where bids came in nearly \$50 million more than expected, and the schools in Inuvik, which have seen their estimates increase nearly every year as the details were worked out.

It is understood that increases in the prices of building material and the shortage of skilled tradespeople make it difficult for the Department of Public Works and Services to provide solid financial numbers for large scale projects that may take up to six years to complete.

However, there are examples, like the Territorial Treatment Centre in Hay River, where, in the minds of committee members, proper planning was not undertaken in advance of the project getting into the capital plan.

In this example, Members had been asked to approve a renovation to an existing facility and were disturbed to see, some months later, a tender call for the demolition of the facility. Finally, a determination was made that it made economic sense to renovate. The committee believes that this is the type of work that should be completed prior to any project being included in the capital plan.

This is an issue that will be tracked and commented on by various Members during the review of the main estimates. It will also be mentioned as an issue for the 16th Assembly in the transition document.

Department Of Justice

Introduction

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on Tuesday, September 26, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Justice.

Members considered the draft main estimates, including the changes to the budget of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment since the committee reviewed the business plan in September, on January 16, 2007.

The committee noted expenditures of \$88.441 million for operations expense and \$618,000 to be spent on capital projects for the fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 budget-planning cycle.

Pre-Budget Consultations

This year's pre-budget consultation focused on the cost of living and consequently there were not as many comments received as last year on the state of justice programs in the NWT. Many residents and NGOs did comment on the inadequacy of funding for community justice programs. This issue will be discussed later in the committee's report.

Policing In Smaller Communities

The standing committee was very pleased to see that the department has secured funding for a full-time RCMP detachment in Sachs Harbour. The sheer distance and frequent adverse weather conditions make it imperative to have RCMP stationed in Sachs Harbour on a permanent basis.

However, there are other communities in the NWT that can only be reached by air during most of the year that require a full-time RCMP presence. Gameti and Colville Lake are two of the most isolated communities without a permanent detachment.

The committee encourages the department to work with the RCMP to come up with a timetable to introduce full-time detachments to the communities of Colville Lake and Gameti.

Community Justice Committees

During the last two pre-budget consultations, we heard that more funding should be directed to the local justice committees. Over the last couple of business planning cycles, the Standing Committee on Social Programs has made recommendations calling for increased funding for the operation of community justice committees and for paying the community justice coordinators.

Committee members are pleased the department has finally come through with additional funding for the Community Justice Program. Ten thousand dollars for each community justice committee will be phased in over

the next three years to increase pay for community justice coordinators. Per-capita funding for each community justice committee will also be increased by 10 percent. Finally, an NWT programs/project coordinator position will be established to provide administrative support and advice to the community agencies who wish to develop goals, objectives, accountability frameworks and program evaluation.

Funding will also be increased for victim services, with a \$25,000 increase for each of the existing five programs to \$75,000 per year, and \$75,000 will also be available for new victim services in one community each in the Tlicho and Deh Cho. A regional victim services assistant position will be established to assist community-based agencies in delivering victim service levels equivalent to those of community justice and police services in the NWT.

Members of the committee were pleased with the department's focus on increasing funding and support for victim services and community justice committees at a local level.

Members will be consulting with constituents on the adequacy of this new focus and may include it in the transition document to the next Assembly.

Legal Aid In The NWT

During the life of this Assembly, there have been several initiatives to improve the delivery of legal aid in the NWT. The addition of several staff lawyers and the opening of a new Family Law Clinic in Yellowknife are two examples.

However, it is clear that without the support of private practice lawyers in shouldering a share of the caseload, the legal aid system in the NWT cannot be sustained through the use of staff lawyers.

Committee members regularly hear from constituents eligible for legal aid of delays in obtaining legal representation, especially in civil matters relating to family law.

The department has incorporated a 15 percent increase for the legal aid tariff rates that should hopefully encourage private practice lawyers to take on more legal aid cases.

This issue will be mentioned in the transition document, so that the next Assembly can track this initiative's success or failure.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 9-15(5) And Move Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Committee Report 9-15(5) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

----Carried

The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 9-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 9-15(5) moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12, 2007. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 9-15(5) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 12, 2007.

Reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 14: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 86-15(5): E-mail From Constituent

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an e-mail I received on Wednesday, February 7th of this year. I'd like to call the e-mail "A Crack House in my Neighbourhood is Unacceptable." With consent of the constituent who sent this e-mail, I've adjusted it and their identity has been withdrawn from the e-mail, but the contents have not changed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 87-15(5): NWT Information And Privacy Commissioner 2005-2006 Annual Report

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Tabling of documents.

Pursuant to section 68 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, I wish to table the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner. Mr. Clerk.

Tabled Document 88-15(5): Response To Petition 3-15(5)

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the response of the Minister of Health and Social Services to Petition 3-15(5), tabled by Mrs. Groenewegen on October 30, 2006, regarding the Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 17: MOTIONS

Motion 17-15(5): Provisional Rule Changes To Implement Designated Budget Days, Carried

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly is committed to ensuring that the budget review process is publicly accessible, transparent to all residents and efficient;

AND WHEREAS in recent years the sitting hours of the Legislative Assembly during the winter budget session are frequently extended;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Frame Lake, that "designated budget days" be implemented on a provisional basis;

AND FURTHER that Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each week be "designated budget days;"

AND FURTHER that the House shall commence sitting at 11:00 a.m. on "designated budget days;"

AND FURTHER that the time of adjournment on "designated budget days" shall be 6:00 p.m.;

AND FURTHER that notwithstanding Rule 34(6), the time allotted for Ministers' statements on "designated budget days" shall not exceed ten minutes;

AND FURTHER that notwithstanding Rule 38(4), on "designated budget days," when a Minister answers an oral question, only two supplementary questions per Member directly related to the same subject may be asked;

AND FURTHER that notwithstanding Rule 27(2) and 27(3), the daily order of business in the Assembly on "designated budget days" be amended on a provisional basis to remove the items: Replies to Opening Address, Reports of Standing and Special Committees and Motions;

AND FURTHER that notwithstanding Rules 4(1) and 4(2), the House shall not sit from Friday, February 23, 2007 through Friday, March 2, 2007;

AND FURTHERMORE that the "designated budget days" provisional rules be in effect from Tuesday, February 13, 2007, until the prorogation of the Fifth Session.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 18, 19, and 21, with Mr. Ramsay in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have a number of items before Committee of the Whole today. I would like to ask Mr. Lafferty what is the wish of the committee?

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, at this time I move to report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. There's a motion to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The committee would like to report progress, Mr. Speaker. I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Before we go on, Members, I would like to draw your attention to the gallery to the presence of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner, Ms. Elaine Keenan-Bengts. She had hoped to be here when we tabled her report, but she is here now. Welcome to the House.

---Applause

Also, Members, before I go to the next order of business, I would like to acknowledge the fine work of our Pages this week. They are from William MacDonald and Sir John Franklin schools in Yellowknife here. Thank you for coming and being Pages for us this week.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Monday, February 12, 2007, at 1:30 p.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
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, 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
 - Committee Report 7-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 8-15(5), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 9-15(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
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 Monday, February 12, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 12:57.

