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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 18, 2009****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:36 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON 24-16(3):
MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS
ON CONSENSUS GOVERNMENT**

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the 16th Legislative Assembly first met to decide on our priorities for this government, we produced a plan we called "Northerners Working Together." It's a title that reflects the realities of our consensus system and an ideal we all need to be trying to achieve on a day-to-day basis. More than that, the people of the NWT expect it of us. They expect us to be working together to set the direction and establish the plans that will best meet their current needs and lay the foundation for a better future. Sometimes it's relatively easy to live up to that expectation, but when we are facing more difficult decisions it can be harder for us to find a way to work together effectively.

Mr. Speaker, we have some difficult decisions to make as a Legislative Assembly. There are no obvious or easy solutions to things like reforming the way we deliver programs and services or helping people with the high cost of living.

When we took office, we understood that we needed to make some changes for the long-term good of the people of the NWT. That's what "Northerners Working Together" was about. We knew we needed forward-looking initiatives that will support the creation of thriving, sustainable communities and the development of healthy and educated people over the long term. We also knew

we had to take steps to ensure we could continue to afford the kinds of programs and services that we most need, now and in the future.

Fundamental change of that sort will have an impact on people and that may make us uncomfortable. We have to and will make sure that we do whatever we can to soften that impact. But as leaders, we can't shrink from the difficult decisions in this House if we are going to be able to deliver on a better future for our residents.

I will be one of the first to agree with those who would say this government could be more effective in explaining and building consensus around our actions and initiatives. We clearly need to spend more time creating dialogue around our initiatives. We have already made some changes in this regard and will be investing more effort in explaining what we are planning and in listening to the views and concerns of Members, stakeholders and the public.

At the same time, I would hope that our discussions, here and with the public, will be positive and productive. We want input on the ideas and plans we have proposed and we will listen carefully to all your views, positive and negative. We need constructive criticism and are confident that it can help improve the work we do. But criticism that seeks primarily to preserve the status quo for its own sake should be taken as just that. We need to have the courage to change the things that need to be changed, even if they have served us well in the past.

We also need to be sure we are all participating in all the same discussion. As a government, we bring forward proposals at a variety of stages. Some proposals are fully worked out, some are more preliminary and conceptual. Our purpose in coming out with preliminary proposals is to generate feedback and debate on the "big picture" goals and objectives we are trying to achieve. We know that how we implement our ideas is important. But at the same time, when we are seeking input on preliminary ideas, we don't want to get so consumed with debate on implementation that we lose sight of our overall goals.

Mr. Speaker, this government has put forward a number of proposals that have generated some strong public reaction and feedback. I expect we'll hear a lot about one of them -- board reform -- today. We respect those views and are taking them into account. At the same time, we continue to believe that our plans are faithful to the goals of this Assembly. I hope that Members, stakeholders and the public will join with us in the spirit of working together to help us develop strong, workable plans for change that will make a positive difference for our residents today and for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Before we go on, colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to the gallery to the presence of Ms. Lena Pedersen, Member of the 7th Council and the first elected lady to office. Welcome to the Assembly.

---Applause

The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 25-16(3):
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today to follow up on the statement made on February 16th by the Honourable Michael Miltenberger, the lead Minister on the Board Reform Initiative.

There is a great deal of interest in this initiative and people are expressing concerns over the government's plans for board reform. As the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I am hearing the concerns that people have about what this means for the education system in the Northwest Territories, including the schools and the people who work in the schools. I want to assure Members that we recognize all the good work that has been done over many years to help improve the education system in the Northwest Territories. We have more and more students graduating every year from our high schools and this is even more the case in our communities and among our aboriginal students. We have many dedicated educators and administrators, as well as many committed members on various boards who are working hard to ensure we have the best education system possible for our students.

Board reform will respect all the good things that have been done in education and will build on that success. This initiative focuses on governance structures through which we will work to find systemic and long-lasting ways of increasing collaboration and cooperation to meet the needs of students in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Above all, we want to continue making progress in the education system. In order to make progress, we must be prepared to make change where it will help us make the progress we all desire.

Mr. Speaker, we have 33 divisional education councils that govern 49 schools in the Northwest Territories. Education authorities outside Yellowknife are organized under four divisional education councils and one community services agency. The commission scolaire francophone des territoires du Nord Ouest is responsible for French first language schools in Yellowknife and Hay River, while schools in Yellowknife are governed by two district education authorities. In exploring new models of governance for education, we expect that schools will continue to operate much like they do today. Principals and teachers will continue to fulfil the responsibilities of delivering education programs to students. There will continue to be a need for senior administrators with education expertise to support the schools and to provide oversight responsibilities for ensuring quality program delivery. As Minister of Education, Culture and Employment I will continue to hold responsibilities for the education system in the Northwest Territories.

Board reform will not affect the education rights of anyone in the Northwest Territories. It is hoped that this Initiative will result in more efficient and effective governance of schools in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister Miltenberger mentioned in his statement on board reform earlier this week, the government has started its consultation process on this initiative. We are still in the early stages. Some discussions have taken place, including discussions Minister Miltenberger and I had with chairs of the education authorities in early December. I recently met with the chairs of both Yellowknife education authorities and I committed to having further discussions with them. I am prepared to have these discussions with the boards of each of the education authorities. As well, senior officials in the department have had discussions with senior officials from the education authorities. Further discussions must take place and will take place.

We welcome input from people, not only to express their concerns but also to offer suggestions on how we can continue to make improvements in our overall governance structures. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 26-16(3):
BOARD REFORM

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the issue of board reform from the health and social services perspective. As Minister of Health and Social Services I have heard concerns on what this board reform means to the NWT health and social services system. As my Cabinet colleagues have mentioned and I have stated all along, nothing is set in stone and we are looking for feedback on how to proceed.

In health and social services, we are always looking to improve service delivery for our clients while at the same time making sure our system is financially sustainable. The Board Reform Initiative is attempting to streamline those services and potentially reduce administrative costs. Coordinating services such as school counsellors, child youth workers and social workers will help better serve the needs of our clients. Integrated regional service boards will allow for better case management and help clients receive services in a one-stop approach.

Along with the Tlicho Community Services Agency, there are seven other health and social services authorities in the Northwest Territories. Two Authorities, Stanton Territorial Health Authority and Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, are managed by a public administrator, the other six have a board of trustees. Chairs of these boards sit on a committee called the Joint Leadership Council, which I chair as the Minister. All Members of this council find this to be an effective forum for identifying issues common to all boards, and provide strategic system-wide direction, which shows us how we can work together to manage a complex system.

I have called two meetings with the Joint Leadership Council on the issue of board reform and listened to some of their initial thoughts. Some good ideas were exchanged and suggestions on ideas we need to consider were offered. We have put these into our deliberations. I have also travelled to communities and regions at their invitations to have a dialogue and seek their input into this process. I have committed to meeting with the Joint Leadership Council throughout the consultation process. Similarly the deputy minister of Health and Social Services meets regularly with the Joint Senior Management Council, which includes CEOs from each authority. These initial information exchanges have and will continue to help build the foundation for future board reform consultation.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear, we are not looking at reducing the level of care we offer to residents of

the Northwest Territories. In fact it is the opposite, our goal is to create a more effective and efficient system that ensures sustainability and to better meet the needs of NWT residents by integrating services and creating efficiencies where reasonable. This supports goals of the 16th Legislative Assembly, of "an effective and efficient government and sustainable, vibrant and safe communities".

I would encourage everyone to read the supporting documents and partake in the consultation efforts with good will and open minds. Feedback from everyone will enable us to reach our goal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 27-16(3):
BOARD REFORM – HOUSING

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the issue of board reform, specifically how it will impact on the delivery of housing programs and services at the community, regional and territorial level.

As Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, my priority is to ensure that every community in our Territory receives support to improve its housing conditions. For nearly 35 years, local housing organizations have been the primary source of community input on housing matters and have been critical partners of the Housing Corporation in the delivery of programs and services. As other Members of this Assembly have noted, LHOs have done a commendable job throughout their history, and the commitment and service of board members and employees of these organizations need to be recognized.

As Minister Miltenberger indicated in an earlier statement, board reform is not about suggesting that the boards aren't working hard to deliver programs and services. It is about reviewing how we serve clients who access multiple services from the GNWT. Public housing clients are often the same residents who access income support, education and career development services, and no matter what the final outcome of this review may be, the GNWT needs to better develop its case management approach to ensure that those residents who require support from multiple service areas are served in the most efficient manner possible.

It should also be pointed out that the delivery of housing at the community level is also being considered as part of our review of infrastructure

services. As Members are aware, the Housing Corporation and the departments of Public Works and Services and Transportation are currently reviewing how infrastructure will be delivered in our communities. These efforts are intended to find areas where collaboration and better coordination can improve how we plan for, acquire and maintain roads, schools, hospitals and housing in our communities.

These are important linkages between the infrastructure review and board reform. Together, both processes will consider best practices for how we deliver housing at the community level, and decisions made within one review must give consideration to what is being discussed through the other.

Mr. Speaker, these reform initiatives are at the information gathering stage, and consultations with stakeholders are ongoing. I am pleased to inform this House that I will be meeting with the chairs and managers of all LHOs in March to gather their feelings on board governance and service delivery options. I am looking forward to a good discussion with these individuals.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, structural change of this magnitude deserves a full and open dialogue with all stakeholders prior to proceeding. Together with my Cabinet colleagues, I am committed to do just that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in every meeting we, as leaders, stop to say a prayer for guidance in the work that we do on behalf of our constituents. The prayer that we pray at the opening of every session day asks that we have constant recognition for the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to elaborate on that prayer in relation to the pressing issue before us. We are taught to pray by beginning and entering with our thanksgiving and then making our requests known. Today I thank God for our country, for the hard-fought freedoms, the freedoms of expression, the freedoms of religion, the freedoms to demonstrate, all of these freedoms entrenched in our Canadian Constitution.

Today, I thank God for this marvellous Territory that we all call home, for the richness of the people, for the diversity of our cultures and for the remarkable resources of our land.

I thank God for the heritage of our First Nations who were the original people of our Territory, for their perseverance through the challenging times, for their wisdom in dealing with the ever-changing pressures on their way of life, and for their forgiveness when they suffered injustices and for their sharing of their knowledge when newcomers arrive and made the North their home as well.

I thank God for every leader at the community, regional or territorial level who has embarked on service with the best interest of their people at heart, that they would never lose sight of the honour and trust there is in being asked to lead. Whether that leadership is on a local school board, a member of a parent action committee, a community or band council member, a community justice committee, I trust that they will feel validated for their contribution in leadership.

For those who serve at the front lines of our programs and services to our people, I pray for strength, encouragement and supernatural wisdom. For the teacher who stands each day before a class of young minds with the desire to bestow knowledge, value and guidance, even when they feel alone or overwhelmed, I pray they will feel the support of their colleagues and this government and the network of leaders who oversee the education of our youth. For the nurse at the local health care facility as they deal with the stress brought on by illnesses or the trauma and grief from the loss of a loved one through accident, illness or suicide. For the councillor who puts their heart and their hand out to victims of abuse or those struggling with addictions, that they would celebrate the small victories and it would give them inspiration to carry on.

I pray for us as legislators at this level of government that we would serve with humility and respect, never losing sight of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve from the most vulnerable to the strongest, from the youngest to the oldest, from the most lowly of means to the most successful. I pray that nothing that we do or say would be an affront to those who desire to serve and be involved through their life's work or through their volunteering.

I thank God that His ways are higher than our ways, that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and I pray that our leadership would demonstrate those values. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR BOARD REFORM

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October of 2008, my Member's statement said that I believe that some consolidation of some NWT boards is necessary and I still believe that. Mr. Speaker, I also said that the Tlicho Services Board model is not the best option for board reform in the NWT and I encouraged the government to consider other options. I quote from the Hansard record of October 9, 2008, when I said, "There are many other combinations and hybrids of our current system open to us if we get creative. No option should be dismissed outright."

I also said that the consolidation of boards in Yellowknife would be almost impossible and encouraged significant in-person consultation with stakeholders. It is now February 2009 and where are we? The amalgamation model was decided without genuine consideration of other possible options; in my mind, definitely without consultation. One definition of consultation says it is a discussion aimed at ascertaining opinions or reaching an agreement. That would be prior to any decision, not after. There was no opportunity for stakeholders to provide comments or input and that's a shame.

Mr. Speaker, MLAs, board members and residents have yet to be told how the decision on the model was made. It's now February 2009 and where are we? In-depth analysis of the impact of the proposed changes on our residents, our board members, our staff, our systems is still lacking or unavailable. Where is the proof for the research to show that the proposed model is the best one working successfully elsewhere and suitable to all regions of the NWT? It's now February 2009 and where are we?

The Minister has presented board reform as an issue already decided. His high-handed attitude and remarks to the media have shown a clear disregard to the importance of all NWT residents who are concerned about this change. He's dismissed them outright, Mr. Speaker, and that may not be his intent, but that's the message he's transmitted.

In a statement made by Mr. Miltenberger on Monday, he indicated that the government took a considered approach to finding a solution for board reform and that they used three principles as a basis for their decision. I agree with that approach and the principles are valid and acceptable, Mr. Speaker, but the problem and the principles should have been presented to our public along with a

blank page and a request for input to help create a model that will really work.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: Thank you to my colleagues. Working bottom up, not top down, Mr. Speaker, will garner buy-in to a problem from all participants. At this point, Cabinet has not sold their bill of goods to anyone except themselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON
MODEL FOR BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am frustrated that once again we have taken a good policy opportunity with good intentions and turned it into an attack on the mood of our public whom we are meant to serve. We simply cannot continue to unleash public assaults and threats such as the current Board Reform Initiative. In fact, policy ideas such as this should first go through an internal process of maturing by being substantiated with representation from different perspectives and departments and with some cold hard facts to ponder. Only then, with a clear iterative public consultation schedule identified should we begin to engage our public in a responsible way.

Mr. Speaker, the clear suggestion to throw out the entire existing system is causing undo upheaval, but it also threatens to throw out the baby with the bathwater. A good example of where the system is working is our two education boards right here in Yellowknife. Both boards operate within budget year after year and achieve a standard of education amongst the highest in Canada. These are democratically elected boards of passionate parents who by their very nature, are the most qualified people to be making decisions about children's education. We need to recognize this success up front. This does not detract from the need to look into ways we can ensure cooperation between boards when required.

The reason the housing authorities were created was to have operations at the community level. A good example of what can potentially happen when we remove this community-based approach and replace it with a bureaucratic approach is a transfer of the housing from the housing authority to ECE. This move is a failure costing our people more problems and our government more money than

the system it is replacing. This is a classic example of forced and ineffective reform and should speak to the Minister.

Stanton Territorial Hospital Authority delivers good services, but has experienced management problems and budget deficits most years since division. Loss of the public board exacerbated these failures. There are now indications that Stanton is finally improving with significant personnel changes and hard decisions.

Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority continues to be effective and within budget, however, there may be opportunities for some productive thinking, for improving efficiency of health operations of these two authorities in Yellowknife.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: The biggest folly here is that we are force feeding a model on a number of systems, some of which are functioning very well and some of which are not. There seems to be no attempt to differentiate these or consider inherent regional realities to help focus and facilitate productive discussions and input.

Government's proposals have generated more than some strong public reaction and feedback, as our Premier has said today, but they have done more than that; they have generated outright rejection. Surely we have learned our lesson by now and we realize good communications makes for good policy. If so, I would ask the Minister to show us.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EFFECTS OF BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE ON SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, like my colleagues, I would like to talk about the proposed board reform and its potential impacts at the community level. The residents of Tu Nedhe are concerned that the new administrative process associated with board reform will create a new state of confusion at the community level. Also, we will see a loss of authority at the community level. Included in this is a loss of decision-making, which is a critical component in managing these areas. The consideration and evaluation of important community factors and other equally important intangibles can only be made possible by those living in the community.

The amalgamation of these boards into a regional board will create a loss of focus and expertise in each of the three areas of housing, health, and education. As an example, housing allocations; will the proposed regional boards result in housing allocations being made outside the community or will it mean that the local housing staff will now be taking on additional responsibilities, including making the important unit allocation decisions themselves? Does this mean new and revised job descriptions? Would this mean new positions? Would this mean a raise in pay? Does this mean all housing association and authority staff will now become GNWT staff?

Another example could be medical travel; an activity that hits close to home and an activity that has personal and economic impact on many families in our smaller communities. How will this be impacted by the new board reforms? There is a danger that regional boards will be more concerned with the bottom line than the welfare of individuals when making medical travel decisions.

Probably the most important concern with the amalgamation of the various boards into the regional, all-inclusive board is combining different mandates. In other words, the mandate of education is to increase the viability of an individual to provide opportunities for improving one's skills and abilities and to do so over an extended period of time. On the other hand, the mandates of housing and health are primarily concerned with addressing serious and almost always immediate concerns and the basic necessities of life, personal health, and shelter issues.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BEAULIEU: Amalgamation of these mandates will not only result in a loss of expertise in these areas, but there is a danger that one will take precedence over the other. This is not good when all three are critical and must be treated as top priorities. All of these must be examined thoroughly and carefully, and due consideration must be given to those that will be directly impacted by this proposed change.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EFFECTS OF BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE ON ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The board reform process has totally undermined the

constitutional rights and obligations we have to First Nations people. The Inuvialuit in my region settled their land claim in 1984 and the Gwich'in in 1992. They presently have two self-government tables being negotiated in the Beaufort-Delta region: one for the Inuvialuit and one for the Gwich'in. The Inuvialuit are negotiating for a regional government structure. The Gwich'in are negotiating what the obligations are under the treaties they signed in 1921 and the modern treaty they signed in 1992.

Those agreements give the aboriginal groups the right to negotiate self-government agreements, to take over programs and services that are presently provided by this government. The First Nations people throughout the Northwest Territories and the rest of Canada have a fundamental right to self-government and to be accommodated under those self-government agreements to negotiate framework agreements to take on public government programs, such as housing, health care, education, policing, justice, cultural rights, and also those aboriginal rights that are still enforced under Treaty 8, which was signed in 1898, Treaty 11 in 1921, and the modern land claim agreements which have been signed in the last 20 years.

As we all know, the Tlicho have signed their agreement. Yes, they have a Tlicho Government, they do have a Tlicho Regional Services Board. But the Tlicho had the opportunity to negotiate what they feel will work for them. The other aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories must have the same opportunity. Regardless if it's the Inuvialuit negotiating their regional government structure and developing the regional structures they want in regard to development of their programs and services or the Gwich'in in regard to negotiating their rights, the same thing applies with regard to the Sahtu communities where Deline has negotiated a community-based self-government agreement and the community of Tulita is in the same process. The same thing applies to the people in the southern part of the Northwest Territories of whom we all know the Dehcho are negotiating a regional government for the Dehcho people and the Dehcho Nation...

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

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. KRUTKO: Like I stated, the Dehcho are negotiating a regional government for the Dehcho government and the same thing applies to the Akaicho, who are also negotiating their treaty rights with regard to Treaty 8.

I have to say that this government hasn't done its homework when it comes to consultation that it has to impose upon aboriginal people and aboriginal governments to ensure that this does not interfere with those negotiations that are presently going on in the Northwest Territories and in the regions throughout the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REACTION OF BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE IN THE SAHTU

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was listening to the issues of board reform and the information that's been provided to me about board reform I was thinking about a time when in the Sahtu region we had something like a board reform. Finally, after many years of good politicking and the leaders in the House Assembly, this Assembly here, we finally have an educational divisional board. Several years ago we had a health board. Now we have a district office of the housing authority in the Sahtu region and we are just getting used to having this kind of authority in our region. Now this government is proposing to take it away again. The people yet have not really fully benefited having full authority in the region in terms of these types of boards that the Minister is suggesting that we go towards a super board in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, people in the Sahtu, and I spoke to them and asked the leadership if they support the Board Reform Initiative. I have received letters and phone calls saying no, they do not support the board initiative at this time. There is no type of real genuine consultation that has gone on with my people in the Sahtu region. We have land claims, self-government negotiations that are being negotiated as we speak. This has an impact on the board reform. We, in the Sahtu, want the same rights in terms of education, health and housing. We brought to the community level as close as possible where authority and decisions can be made. We have experience where education decisions, health decisions and even housing decisions were made out of the Sahtu region.

I will tell you what. It is not a good feeling when you are living in the region in communities where decisions are made at headquarters and regional levels. They tell you and they dictate to you, but they call it consultation. But it is really a dictatorship in terms of telling you what to do, how you are going to do it and what you should be grateful for. We know in the Sahtu region that this is the price you pay for being in a democratic society, the Northwest Territories, where the federal

government has given the right to aboriginal people to negotiate aboriginal governments.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. YAKELEYA: In closing, the people in the Sahtu agree with the Members here that board reform needs to be stopped and really looked at. Otherwise, this government here is going to feel the wrath of the Sahtu people.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EFFECTS OF BOARD REFORM
ON NAHENDEH COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHE: Today I share my colleague's concerns and I, too, will discuss the Board Reform Initiative. Also, welcome the many teachers, concerned citizens and youth in our gallery here today.

---Applause

The Ministers have proposed some very big changes. We would need to have some very clear and important reasons to understand why we should make those big changes. The Ministers have not yet been able to clearly explain to me what important and urgent problems they want to solve with these new regional services boards. In my riding of Nahendeh, the Dehcho Divisional Education Council is organized, efficient and within budget. The Dehcho Health and Social Service Authority is operating efficiently and effectively. The local housing organizations function well and as well they can relate to people's circumstances. We have capable administrators, financial managers and chief executive officers. We don't have many issues with case management. Our agencies and staff currently work together for the betterment of our people.

I initially supported a review of our boards and agencies. However, the GNWT's rollout package indicates that government is now actually proposing the merging of organizations and administrations. This now has the interest of my constituents and is developing into an issue of great concern. Mixing of health, education and housing is not a good combination. I liken it to the mixing of apples, oranges and bananas. There is just no way to make them the same.

It seems like the Ministers are proposing to make changes that would cost a lot of money and, in the end, would not make very much difference to the

people. I understand that there would be large HR costs to bring new people into the public service, transfer their pensions. I also understand that there would be significant computer costs so that everyone could be on PeopleSoft and the government's new financial systems. And then there would be offices that would have to be rearranged and moved. We, as MLAs, would be surprised if we were able to review a carefully prepared estimate of these costs. I would expect that number could be in the millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker.

I would also seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. MENICOCHE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, colleagues. Effective and efficient delivery of our public services is all that our people ask. I believe that our current system is effective. I also believe that the proposed changes will not provide improved services to our people. I am not in favour of the proposed Board Reform Initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REACTION TO BOARD REFORM
INITIATIVE IN NUNAKPUT

MR. JACOBSON: Today I would like to talk about some real issues facing our local housing organizations in Nunakput. I really think these issues get lost when the government identifies its own priorities and diverts everyone's attention to the topic of board reform, the way we are trying to improve services offered by local boards. No one really thinks that a super board is going to make any difference to the ordinary person in the community. Everyone knows talking about a super board means going to many meetings and discussions of a super board and will only take away from local organizations in the effort to manage and deliver local services.

In Nunakput, the Inuvik Housing Authority now manages services in Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour. This means now everyone takes longer because of the community who can help sort out our own problems. We all know it takes a while for income support processes and assessments. Now it takes longer for housing to organize their rental charges to their tenants. Now there are more people being evicted because of the rental arrears. Let's do something real for our residents. We need to provide better services so they could live happier and more productive lives. You can't convince me the changing of managers and the board members

will have any real affect in Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour to improve housing and income support services. Let's start to really fix the problems and things that matter to the people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
LACK OF CONSULTATION ON
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, this morning when I was walking into the Legislative Assembly I saw two signs stuck in the snowbank. There are now dozens out there. One of the signs said, "super boards is super bad." The other said, "one board does not fit all." I have to say that I agree with these signs. The protesters who placed those signs outside of this Legislature are right. They hit the nail square on the head.

Over the last several months, there has been a lot of concern raised about this Cabinet's direction to move forward with board reform focussing on going from 70 boards to seven using the Tlicho model as basis. In my opinion, that blind devotion to this model for every region in the NWT is a huge mistake. Fortunately, on Monday, February 16, 2009, the lead Minister of the Strategic Initiative Committee on Refocusing Government seemed to backtrack from that position. According to the unedited Hansard of February 16th, Minister Miltenberger said, "Board reform is a work in progress. The issues are complex and it will take time to develop our plans and to implement any changes. We have stated in the past that this may end up taking on different forms in different regions."

To me this suggested that Cabinet was finally moving away from the preconceived model from 70 to seven, which is what I wanted to hear. This message was strengthened by comments by Minister Lee in today's Yellowknifer where she indicated that this is a work in progress; nothing is predetermined. To me, these comments from the Ministers suggested that they might be open to a healthy debate, that they might be willing to see reason and listen to the people in the NWT who are concerned about the dedicated direction the Cabinet is taking with respect to board reform.

Unfortunately, the good feeling didn't last long. This morning while driving to work, I listened to an interview on the radio with Minister Miltenberger. I was incredibly disappointed to hear the Minister tell the reporter that we think we can go from 70 to seven and we are prepared to have a discussion. We want to meet towards that, but how we get

there and let's get some consultation and feedback on that. Mr. Speaker, these comments fly in the face of the Minister's comments on Monday. They are completely contradictory. What is the real message we are trying to send? To me, the message is clear. The Minister is still committed to going from 70 to seven. The decisions have already been made. The preferred model has been selected regardless of facts or research.

Once again, the voices of the people and the Regular MLAs aren't being heard. It's Supplementary Health Benefits Program changes all over again. When will Cabinet realize that they are here to represent the people of the NWT, not to do whatever they want, when they want and how they want? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
LACK OF ANALYSIS ON
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today, as well, on the issue of the government's plan to reform boards in the Northwest Territories. I spoke numerous times about my belief that the government has not done adequate or meaningful costing, research, consultation or analysis as it pertains to board reform. Mr. Speaker, no one can debate the fact that efficiencies need to be found. This continues to be a priority of the 16th Assembly. We seem to have gone from finding efficiencies, which is a noble pursuit, to potentially gutting our education, health and housing boards. The edict that we go from 70 to seven boards from Minister Miltenberger is not what Regular Members envision. This is not what we wanted. You cannot point your finger at the Regular Members. This is Cabinet's plan plain and simple. In my opinion, the move to regional super boards will do nothing to address efficiency. The Minister has yet to articulate exactly what the problems are. These super boards will add another level of bureaucracy and be located, staffed and administered in regional centres. Mr. Speaker, will there be a corresponding loss of jobs in other communities? Absolutely. What the government is moving toward is an erosion of ministerial and legislative responsibility and accountability. With these super boards administering close to 70 percent of our annual budget, why would we even need 19 MLAs when the responsibility and oversight of close to 70 percent of our budget is done by what very well could amount to be appointed boards and chairs?

Mr. Speaker, we should be looking at ways to increase the responsibility of Ministers so accountability in our government can be maximized. Mr. Speaker, this government needs a lesson in consultation and what it means to engage the stakeholders and the public in a meaningful way. To date, they have failed miserably in consulting, researching and explaining what it is that they're trying to do or to fix. The style of this government in its short time is to intimidate, to bully and to push around those most vulnerable in our society. Mr. Speaker, this abusive power has to stop somewhere. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MODEL FOR BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, today I publicly demand Minister Miltenberger please put down your board reform pen and join the side of the people. If there is a time for unity, a vision where Northerners need to work together during these fiscally tight and uncertain times, the time is certainly now. The thinking of "government knows best" has been heard and is certainly now refuted by the people who are demanding better from their elected officials. From the turnout today, it is proof enough that the people want their government Ministers to now listen.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, the dream of a democratic approach was never designed around a one-size-fits-all. I have heard and seen time and time again that people want their government, regardless of what level, working better together. Perhaps, if the Minister hasn't noticed yet, the people want their boards in health, in housing and in education. The people want their boards to be elected, independent and responsible directly to them but not to a bureaucrat out of their reach. Yes, there will be struggles, but that is the nature of what defines us. Now is the time to work towards efficiencies and not the deconstruction of our democratic right, our boards.

Reform is scary, Mr. Speaker. Everyone wants some version of it and in this case the word "reform" has meant steamrolling and amalgamating these boards together. It has not been built around practicality and reality. I'm a believer that if amalgamation is what the people really wanted, Mr. Speaker, then that's what they would have asked for. I have heard no calls to make super boards out of our grassroots boards that are publicly elected and publicly responsible. Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen one ounce of proof that efficiencies will be

made through this pass; no better representation and certainly no better quality of programming for our people. At this moment there has been no case to build on that effect. I can't imagine a single person defending inefficiencies, so then where are they? So where are these great reasons to roll up our boards? I cannot see any.

The process from the beginning should have been about bringing people together to harmonize excellence, but not to force a merger through this representation. This should have been about building better relationships and efficiencies, not butchering our boards and our people. Mr. Speaker, this is no loss of respect or shame if this Minister and this government pulls this from the table, but there will be a new found respect earned today by the people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to the gallery today and the presence of Mr. Gerald Gerrand. He's our Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Welcome to the House, Mr. Gerrand. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I risk leaving somebody out because I certainly can't see the people who are assembled up behind me, but there are some constituents I would like to recognize: Mr. Duff Spence, who is a constituent and also the chairperson of Yellowknife Education District No. 1; Gladys and Albert Eggenberger, who are constituents of Frame Lake and long-time residents of Yellowknife. Welcome to the House. I'd like to mention, as well, Mary Vane, who is the chair of Yellowknife Catholic Schools, who is here; Mel Pardy, the assistant superintendent of Yellowknife Education District No. 1; Garry Hubert, who is the executive director of SideDoor, and anybody else that I've missed, my apologies and welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of people in the gallery today and I just wanted to welcome all of the constituents that I have up in the audience today as well as parents and students, organizers of all those who showed up today in protest of the board reform. I welcome

your participation in this process and, again, welcome to the House.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to stand up today to recognize a constituent from Fort Smith, my constituency assistant Denise Yuhas, one of the best in the business and the only one from my community here today. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to recognize everybody that is attending today, particularly those constituents from the Weledeh riding, and in particular all of the young people that have shown up today and remind us exactly what our jobs are. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

I'd just like to recognize all the students that are here, the teachers, the chairpersons and the parents as well. Welcome to the Assembly. Mahsi.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to take a moment to recognize many, many constituents from Range Lake who are here. I know they know whose riding they're in and I see them all. I just think there are too many for me to mention. I just want to thank them for being here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's so important to recognize everyone here today. It's difficult to recognize individuals due to the size of the crowd. I'm seeing people from the riding as well as from the Territory that I know. It should not go unnoticed the significant contribution of public display and effort here today. I want to thank everyone for coming. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to thank constituents from Nahendeh that may be in the crowd there. I don't want to be remiss in not mentioning their effort in coming to the capital and, as well, making the effort to come out to the Legislature. Thank you very much. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Today I'd like to welcome everyone into the House. It's good to see all the kids out, livening up the place a bit. I'd like to recognize my mother-in-law, Edith Bourke, from Fort Smith today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: There are a large number of constituents from the Great Slave riding. I'd like to thank you for coming and for the sake of time I'd like to recognize just one constituent and a neighbour, Mrs. Theresa Crane.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: I'd like to recognize any constituents of the Mackenzie Delta who may be in the gallery. More importantly, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize a former Member of the Mackenzie Delta, Edith Bourke. It's nice to see you again, Edith.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 144-16(3): BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the lead Minister responsible for refocusing government. A common question I've been getting from constituents and northern residents when it comes to board reform is

why. What are we trying to fix? Today I would like the Minister to please tell me why Cabinet is proceeding with board reform and specifically what the problem is that we're trying to fix.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister responsible for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to point out initially that what was played in terms of my first comments this morning were from October 2008, followed at some point later by an interview with myself in Whitehorse. So that may have caused some of the concern for the Member for Great Slave.

The issue of board reform has been identified as a priority of the 16th Legislative Assembly. It has been worked on for over a decade. The social programs area was one that was determined to be, in our opinion, significantly over-governed with 70 boards for health and social services, education, and housing. We set out with an initial concept to try to rationalize that board structure, building on a regional structure that's there. It's been a priority that's been with us for these two Assemblies.

MR. ABERNETHY: Just as a note, when I made reference to the comments made they were actually from the comments made while in the Yukon, not the comments from October 2008. I didn't really hear an answer as to what is the problem we're trying to fix. Going back to the press release from February 16th from the Minister, as well as...Sorry. Based on the unedited Hansard and the Minister's press release from February 16th where he confirmed the next steps in board reform, it sounded like Cabinet was not committed to a specific model. It sounded to me like there was recognition that regions have different realities.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: The question is coming. Okay. So then today, and that's what I made reference to before about the comments that he made while in the Yukon, it sounded like you're still pursuing 70 to seven. To me this seems like a contradiction. Could the Minister please clarify the Cabinet's position on this issue? Is 70 to seven Cabinet's preferred model?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It's the model that we've moved forward with to this point trying to do the work to prove how it could be done, the impact of it being done. We recognize that it's going to require significant discussion, which is why we picked April as the milestone date to see and look at the work that's been done and then decide on any changes that are going to be necessary and on

the way forward with the broad issue of board reform.

MR. ABERNETHY: So for clarity, the answer is yes?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: For clarity, the answer is that's where we started. We recognize that with the regional differences and discussion that's going to ensue, that's not necessarily where we're going to end up. It was our starting point. We put it out there. We've been looking at if it's doable and if it's doable what will it look like. We've asked for feedback and we've been receiving that. We know that there are other options out there. April is going to take us to the point where we can have that discussion of how we move forward.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister tell me what other models for board reform they are currently investigating?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We considered whether we would look at going with territorial boards only, which is not a model that made sense to us in terms of removing control from the regions and communities. We agreed from the very start as an Assembly that the status quo needed improving. The one model we had been looking at that seemed to have applicability was the regional service model as it's been set up over the years in Tlicho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 145-16(3):
MODELS CONSIDERED FOR BOARD REFORM

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the Minister was in my riding and we met with the Dehcho Health Board and the Dehcho Divisional Education Board he indicated that the Alberta government model was that they had merged boards as well. In that case they merged the health boards with health boards and education boards with education boards. And albeit too, it wasn't very effective. I'd also like to ask, prior to this model were there any other models that the Minister or their committee had looked at before rolling out this package?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I didn't hear any question, but I'll go to the Minister for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, as I indicated, looked at territorial boards. We didn't see great value to that in our

style of government. We, of course, looked at the status quo and then we looked at the regional service model as has been put in place in the Tlicho.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I concur that at the beginning of this Assembly we all sat down and indicated that a review of the boards and agencies was important. But I still don't understand how we can merge a health and social services board with an education board. To me and to people who work inside those organizations, it doesn't make sense. I'd like to know the reasoning behind that decision to put forth this model.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There were case management issues, there were efficiencies through administration and finance we believe are there and are the two key areas that we think would allow us to rationalize that. It would hopefully in the long term allow us to put more money into programs and tie up as little as possible on the administration and finance and policy sides.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: You can make the same argument to propose a merge of the Workers' Compensation Board with the Power Corporation Board, but it just doesn't fit. I'd like to ask again how they can make an assessment and think there's a fit here.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We've indicated that this is, what we came forward with was an initial concept. We recognize that there are lots of questions to be answered. The timeline was up to 2010-2011. This April is a milestone date to look at the work that we've done on the particular approach. Is that going to be the way forward? If there are going to be adjustments, what are they? Those are the questions and debate and discussion we were looking to have in April with the Members.

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

QUESTION 146-16(3):
LACK OF SUPPORT FOR
BOARD REFORM PROPOSAL

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the Minister responsible for refocusing government has to wait for April to find out what Members think. I think very little research is really required to find out whether or not this side of the House supports going from 70 boards to seven boards. The Minister sat here today. He's heard all 11 Members on this side of the House stand up and say we don't like your policy, we don't like your process, we don't like the way you're going about this. Why don't you just save us all a lot of time and

trouble and commit here today to take this off the table?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The broad issue is board reform. If that is not the way forward, what is the way forward on board reform? If the decision of the House is that board reform is off the table in its entirety that is a significantly different and more fundamental issue than we don't like a particular concept. But we think there's some value to board reform and what is that direction going to take.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Any responsible government should always be monitoring for efficiencies and effectiveness in any governance model that they have. That would be an expected thing to do. I sat on the committee for Agencies, Boards, and Commissions' review with the Minister and with Ms. Lee in the last Assembly. Somewhere between the research inventory of our boards and what has come forward now from this government there has been a strange quantum leap. Where did this Minister get this idea that going from 70 to seven was ever going to fly in the Northwest Territories?

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to call attention to the visitors in the gallery. We welcome you here. We hope you're enjoying the proceedings. But I would like to remind you of the rules that there is not to be any applauding in the Chamber. I've been very patient today so far, but just a reminder and I ask for your cooperation. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we embarked upon this initiative it was recognized that there is a significant restructuring that is entailed in this particular initiative; that there was going to be, when there was engagement across the North, a lot of discussion about how to deal with board reform. We have put forward an initial suggestion. We recognize that there is a lot of concern. The issue of board reform is still a priority of the 16th Legislative Assembly. I've heard comments from a number of the Members that they don't necessarily agree with this particular approach, but there is some type of board reform needed. It was hoped that in April we would be having that discussion. If it's not this, what is it? If it's nothing and board reform is going to be pulled off the table as a priority of this Assembly, then that's a discussion as well that can be held.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: The boards and agencies which currently exist in our communities

and regions across the Northwest Territories took many years to evolve to the point that they did. They were intended to encourage participation from people more than us. Consensus government doesn't stop at the doors of this building. Consensus government is a Territory-wide concept. What does Mr. Miltenberger say to those people who are contributing here in Yellowknife and in the communities around the Northwest Territories. What does he say to those people who have contributed so much to build this capacity and be involved for the work that they have done?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We appreciate the work that every board member has contributed over the years, but we also recognize that we have a system that has evolved without a lot of planning over the years, often by program area, by ministry, and we have evolved now where we have 150 boards for 42,000 people for a whole host of different program areas. We have 70 in health and social services, housing, and education alone. We are of the opinion that there are ways to provide enhanced decision-making at the regional community level at the same time as rationalizing some of the board structures.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very divisive initiative that this government has gone out with. It has not been costed. There are so many unanswered questions. It is causing people in the regions, in the communities, in the aboriginal governments to consider their confidence in this government. What can the Minister suggest that we do to dial back on this initiative and start again to look for efficiencies and effectiveness? What venue or process would he suggest going forward?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There are a number of options. If the intent is to have further and greater consultation within a specific time frame, there are committees in the past that this Legislature has struck special committees for different things with a specific budget and timeline and clear mandate to go out and do business, which is one way this Legislature has to take that matter into this Legislature. The mandate and all those things would be worked out is one option that comes most immediately to mind as I stand here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 147-16(3):
ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS IN
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to ask questions of the Minister for refocusing government. I'm wondering what boards and agencies do we have that actually have elected members, democratically elected members. I know the two education boards in Yellowknife. Are there others in the Northwest Territories?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education has elected boards for the most part. The one exception I believe exists was the arrangements made in Fort Smith where the DEA patterned itself under the health board arrangement where there were two seats for the band, two for the Metis, and two for the general public. But for the most part education boards are elected and health boards are appointed. And the LHO boards, as well, I believe are appointed.

MR. BROMLEY: I think these elections are important parts of our democratic process. I think also that particularly in education, the area the Minister has identified, this is a way we can find passionate and truly dedicated people. The statements I've seen by the Minister, the outright statements and insinuations, is that we would get rid of all these democratically elected positions and move to appointments. Does the Minister not agree that this would be a loss of engagement with our public? A loss of the civil input, civil society role for meaningful input and the passion that we really want in our education?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There have been no insinuations. I have stated clearly right from the start, and consistently, that the issue of elected versus appointed has yet to be determined. That the structure that we currently have has a mix and as we move forward with board reform, that would be one of the issues that would have to be debated and decisions made on the most appropriate type of structure. Are there other hybrid models? There's some appointed seats, there are some guaranteed seats, there's a number of options out there that have yet to be considered.

MR. BROMLEY: Perhaps I have been misreading the statements, as have many other people. I'm wondering, just for clarity, is the Minister equally interested in comments on elected versus appointed memberships on these boards and agencies and will he actively seek input on that specific question of democratic elections?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Going forward from April those questions would have to be discussed. The whole issue of all the work done to cost out some of the Collective Agreement issues, pension issues, would have to be looked at. The discussion about the concept and if that's not the right concept what is the plan, there are a number of significant issues that would have to be addressed going forward. April is just one of the first milestone dates. We had given ourselves to 2010-2011 to work through the planning, design, and implementation. After April we will be looking at those decisions and further consultations.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That hasn't clarified the process here to me. Just for clarity, will the Minister be providing the public with the information necessary for them to be able to comment prior to April 1st or is our public to remain mute until April 1st and then they can look at the results and comment thereafter?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We've laid out the work we're trying to get concluded by April so that we can have that fulsome discussion about next steps. The issue of the debate over some of these fundamental issues is yet to be had. The debate over and looking at some of the numbers and costs that are tied into some of the broader issues with collective agreements and implementation and the costing have yet to be had. So the assurance to the Member is that we look forward and plan on further consultation and debate on those fundamental issues, recognizing once again that there is going to be, in all probability, regional differences as there are regional differences that currently exist.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 148-16(3):
BOARD REFORM CONSULTATION PROCESS

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the community that I come from, Tulita, I asked the Tulita Housing Association if they understand the Board Reform Initiative and if they do, whether or not they agree with it. The members of the housing association said no, they don't understand it, and no, they don't agree with it. So I'm asking the Minister here, in terms of his consultation policy, what it will take for him -- and he's giving some indications by April -- as to how to go forward in terms of this reform initiative. This consultation process between now and April, just one community of Tulita -- I represent five communities -- the consultation process in terms of communicating with the people in their aboriginal language and in their second language of

English, can the Minister assure me that this process will happen in the meaningful way that it's intended to be?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are seven weeks left. I have asked them to lay out all the work that we're going to conclude, the consultations that we're going to try to undertake in the next seven weeks, taking into consideration as well that we're going to be in this House until March 13th. We recognize very clearly going forward after April the next phase, once we decide on how we move forward, that there's going to be more consultation required, probably broader consultation once we get things clarified in terms of general direction.

MR. YAKELEYA: I would like to ask the Minister, the Tulita Housing Corporation said no, the Fort Good Hope community says no, the Sahtu Regional Health Board and education board have said no. What part of "no" on this board reform does the Minister not understand? The people in the Sahtu do not want...

---Applause

I ask the Minister what it will take for this House here to tell the Minister to cease and desist on the health board initiatives from the Sahtu people. What will it take?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We're back to the fundamental question. If the Legislature decides that board reform is totally off the table for this Assembly and it will be dealt with at a later date by a different Assembly, that's a very fundamental question. If it's a question of board reform, but not this type of board reform, then we have to have that discussion about how to best move forward on the broad issue of board reform to not lose sight of that goal as a priority of the 16th Assembly. So this Legislature will be determining the next steps.

MR. YAKELEYA: The people of Colville Lake have a dire need for basic services and programs in their community. This proposal, the majority of this Assembly says yes, we will look at a model, will the reform look at the community of Colville Lake to get basic care for dental, nursing, social workers, mental health workers as right now they're fighting strongly for it. Will this do that for them? Because right now, the way it is, this structure here will certainly deter services farther from Colville Lake than ever. I have not yet seen any type of evidence in terms of how this proposal is going to help my people in the Sahtu.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few days ago we concluded the health budget. It's over \$300 million; about 25 percent of the territorial budget. This issue of board reform deals with administration, finance, and governance. The health programs and needs that the Member talks about, the requirements for further enhanced services are all issues that are being dealt with through the health budget, through the education budget for education issues, through the housing budget where there are additional funds. What this particular initiative concentrates on is trying to rationalize the governance structure and look for efficiencies when it comes to finance and admin. It does not detract from the importance of the issues that the Member is raising, but those will continue to be dealt with through the program and budgeting processes and business planning processes that now exist with the Department of Health and Social Services.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister has alluded to, the Health and Social Services budget I know the majority of funding where it's spent. We all just check the records where this money is spent in terms of funding for health and social services issues. I would ask the Minister in terms of this reform initiative here, in terms of going forward here, that the Minister has talked with the self-government negotiating tables in our communities in terms of what is it that he's trying to do. We are trying to get power back to the people to make decisions in our communities for our people. This government here is taking power away from people. So it's going against what we have been fighting for, for many years. Has the Minister talked to the self-government communities in terms of their self-government arrangements in terms of programs that we're fighting for in our communities?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We believe that this initiative is going to affect with the clarity and efficiencies we think we will realize if the board reform is done properly in whatever the final configuration is should lead to better and stronger support of the community and regional level. We also acknowledge, and from the very start and continue to acknowledge, that as self-government discussions and negotiations continue and as they're decided, then of course the structures in the regions where these agreements are negotiated will reflect the final content of the self-government agreements.

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

QUESTION 149-16(3):
ROLE OF MINISTER IN
BOARD REFORM DISCUSSION

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the Ministers' statements earlier today and I was impressed that the three Ministers -- Housing, Health and Social Services, and Education -- actually broke their silence on board reform.

AN HON. MEMBER: Finally.

MR. RAMSAY: Finally. I think it's about time that they stood up and are held accountable for their support of this Board Reform Initiative. I want to begin by asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if he's not going to defend the interest of the DEAs that are out there, the school boards, the parents, and the children in our Territory, who else is going to defend their interests at that Cabinet table?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly in my role as the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment I will be defending my department on a moving-forward basis, making sure that programs are not impacted. We are going to continue with the program delivery in all schools, all 33 communities that we serve.

MR. RAMSAY: The next question I have for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment is I would like to know who wrote his Minister's statement today. Was it his department or was it the Refocusing Government committee?

---Interjection

AN HON. MEMBER: Cheap shot.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I do have staff in my department that I monitor and work closely with. Even though they write the Minister's statements for me, I go through it and do a double check. It's not board reform that wrote the statement for me.

MR. RAMSAY: That's good to know. In speaking to educators around the Territory, DEAs, school boards, and anyone, for that matter, people are having trouble understanding why the government is insistent in moving ahead with the Board Reform Initiative. By throwing education in with health, social services and housing we're taking a huge gamble on our future. Our future is the children of this Territory. I'm wondering why the Minister is willing to gamble the future of our Territory and the children here in the Territory by supporting an initiative like this board reform. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Member looked at it as gambling, but we look at it as cost efficiency and an effective way of operating. Just moving forward, we are compiling information. No decision has been made to date. That message needs to be clear. When April 1st comes along, that is the date that we will compile information and decide if we are going to move forward or not. The Members will be involved as well through the standing committee and the decision-making they will be involved in. Mahsi.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I am wondering if, as the Minister of Education, he has heard from any school board, DEA, or educator across this Territory that is in support of the current initiative underway by this government. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, we are receiving a lot of comments, issues and feedback on this moving-forward basis. The understanding is, yes, there needs to be a change, but what kind of change we don't know. I could say that there is support for change but the end product still will be seen after April 1st. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 150-16(3):
COST SAVINGS ASSOCIATED WITH
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister responsible for refocusing government. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of one of the government's mandate with this Board Reform Initiative to save money. Could the Minister tell me how much money will be saved? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister responsible for government refocusing, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the final analysis, we don't anticipate there is going to be any money saved, that there's going to be with the forced growth costs that the Members know are upon this in the social envelope with the annual growth rate up to this year of about 6 or 7 percent in health alone and any efficiencies that are realized, the forced growth in the program area will more than consume any potential efficiencies. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, just to get a sense of the thought process here, I would like to know how the plan structure of the amalgamated boards will accommodate this House and our ability to ask questions in the three disciplines and how the government plans on dealing with, obviously, some sort of a matrix reforming system with three Ministers and the boards. I am just trying to get a feel for what type of thinking is coming, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Refocusing Government Committee of which the Member is a party or sits on, there were some of the longer-term questions that we are going to have to resolve. This House will continue to have a very clear and defining role than it currently has. The main estimates will continue to be voted. The money will still be voted. Business plans will still be done. The regional boards currently are there already. They exist. We are talking about change, scope and mandate, but the role of this Legislature will continue to remain paramount. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, currently, many of the decisions made in these three areas of education, housing and health are made at the community level. If and when the planned board reform as proposed by this Minister comes to fruition, will there be any decisions to be made at the community level? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this initiative, which is trying to act on a priority at the 16th Assembly, is an initiative of the Cabinet. We anticipate that decisions will still be made at the community level with the rationalization of legislation and policy. Decision-making will hopefully be more efficient, the ability to do case management at the community level where there is often significant overlap with education, housing and health issues. They would hopefully be able to be facilitated and done even better. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there exists 67 different administrative structures to accommodate these three departments, as we were told here today. Has the Minister completed an analysis on how those administrative functions and structures will now work if the board reform is to continue? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, in the work plan that we laid out over the next seven weeks, some of that basic initial work on the concept is going to be completed by then. The modelling, the finance, the costs, those types of things, we have folks working on. That will be part of the discussion when we look at what is

concluded, complete and available for information in April as we collectively decide on the next steps. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 151-16(3):
BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I have questions for Minister Miltenberger as well. I was listening closely to Mr. Yakeleya's question and the response from Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Yakeleya's question was basically what is stopping you from stopping this. Minister Miltenberger's somewhat response is, if the Legislature decides. So, Mr. Speaker, I think this question could be put to rest today clearly and simply. Mr. Speaker, my question to Minister Miltenberger is, if this Legislature passed the motion today to stop board reform, would the Minister heed that recommendation and take it back to Cabinet to stop it immediately? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I am going to rule that as a hypothetical question. There is no indication. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 152-16(3):
CONSULTATION PROCESS WITH ABORIGINAL
GOVERNMENTS ON BOARD REFORM

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, in regards to my opening statement, I talked about the impacts this board reform will have on self-government negotiating talks up and down the valley. There are several tables in place. In my riding, there are two tables presently negotiating, the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in. Again, I think it should be their choice in regards to what type of structures that they would like to govern themselves going forward in the future. My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Roland. Has the government consulted with First Nations governments who are negotiating self-government and the impacts of board reform on those negotiating tables?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This initiative is one that we've discussed at the regional leaders meeting. In fact, when we had our regional leaders meeting in the Sahtu, we have also put on paper the other, internally for the government on consultation processes and each department will be using that process as we deal

with the issues around aboriginal governments of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, under the Gwich'in agreement, the whole principle of negotiations was that self-government negotiations will be addressed. The Gwich'in desired to have self-government exercises as close to the communities as possible. Mr. Speaker, I believe the board reform will totally take away those powers that we are trying to negotiate for powers in our communities, which again will establish these regional structures and take away those authorities we are trying to develop in our communities. I would like to ask the Premier or the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, is the government still living up to the obligations under the self-government agreements that we negotiated to allow self-government to be negotiated at the community level?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, this process that is being undertaken to review how we deliver programs and services in the Northwest Territories is not one that will stop, interfere or hinder with any self-government negotiation that is happening to date or in the future. The simple fact is, for self-governments, once they negotiate a claim, they would then draw down that authority where they have negotiated. So if it is particular with education or health and social services or justice, those areas that they have negotiated would be drawn down to the degree there were signatories to an agreement between the federal government, aboriginal governments or the Government of the Northwest Territories. This initiative does not interfere with that work. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe it will. As being a private negotiator with the Dene-Metis claim, the Gwich'in and the Sahtu, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Canada has always had the principle that you can only negotiate for existing programs and services and nothing more. So has the Government of the Northwest Territories changed that position? If so, is it in writing?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Once again, the Government of the Northwest Territories has not changed its position. We have not changed any legislation. This will not change the Education Act unless this Assembly agrees to change the government structure of that or the Territorial Health and Social Services Act. Again, unless this Assembly agrees to change the governance portion of that, and that is what the board reform is looking at, the governance side of it, the programming side, day-to-day delivery of education in our schools, day-to-day delivery of health care in our communities, is not going to be changed by this process. In fact, we are trying to make sure we

have enough revenue to keep what we have or try to enhance it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly the fear factor that is out there in our region. It is because we are negotiating self-government to govern ourselves and not depend on Yellowknife in the future. That is what self-government to us means. By you saying that basically we now will have to agree to seven boards in the Northwest Territories and you have to live with what the decision of this government is, that is a change in regards to the organization structure in our regions. Again, I would like to ask the Premier...That is a very crucial change in regards to the structure of governance in our regions which will have an effect of the outcome of our negotiations for land claims. I would like to make it clear to the Premier that the decision you are making here today will have a drastic affect on our land claims negotiations, but more importantly our own right to govern ourselves in our regions by this decision. Have you got a legal opinion from the Department of Justice or from Aboriginal Affairs what the legal ramifications of this decision are on those land claims negotiations and those agreements that this government signed?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, the fact is there is no change in our direction at the negotiation tables. The matters that are being discussed at the Deline table, the Tulita table, the Gwich'in table, the Inuvialuit table or the Dehcho table have consistently been on the table. None of those factors have been removed. What we are trying to do through this process is come up with all the information necessary for the next steps as Mr. Miltenberger laid out. Once this Assembly agrees what steps to take forward and if we are going to make some more changes, then we will take that to the appropriate tables -- I would think that, for example, to the regional aboriginal leadership -- and put that on the table and see if we can continue to work with them on implementing and improving our services. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 153-16(3):
ANALYSIS TO SUPPORT PROPOSED MODEL
FOR BOARD REFORM

MS. BISARO: Like my colleagues on this side of the House and I think many members of the public, I am struggling to understand how this particular model that has been proposed was arrived at. My questions are addressed to the lead Minister for Refocusing Government committee, Minister Miltenberger. I would like to know how much

research and analysis and what kind of research and analysis was undertaken prior to the determination that this model that we are currently looking would be used to affect the board reform that we are talking about. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The lead Minister for refocusing government, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Tlicho model which has been in existence for probably at least 10 years has been one that the territorial government has been involved with throughout its development. It has won awards. It seemed to bring together in a way that supported the consensus model that allowed for integration of services for a small jurisdiction where we have not many people and the need to be efficient. It is one that we have a considerable history with. When we look at other things like territorial boards or the status quo, it seemed to be one in the North, designed in the North that had applicability outside of the Tlicho region. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I thank the Minister for the answer, but I am afraid I would have to agree to disagree with him, unfortunately, again. It seems to me that there was no analysis or research. The Tlicho Services Board model was looked at. It was determined that it was the best one. There was no other option presented for Regular Members and for the public to look at. So again I want to ask the Minister, other than looking at ideas which were presented perhaps by other members on the Refocusing Government committee and the Tlicho Services model, what research was done to determine that this model should be the one that has gone forward in the proposal? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I would just be restating or repeating the answer that I just gave to the Member. Clearly, April is a milestone date we have targeted to see where we go from here. The Tlicho model is a made-in-the-North model that we looked at and we think had applicability. Our initial concept was to move that forward and that is what we have done, recognizing and building in the milestone date of April. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess I will have to take that answer as no, there was no research or analysis done. I would like to ask the Minister why, in that case, when a model was proposed that the consultation, such as it is, that is currently being undertaken, why was there not a number of options presented? Why was one model or option presented as the way to go and people asked to comment on that one? Why were there not four, five or six different models proposed and people asked for comment on that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully disagree that there wasn't enough work or research done. It may not meet the regular standards that the Member had in mind, but we did enough, in our opinion, to move forward with a model. We decided to pick a model that already had a track record in the North that looked to hit a lot of what we would see as key points and abilities to build, to integrate service, to be able to streamline governance, streamline finance and administration, look at the ability to do better work on the case management approach. Based on those factors, a decision was made to advance the initial phase with this particular model. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the answer, I think. I guess I really don't understand why a decision was made to go with one model when there are opinions being sought from Regular Members, from members of the public, from board members, et cetera. I guess to ask the Minister again, what rationale did you use to determine that it was up to either Cabinet or the Refocusing Government committee to pick this one particular model and not allow other options out there for the public to comment on? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this process was stretched out with a long timeline to 2010-11, recognizing that there was going to be a lot of work to get us from where we start to where we may end up with the issue of board reform. We are not precluding those types of discussions at this point. We took the first step to say, here's a model we think has applicability and we have been doing the work to get us to April that will give all the information for us collectively to talk about and look at to decide on next steps. If it is not that model, not that approach, then what approach and if the broader discussion is as a Legislature, we want to collectively put off the table the whole issue of board reform, then come April, I suppose that would be a discussion we could have in this House today during the time that we are going to be sitting here. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 154-16(3):
PROPOSED MODEL FOR BOARD REFORM

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister says that his research and analysis for coming forward with this 70 to seven regional super board model came from watching the Tlicho model over the last 10 years. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Tlicho people and some of the wonderful

things they have done in that constituency, surely the Minister would recognize the fact that the Tlicho Community Services Board serves one group of people, the majority by far from one nation, who speak the same language, who have one large central community and three outlying smaller communities. How did he think we were going to transpose that to a region like Yellowknife finds itself in or Hay River finds itself in? How were we going to overcome those differences? I mean, was no thought given to the fact that the Tlicho region is actually extremely unique in terms of its makeup? How could he think you could transpose that model to these other extremely diverse regions? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The lead Minister for refocusing government, the Honourable Michael Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This model, the Tlicho model, is not one that's necessarily one that's based on ethnicity or having homogeneousness to the population. We recognize that there are unique characteristics in every region. What we're talking about is a governance structure that has applicability. We believe, where we currently have regional boards of governance now in every region, either one or two, dealing with education and health, we believe that we could integrate the current...use the current board structure, expand the scope and integrate the program delivery oversight into that structure, that we believe with the appropriate policy reviews and legislation changes would lead to a more effective delivery of programs, streamlining the governance admin allowing us better case management. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, part of this approach has also been premised on the theory that it's kind of a one-stop window for people who come in contact with government through their need for housing, education or health. You know that basically we're serving those three agencies, or those three departments are serving the same clients. Mr. Speaker, I think that is another ill-conceived premise. I would like to know from the analysis that the Minister and his committee has done how many people are actually in that category. Because you know, for myself, I don't have a housing issue, I don't have an education issue, I don't even have any kids in school anymore, and for now, I don't have any health issues. So how was this idea that somehow we were going to have this consolidated approach to all these constituents? How many constituents in the Northwest Territories do each of those departments deal with collectively? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the clientele for housing,

education and health are very common. We have small communities where, for example, the predominant form of accommodation in the smaller communities is housing. We know -- I know from personal experience, having worked in Health and Social Services -- that when there are health issues or social service issues there tends to be a related housing issue. If there are troubles in school, if there's not enough food on the table, if there's alcohol abuse in the home, if there's FASD, that these services link. Our intent was to be able to have that case management facilitated to a greater degree than it is currently, where we would have a structure that would encourage social workers and the housing people and the educators to be able to come around the table to try to sort out issues, pool their resources, avoid duplication and those type of areas.

Anybody that has been blessed with good health should be very grateful and I hope that the Member continues to be healthy. There are many, many people in our jurisdictions that struggle. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you and I really appreciate the Minister's well wishes towards me.

Going back to the issue of analysis and how we're going forward with this, the issue of changing legislation, all of our boards and agencies in the Northwest Territories are creatures of our legislation. We've had a piece of legislation we've been trying to get to -- the Wildlife Management Act -- for 10 years. We don't have the people to write the legislation; we don't have the workforce to...I'm just wondering what kind of analysis went into what the cost would be to put in place changes to existing legislation, overarching legislation, which would then see these new structures operate within that legislation. What's the costing on something like that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We shared with the Members and we put on the executive website the work plan over the next seven weeks. The work that's currently underway, a lot of it is going to bring us those figures; the modeling costs, the transition costs, the potential implementation costs, some of the human resource issues. We'll look at it at that point. Those are legitimate issues that we have to look at and intend to address moving forward. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: So all of the preliminary analysis was based on one model and all of the serious analysis that we're asking about is going to happen in the next seven weeks. Mr. Speaker, I have to ask this Minister why would you launch a plan or a model or a scenario with none of that stuff

having been done? This whole initiative should be dubbed failure to launch, because, yet again, another ill-conceived, ill-prepared idea thrown out there into the public. Why wasn't the research done in advance before putting this out? Thank you.

---Applause

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, there has been about a decade or so of work: Strength at Two Levels; the Cuff report; the Deloitte Touche report on governance, on boards; the work done by the Boards and Agencies committee; the recommendations for a whole host of different approaches to how we deliver services in the regions. We looked at all that. All that was there. It's all documented. There are hundreds of thousands of dollars going back to the last century with the Minister of the time -- I believe it was Minister Ng -- started with a \$400,000 report. Over the last 10 years I would suggest we probably spent a couple million dollars studying this issue. We've looked at all that. We've looked at things like experiences that people have had in the business. We've looked at the Tlicho model and we made some decisions to move forward. There is no easy way to do this type of process that's going to cause restructuring, that's going to change the status quo when it involves so many boards and so many people. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

QUESTION 155-16(3):
BENEFITS OF BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is for the Minister of refocusing government. What's the benefit from doing this if there's no cost savings? Why? Was there any time on this and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The lead Minister for refocusing government, the Honourable Michael Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to let my colleague...(inaudible)...

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, this issue is trying to improve the governance, improve how we deliver the service which would improve the service, we believe, to individual community members. At one time or another every program area has struggled with the governance structure, with deficits, with other issues, with rental arrears, with cost overruns, with those types of things. To say if the system is not broke, why would we want to fix it? The constant concerns we get about health, housing, education

are the top three in this government and have been in the 14 years that I've been here, usually with housing at the top followed a close second by health and then education. We have to look at all these particular factors and how we're spending our money. As just a finance context here, we are moving in, we are in one of the most difficult times financially since the Great Depression, and things are continuing to get worse daily. We are going to be charged to be as effective, as efficient as we can. For those factors is why we thought we wanted to move on this and it's been identified as an initiative of the 16th Assembly. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Minister, how will this benefit my constituents of Nunakput other than getting headaches worrying? Let the different boards take care of themselves and let us take care of our own people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the intent is to facilitate the things we've been talking about in this House with case planning, the ability to better coordinate the decision-making, to thin out the financial admin overhead in the governance, to put as much money possible at the program level recognizing that we are always going to be challenged with more needs than our resources. It's for those reasons that we believe that this board reform will, if done right, improve how services are delivered at the community level. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 156-16(3):
CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR
PROPOSED BOARD REFORM

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister indicated that he has roughly about seven weeks before we decide as to go/no-go or to go forward in terms of this seven weeks to put some discussions on the table in the regions; 70 boards into seven. Can the Minister outline to me exactly the process that the people in the Sahtu region can satisfactorily say, yes, we had a meaningful consultation in terms of looking at this initiative here and we think that this is the way to go? Can the Minister safely say in seven weeks here, come back and say I had a meaningful consultation where people in my communities are saying today no to this initiative. What would make them change their minds in terms of this seven weeks' length here?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The lead Minister for refocusing government, the Honourable Michael Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, we've laid out the timeline to 2010-11. We have a very intensive amount of work that we're going to conclude by April. I can commit to the Member that as board reform proceeds past April there will be a very thorough consultation process built in to take forward whatever the final decision is on next steps. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member supplementary questions. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has indicated that in April he will have some other discussions. I guess what I'm asking here in terms of building from the community from the bottom up and looking at initiatives here in the Sahtu region. I guess I'm asking in terms of what or how many more red flags does this government need, and this Minister need to say this is a no-go process here, we should be looking at something else other than board reform in terms of it moving forward with this government.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the issue of board reform or not is a decision we can make in this House. Decision of board reform, but not 70 to seven but some other configuration is also a decision. We've been moving to respond to a priority of the 16th Legislative Assembly. We've put forward a concept. We've been doing the work to prove it up. April has been determined as a date and the Member will be fully involved in April when we do this review. It's been indicated that there is a motion coming forward; we'll be looking to see what that says. It will help clarify the next steps. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I would again request to the Minister in terms of what in theory sounds good but in practical reality is not very good for our region or for the people in the Northwest Territories in terms of this initiative. When the Minister took the Agencies and Boards committee's recommendations on the inventory, what process did he fail to allude to the Regular Members in the communities that we're now looking at a Board Reform Initiative? There was a gap missing there. What steps has the Minister not taken?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, we believe at this point we've taken the steps that we can to advance this initiative. We've built in a milestone date, there's a tremendous amount of work being done. All the senior people from all the involved departments have been involved in the work. We've sent out hundreds of packages. We've crossed the land, in terms of consulting. I've been to a number of regions and met with boards, health and education, so has the Premier, so have the

Ministers. We recognize that there's more work to be done after April, once we decide on next steps. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 7 on the orders, oral questions. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 157-16(3): CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR PROPOSED BOARD REFORM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for Minister Miltenberger, Minister for refocusing government. I'd like to ask the Minister what meaningful work and consultation has been done with the boards to find efficiencies prior to taking the singular approach of a board roll-up. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Lead Minister for refocusing government, the Honourable Michael Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, for my entire time in this Assembly the boards, like every other part of government, has worked with the government-of-the-day to hit the various targets as we struggled with efficiencies, as we struggled with deficits. The first budget of this Assembly is a case in point where we had to struggle with reductions. All the boards were involved in their respective areas along with the rest of government. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister saying that no consultation about this approach was taken in advance to discuss, design, find efficiencies prior to the roll-up decision? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The issue of efficiencies within the current structures have been looked at as we've done business from Assembly to Assembly, depending on the fiscal circumstances. We took this on and there has been 10 years of work. I've laid out some of the reports that have been done: the Strength at Two Levels, the Cuff report, there was a report back to the 13th Assembly, the Deloitte Touche report. This is some of the work that has been done all for many hundreds of thousands of dollars. We've, as well, brought this up in the House with statements, it was

reviewed in committee. There has been a lot of lead up to this. This is not an issue that just came on to the table. It's been with us now for a decade or so. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 7, oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 15-16(3): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Public Utilities Board 2008 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 11-16(3): BOARD REFORM DIRECTION

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, February 20, 2009, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that the Cabinet set aside its decisions and assumptions about board reform;

And further, that the Cabinet initiate a process without a predetermined end point, with full public input, to find efficiencies that improve the effectiveness of government processes and board structures, and that the benefits and disadvantages that may be associated with changes to board structures be discussed with Northerners, GNWT employees and managers, First Nations, aboriginal governments and other community leaders, and Members of this House, with the intent of openly and constructively working towards a viable solution satisfactory to all northern residents.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Motions

MOTION 11-16(3): BOARD REFORM DIRECTION CARRIED

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS all Members of this House are interested in the ongoing pursuit of efficiencies in government as stated in the priorities of the 16th Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS many kinds of efficiencies are best determined by program staff and other employees and should not be imposed on organizations;

AND WHEREAS there are currently some examples of boards which have a long history of efficient, effective, democratic, and fiscally responsible performance that do not need reform;

AND WHEREAS the Premier established a Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee, which was followed by Minister Miltenberger launching the Board Reform Initiative with a predetermined end point on seven regional services boards;

AND WHEREAS the Cabinet has not considered other options for board reform nor adequately consulted with education, health, and housing stakeholders, First Nations, aboriginal governments, and other community leaders;

AND WHEREAS the Cabinet has not undertaken any detailed analysis of the implications of the proposed board reform;

AND WHEREAS all Members know there will be numerous legislative amendments and legal challenges, significant costs, important implications for employees, complex negotiations to harmonize arrangements within self-government agreements, and the loss of principles which are fundamental to existing boards;

AND WHEREAS Northerners and current board members are very concerned about the proposed direction taken by Minister Miltenberger and the Cabinet;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that the Cabinet set aside its decisions and assumptions about board reform;

AND FURTHER, that the Cabinet immediately initiate a process without a predetermined end point with full public input to find efficiencies that improve the effectiveness of government processes and board structures, and that the benefits and disadvantages that may be associated with changes to board structures be discussed with Northerners, GNWT employees and managers, First Nations, aboriginal governments, and other community leaders, and Members of this House with the intent of openly and constructively working towards a viable solution satisfactory to all Northern residents.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I'm going to remind the visitors in the gallery once more of the rules of visitors in the gallery is to hold their applause. A motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring this motion forward today as the chair of the Priorities and Planning committee. This motion as put together by all Members of the P and P committee and I merely bring it forward as their chair. To that end I will conclude the debate on this motion, but I would defer to my colleagues to begin to speak to the motion and I will speak at the end.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I obviously stand here today in full support of the motion that is before us for a variety of reasons, many of which I have outlined in this House since we have been back to work here. I'll just go over a few more of them, if I could.

I've been in politics, in elected office, for over a decade now and five years here in this House in my role as MLA for Kam Lake. Decisions have been made here in this consensus style of government. We call it a consensus government, but the decisions seem to be made by Cabinet. When I talk about Cabinet I think it's a couple of Cabinet Ministers that make decisions. The rest of Cabinet seem to follow along.

If you ask me what is wrong with consensus government and why we've gone down the path with proposed changes to supp health and now board reform, the reason is quite simple: Cabinet does not have free votes; they do not have a voice of their own. Each Cabinet Minister has to be muzzled by those that are pushing their own agenda. I think that in itself is something this Legislature really needs to come to terms with. If we want to have true consensus government here in the Northwest Territories we need to address that. We need to open up the barriers that exist on that side of the House. We need to allow free votes. We need to have each Minister over there able to speak their mind and able not to be fearful of retribution from any other Cabinet Minister or Members on this side of the House. We have to have that open communication and votes. I think that's paramount. To me that is the big part of the problem that has been taking place here over the last 16 months or so.

The issues on board reform...I've talked about the diversity of regions and I don't support the one-size-fits-all approach that the government seems intent on delivering. I think if the government wasn't so lazy they could get out and do the work; they could tailor make a solution for each region by working with the MLAs, by working with the organizations in the various regions, and come up with a solution. Yes, there are efficiencies out there. But by just taking this heavy-handed approach on board reform and suggesting that the Tlicho model is a model that's going to fit everywhere, it's not going to work that way. It certainly won't work here in Yellowknife. I would fight for the institutions that are here in Yellowknife to the end. If Cabinet wants to pursue board reform, they're going to have a fight on their hands. That can be for sure.

I also appreciated my colleague Mr. Krutko talking about impending self-government and the fact that this may have some impact in that area as well. I believe the government has some work to do there, and Mr. Krutko talked about a legal review of that and I agree with him. I think the government should be looking at that.

I also believe that the consultation that's taken place on this is so suspect and full of holes it's laughable. Really it is laughable. How the government could come out with a list of nine questions, most of them presumptive, send them out to some organizations and call that consultation, that's not consultation. It's telling people what you're going to do; not listening to them and not taking their advice on what they believe should happen. I think the government, like I said in my Member's statement, has to take a lesson in consultation and what it means to really engage the public in a meaningful way. Not just the public, but the Members on this side of the House.

We've been down that road a couple weeks ago with the motion that was before the House. We don't want to have to go there again. Believe me, we don't want to have to go there. I hope the government got the point and the message a couple weeks ago. This board reform is much the same as the supp health benefits proposed changes. No research. No analysis. You just threw it out there and people have enough things to worry about in their day-to-day lives than to be concerned about what the government's going to try to do to them next. I think it's an affront to the institutions that are out there. I don't believe the government has met with the organizations, the DEAs, the school boards. I don't think they've met with them in a consultative way. I think it's been intimidation, fear, and that's not the way for a government to operate.

I certainly will be supporting the motion that's before us today. When Ministers get a chance, and I hope they do, I hope they get a chance to stand up here today in front of all the people who have gathered here in this House, and people who are watching on TV, and say whether or not they support Cabinet's direction to move ahead with board reform to go from 70 to seven boards. I spoke of it earlier. I was glad to see the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Housing stand up in this House...

AN HON. MEMBER: Finally.

MR. RAMSAY: Finally...and say something about board reform. Like I said earlier to the Minister of Education, if they're not going to protect the institutions that are out there, the parents, the families, the children, the sick, the infirm, somebody has to do it. If they're not going to do it, who is? The only Minister earlier today that made a Minister's statement that said they supported the Board Reform Initiative was Minister McLeod, the Minister of the Housing Corporation. I didn't hear the Minister of Health and Social Services say she supported it. I didn't hear the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment say he supported it. When they do get a chance, please, folks, stand up and say whether or not you support board reform as proposed by this current Cabinet.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It takes a long time to get things to work. It takes a long time to get people to feel comfortable with their local organizations and agencies. In the Beaufort-Delta we are no different from anyone else.

We have local housing organizations that work pretty well. Yes, sometimes there are issues and challenges where sometimes things could work better.

We have to work with regional health and social services boards, which includes a person from each community. Yes, and we have hard times staying in the budget. Most health authorities do. Yes, they have difficult times staffing its positions. What health organization has an easy time staffing?

We have a divisional education board and our education results are improving as results improve across the NWT.

How does a new or larger board manage a deficit better than the existing board? How come the new board would have more success at staffing its positions than the existing board? Why would the people become more effective because they work for a new or larger board?

Most people in the Beaufort-Delta know that things don't get better simply because some changes are made at the top. Things don't get better because people change offices. Things don't get better simply because someone gets a new computer. Yet all those changes cost a lot of money. Adding new employees to the public service, getting them in the GNWT computer services such as PeopleSoft, financial management systems, co-locating of office buildings. People don't want to see money spent on this. People want the money spent on front-line services, better programs and schools, more local health services and more for seniors' homes.

When the government keeps pushing a bad idea, the government starts to get a bad name. Many people think the Board Reform Initiatives are a bad idea. Many people are telling me that the government is starting to get a bad name. People are starting to give up and look elsewhere to put their energy and ideas. We need those people to work in their local organizations, to give those organizations their energy and ideas. When the government starts to get a bad name it reflects poorly on all Members, not just Cabinet Ministers.

Let's stop Board Reform Initiatives. Let's start working on finding ways to improve our services at the front line. I want to give government a good name in Nunakput communities and I will be supporting the motion.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this is such a significant shift in government

institutional change that it will have a major effect on the Government of the Northwest Territories' ability to deliver programs and services, but more importantly to integrate those services into seven boards.

As I stated earlier, we have some 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. We have different institutions by way of housing authorities and DEAs. We also have regional bodies by way of divisional boards and regional health boards. I think as a government we realize that everyone has a significant role to play. I think we have to treat each one independently of the whole.

I think there are pros and cons to how we're going to get there. Regardless if we have workshops, town hall meetings, regional conferences, we have to take the time and do it right. There are pros to doing everything, but there are cons as well. Making sure you get the checks and balances to ensure that we don't find ourselves with court challenges and avoiding the legal ramifications of collective agreements and what the implications are going to be on the residents of the Northwest Territories on the basic programs and services they depend on.

Being here since the 13th Assembly, going on 12 years, we had some grand ideas back then too in regard to consolidation of three departments into one. Today, going back 12 years, those three bodies are now back in place, independent of each other, because we made a mistake. I think we should learn from our mistakes and not continue to do them over and over.

At the bottom, at the end of it all, I think we have to realize that everything to run a government, to run programs and services, costs money. If the goal at the end of the day is to improve programs and services for the Territory as a whole with regard to looking at those areas where cost savings can be met, I think every resident in the Northwest Territories will follow behind us. But if it ain't going to do that, no one can be convinced otherwise.

With that, I will be supporting this motion and I look forward to working with my colleagues and the people of the Northwest Territories to improve the quality of programs and services in the Northwest Territories. I move forward, but move forward cautiously in regard to a major decision we're all going to have make and live with for the rest of our days.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about this being the

wrong approach. I'm reminded by Steven Cubby when he talks about begin with the end in mind. I questioned myself as to what the Minister decided at the very start as to where we're going on this initiative. Did he decide that he's going to eliminate all these boards? Or did he decide that he was going to strive for efficiencies? I would say he certainly didn't get the second one right. I think he strived to eliminate boards and I think that is the wrong process.

He has said on record that there will be no efficiencies. So where will we get better services and better quality by rolling up the boards? I can't see a single one.

I see no shame or loss of respect if this Minister and this Cabinet pulls this off the table today. I see that they speak clearly and hear clearly what the people really want by saying no, we were wrong, we'll not proceed by doing this.

Clearly this will be a shotgun marriage. Who are we kidding? If you put housing, education, and health together it's going to lead to nothing but fighting between these organizations over resources. Who is going to stare the housing representatives down and say sorry, you can't have more money for cancer treatment because we want more gym time. They'll say, well, do you not care about people? Those are the type of fundamental questions I don't want this new board to struggle with. Should we worry about health or should we worry about education? What about those people who need housing?

This will bring significant principle errors to the way we should be treating our people. We should be treating them with respect and we should be giving them the leadership they want. They want boards representing them. They want duly elected boards.

What's on the table today I think ignores everything that people have fought for. They've fought for grassroots leadership within their community on the issues they care about. This is one example of how to take it away.

Mixing mandates will never solve anything. We've clearly identified that there will be no cost savings. This will not identify efficiencies in any way. If the Minister wanted to deal with this issue up front he could have quite simply had a coffee with many of these boards and said, look, we want to work better together. How can we do this together? In my questions today all I heard was we've talked about this initiative for 10 years. I've not heard where in the last year the Minister's gone over to one of the education board chairs, maybe a health board chair, and said, look, how do we work better together? Is it about money? If it is, then just say that. If it's about process, just say that.

I haven't heard one iota today or in the last six months about how we can serve the people better on this initiative. I've heard about how we can complicate this, about how we can frustrate people, about how we can annoy the heck out of them, and certainly we've done that.

I don't support this initiative that's going forward. I think it would be a mistake. If we want to worry about just the principle of efficiencies, then I think we can sit down together and talk about working together closer in a smarter way rather than rolling them all up and calling them a super board. At the end of the day all you're going to do is continue frustration and anguish, and that's what we're going to end up with and that's not where I want to be.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ladies and gentlemen in the gallery, I know there are people coming and going all the time and I know that some of you are very interested in the issues being discussed here and are very passionate about this issue, but I would remind you again to respect the rules of the gallery and refrain from applauding. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier today I have become quite concerned that the initial common agreement in this House that we should look at board and agency reform has changed from support to this side of the House being completely left behind. There is a number of reasons for this, but one is, of course, again the communications issue and the engendering of unnecessary angst and frustration with our public for the lack of communication and for the lack of meaningful information on which to base a public consultation. The word that is out there so far completely fails to recognize regional differences and completely fails to recognize where there has been successful operations for decades. The democratic issue is something I once again raised in question period and needs to be addressed.

I think, probably, Mr. Speaker, the best way that I could approach what we need here is to talk about a different process. That is what I would like to see and what I hope to achieve with this motion. I would like to see the Minister produce an analysis of the seven regions. What are the characteristics of those regions? What are the commonalities and what are the unique differences? Perhaps a first attempt even at identifying the opportunities within those regions, recognizing their differences. I would like to see him characterize the population, the cultural resources, the professional resources in those regions and bring that out in a format that the public can read and respond to. In identifying

opportunities that are actually appropriate for regions, I would like to see the Minister actually discuss options rather than one-size-fits-all and rather than just one option for the region. Let's give people something to really respond to meaningfully.

I would like to see this sort of report then vetted with the public, because obviously they have a lot of resources to bring to this issue, and see that incorporated into the analysis and then once again a further crystallization of the opportunities that we can detect. I would like to have departments detail their requirements and debate and refine that internally before once again taking it to the public for review, giving the public meaningful information. I would like to see some costing analysis of some of the opportunities that are identified and again internally reviewed and debated and with input from this side of the House, and again making this information available for public review and input.

Finally, I would like to see this information seek out cross-regional commonalities. Take what this process would produce, seek where there are commonalities, and could be dealt with on a larger scale, and then make proposals available; proposals that acknowledge and respond to actual regional characteristics and opportunities, real opportunities.

I have mentioned public review a number of times here and we have already heard lots of comments on that, Mr. Speaker, but public consultation needs to be comprehensive, well thought out, well scheduled and with a sincere attempt to seek and facilitate meaningful, informed and thoughtful input from Northerners, community leaders, members of boards and agencies, aboriginal governments and organizations, GNWT employees and managers, and Members of this House. This is an opportunity once again for this government to show they are hearing the voice of the people to make that decision, and to actually come out, in the longer terms, with a better product. Again, I stress that we started in common agreement, but somehow this government has left this side of the House, and certainly the public, far behind and we need to go back and correct that situation so that we can get really good input and come up with a good product. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. The honourable Member from Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting this motion as well. In regard to addressing the motion, it is very difficult to know where to start. Like the supplementary health benefits proposal, this particular board reform proposal is wrong in so many places that I really

don't know where I should start to speak against it, so I will just start and carry on.

I have said before, and I think I said earlier today, that some board reform is necessary. I believe that we have too many boards and that there ought to be some consolidation of boards and we ought to try and find some efficiencies amongst the particular board system that we have. But I never imagined that any board reform would be like this, and I feel that the Minister and the Cabinet are naive to think that this is going to work.

I would like to acknowledge the work that was done by previous Assemblies and from previous studies, apparently there is a lot of work out there. The Minister of refocusing government didn't actually give us an opportunity to see some of that work. We were given one model to look at and to try to respond to, and it is unfortunate that we didn't get several different models to look at and to try and analyze. Several people have mentioned, what are we trying to fix? I haven't yet heard an answer to that question and I pose it again to the Minister, and I would love to hear an answer.

This particular model, in my view, is not going to work in all areas of the Territories. We are very diverse in general. In some areas we are quite homogeneous and in other areas we are not homogeneous at all. We are quite diverse, even within various regions. The Tlicho model works quite well there, but even that model has its difficulties. It is my understanding that the health and the education aspects of that particular service board, even though they are under one same board, have two separate year end dates for their financials. So it is not quite as easy as has been proposed, never mind that in some areas of our lovely Territory, we have perhaps two different, very opposing views of how either self-government should go or how certain things ought to be done. We are definitely not homogeneous everywhere.

It has been mentioned before and I want to mention it again, currently, particularly education boards have elected board members. I feel very strongly, as a former education board member, that if all board members on these boards are appointed, it could almost be seen as an infringement of rights, of rights of the individual, rights of the people within the region who are presumably represented by this huge board and the rights, basically, of the general public. It could even be extended down to the rights of children that we are trying to educate or look after their health or house. I feel that if we are going to go with appointed board members that it is going to remove some of the responsibility from the local people, who currently feel passionate, in particular about education, because we have a lot of elected board members for education. I think it removes a lot of opportunity for local input. Appointed

members don't have the same feeling of attachment to a board as those who are elected. Some do, but not all.

The last thing that probably I think is going to make it most difficult to accept appointed members is that I think they are going to end up turning into bureaucrats. We have an awful lot of good bureaucrats in our government and I don't want to speak badly of anyone in particular, but bureaucrats have a far different outlook than elected board members. I think that we are going to see these boards become boards of bureaucrats. They are going to think like bureaucrats and we won't get that representation from the ground up that we need. I think that, as a result, we are going to get an impact on the various health and housing issues that arise, because bureaucrats certainly look at things differently than, say, a parent does. So if we have an education issue and you look at it from a bureaucratic point of view versus from a parental point of view, they are very, very different. So I think what is going to happen is we are going to get an impact on what actually happens in our schools, in our health centres and in our housing offices and that is not a good thing.

By extension, that sort of impact in the schools and health centres is going to trickle down on to the clients of those; that is our kids, our patients, that is the people we are putting into our houses. So I am really concerned that we have to be extremely careful on how the boards are made up.

It has been mentioned -- I can't avoid mentioning -- that the combining of these three disciplines is going to be fraught with difficulties. There are legal issues. Education boards in Yellowknife, for instance, own property. Education boards in Yellowknife have the ability to tax. What is going to happen in that situation? It is going to take an awfully long time to work through some of those. The legislative issues have been mentioned. Those are going to take a long time, as well, and they are also going to be difficult to try and fix. There are staffing issues. We have different unions, even within the silo of education. Within those unions we have different contracts. We have different pensions. And presumably all these people who work for all these boards, these three disciplines, are going to be brought into the public service and all their contracts and all the elements of their contracts are going to be made homogenous. They're all going to be the same. Pretty big issue. There's going to be a huge cost associated with that. Staff working conditions differ. So those are probably going to change somewhat as well.

Most important for me is the focus is different. An education board has a different focus than a health board; a health board has a different focus from a housing office or local housing authority. To find

board members who are going to be able to take each of those focuses and be true to that focus when they're discussing a particular issue I think is going to be extremely difficult.

As well, we're going to find within these large boards that there's a grand temptation to move money from one section of the board to another. Particularly health is known as an entity that will just about drain anybody's pocketbook. It's been mentioned earlier by some of my colleagues, but I feel really strongly that there's going to be a huge pressure on these board members to transfer money from one segment of their board to another. And they'll be doing that presumably without any local input.

I mentioned in my Member's statement, I asked where the analysis, the research, the background information is. It may be there, but there's been no opportunity for certainly me as a Member and I think also members of the public to look at that research and for me to make my own decisions that, yes, this is the best model to go forward with. We have no proof that this is the best model. The background info that we were given basically is to me an op-ed piece. It's somebody's opinion. They've looked at a number of things and said, hmm, yes, here, and hmm, no, not there; yeah, okay, we'll go with number two. I don't call that research and analysis. I'm sorry.

There are huge costs associated with this amalgamation and board reform. Pay and benefits for staff, computers and IT systems -- that's been mentioned -- office renovations and relocation, and there's a cost of transition from the current system to a new system. I don't know that that's been considered, but that's going to be huge. As has been mentioned, there's a possible loss of jobs.

I have a particular concern about the North Slave regional board, which is going to be the area of Yellowknife and a little bit beyond. I have said before and I will say again, I think that a North Slave regional board is going to be a humongous entity. It's going to be the size of a government department and it's probably going to be run by a board of seven to 10 people, I'm guessing. That's an awesome responsibility on people who are appointed. They're not representing anybody in particular because they're not elected. And they're also not going to be there from day to day. I have a lot of concerns about how these board members are going to be able to deal with these three disciplines. What qualifications are we going to require of these board members? Are we going to take anybody off the street? Will they be able to do the job? Not that they...They probably will have the skills, but will they have the time and energy to deal with the problems that are going to arise?

I have seen briefly the presumed layout of the bureaucracy for this new board system. We're going to have a super board, it's been called, of chairs of the regional boards and we're going to create a new Minister. A Minister of Boards, I think is what it's going to be. So we're going to have another Minister who is responsible for the regional boards. But we're also going to have education Ministers and health Ministers and housing Ministers. I'm having a really difficult time figuring out how these four Ministers are going to deal with these three disciplines.

So to conclude, I'm very disappointed in how this particular proposed model has been brought forward. The consultation that has occurred, in my mind, is not consultation. Minister Miltenberger mentioned that this proposal was brought to Members at standing committee and, yes, it was. Most Members expressed grave concerns with the model as it was presented to us. We suggested what about looking at this particular way of doing it? What about looking at that particular way of doing it? Away they went and the next thing we heard from Cabinet was the same thing we heard the first time with no changes. So three times now I think we've probably been consulted. Well, twice we've been consulted, but three times we've heard the same message. I hardly call that consultation. The fact that we were presented with no options is a real concern for me. Again, we should have had a list of options that Members could consider and that the general public could consider, or we should have been presented with a blank page and said, here, fill it up for me, tell me what you think will work. We've had neither of those. Again, my disappointment is obviously showing.

In conclusion, I don't have much to add except to say that I am certainly not in support of this board reform proposal and I will be supporting the motion.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of this motion. To start I'd like to make some general comments on the Ministers' statements made earlier today as I believe they are relevant to the motion at hand.

With respect to the statements made by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, it was a nice statement. It didn't really say anything. While listening I didn't hear anything that would suggest the board reform is necessary or that education should be rolled into health and housing.

With respect to the Minister of Health and Social Services' statement, it did identify some reasons for reform; however, it also offered a better solution, in my mind. The Minister talked about the joint leadership committee. Personally I believe that one health and social services authority or board is a better direction for the provision of health and social services in the Northwest Territories than combining them with education and housing.

With respect to the comments of the NWT Housing Corporation Minister, we already know that rolling public housing subsidy into ECE was, and is, a disaster. The local housing organizations are experiencing major deficits which they didn't have before the change. Reinforcing an already bad decision by putting housing in with a super board is super bad.

Finally, with respect to the Premier's statements, he referred a lot to the need for change. It is my opinion that change for the sake of change is insane.

There's been a lot of talk, debate and concern raised about this government's direction on board reform. According to the unedited Hansard of February 16th, Minister Miltenberger said, "When we got together at the start of the 16th Legislative Assembly a key message for Members was that we need to get on with board reform." I remember it differently. I remember a significant amount of discussion on finding efficiencies within the government and our board structures. I remember talking about doing what's right for the NWT and working in the best interests of our residents. I remember discussions on how to ensure that we are getting maximum benefit from every dollar that we spend. I remember our strategic plan and its goals of having an effective and efficient government. I don't remember anybody talking about or suggesting that we gut the existing boards and combine them in super boards where conflicting mandates will have to struggle against each other on a daily basis. I know I would have remembered that conversation.

To me there are some things that we need to improve upon within the GNWT. Efficiencies must be found. With proper research, analysis, stakeholder engagement and modelling of alternatives this may even result in the reform of some boards. However, in the absence of any research stakeholder engagement or analysis, it's way too early to commit to any plan. It's time to take a step back and do the research and analysis. Let the findings of public consultation lead us into a direction that is in the best interest of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

When Minister Miltenberger first brought forward his plan for board reform and presented it to Priorities

and Planning, the committee, of all of us Regular Members, I was immediately concerned and definitely not convinced that it was a good idea or in the best interest of Northerners. I've been opposing the direction since that time and will continue to do so. I was very concerned that amalgamating the different mandates under one might cause us all to suffer. Health and Social Services is a beast and could easily become the focus of any board responsible for different mandates. This could easily result in the loss of focus or direction in the other areas of education and housing.

Another major concern was that the Refocusing Government committee had decided to apply one model -- the Tlicho model -- in all regions, reducing the number of boards from 70 to seven. The Tlicho model appears to work, although it's still going through some growing pains in the Tlicho region, because it was developed in partnership with the Tlicho Government based on how they wanted services provided in their region. It was developed with their input.

The important thing to remember here is that not every region is the same. All are unique and their differences and desires must be included in any changes that are put forward. Where the Tlicho model works in one area it does not mean it will work in all other areas. Yellowknife is a prime example. We have a regional health authority, two school boards with different mandates, and a number of housing boards -- Yellowknife and North Slave -- being thrown together. Combining these vastly different organizations together will hurt each and every one of them as they compete for combined resources. If the board members are more passionate about health care, then health care will take priority over education and housing will suffer. If the board members are more passionate about education, then health and housing will suffer. Simply, this can't work in Yellowknife or, in my opinion, the majority of the regions throughout the Northwest Territories. Blind devotion to a set model undermines the entire review process and ensures that the wrong model will be implemented. Once again it appears as though Cabinet has made the decision in the absence of sound evidence and research and are moving forward with what they believe is right, regardless of evidence and public input.

As indicated earlier, I believe that the reason the Tlicho model works in the Tlicho is because the Tlicho Government had an opportunity to participate in its design. They are the architects of their own model based on their own needs. As the individual aboriginal groups move forward with their own self-government models they may find that the Tlicho model works for them. However, given the uniqueness of every region, it's also fair to assume that they will desire a completely different and/or

unique model. They will want to be the architects of their own model based on their own needs, just like the Tlicho. I believe it's ignorant for this government to presuppose that we know what's best, to believe that we know what will work for the different self-governments. If we move forward with this model today we may have to completely tear it apart region by region once self-government agreements are reached and implemented. I believe that we would be better off engaging these aboriginal groups now and work towards the future. Do it once and do it right. Don't assume you know what's best and have government pay for going through a duplicate process later on.

In my opinion the direction of the Refocusing Government committee and Cabinet are proposing, with respect to board reform, is bad. Not just because of the serious lack of information, but due to timing. As a government we have far more important issues to be dealing with; things like devolution, resource revenue sharing, population growth -- or as we're experiencing, the lack thereof -- and our economy. The NWT is not immune to the global economic meltdown. We're feeling it more and more every day. Yesterday approximately 33 employees of Arctic Sunwest -- and I might be a little off on those numbers -- were laid off. In addition to those individuals, the 40 that were laid off from Tiffany's at their diamond polishing plant and the five more that were recently laid off from Arslanian's diamond plant, Yellowknife has seen a total of 78 people become unemployed in just three businesses in less than two months. The numbers of unemployed are increasing elsewhere as well. For instance, there has been a significant reduction in exploration in the Beaufort-Delta this winter resulting in more unemployed in that region as well. Is now really the time for us to be focusing on board reform? Are there not more pressing issues that are on our plate? Board amalgamation will result in elimination of positions. There's no way to deny that. People will be laid off as a result of board reform. Do we really need to be increasing the number of unemployed people in the Northwest Territories? Now? Given the economic realities?

There are opportunities to help stabilize our local economies and promote exploration and resource extraction. This should be our priority. So let's revisit our priorities and work to get Northerners working. Let's work to increase opportunities for employment in the NWT for current and new Northerners. Let's work to increase our population, which will ensure that our federal transfer payments go up, not down. Let's stop wasting time and chasing away people who we want to stay in the Northwest Territories. Let's be practical and do what's needed. Stop wasting time on things such as board reform that will do more damage to the Northwest Territories than it will do good.

Cabinet must discontinue board reform. Waiting until April when the Refocusing Government returns with the research and analysis based on their preferred model is not acceptable. We need to put our energies where they are required. Our people's employment and maintaining or increasing our population is far more important and timely. Threatening people with amalgamating boards is destructive and counterproductive. As we put our energies where they should be, we should also continue to pursue efficiencies within the system. To do this government must conduct meaningful research with no preconceived notions and actively engage stakeholders and residents of the NWT to identify potential areas for improving efficiency of government and boards and agencies. A plan that works for each region based on what is best for them, the government, and all of the residents of the Northwest Territories must be developed. In some cases I expect things to stay as they are. In others there is room for improvement.

A number of Fridays ago we all talked about working together and how important it is for consensus government. Today a majority has spoken very clearly on behalf of all residents of the Northwest Territories. I encourage Cabinet to look at our gallery, our very full gallery, and in our packed Great Hall and on the streets. People are speaking clearly. They want board reform to stop. It's now time for Cabinet to acknowledge what we are saying and what they are hearing on the streets. It's time for them to stop board reform.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would add my comments to the motion here. In our pursuit of looking for efficiencies in the Government of the Northwest Territories as stated in the 16th Assembly, certainly in terms of efficiencies, it has to do with the interpretation as efficiencies. When you look at the efficiencies of the government, certainly we all strive to see where we can do better.

In terms of the interpretation of efficiencies with this government, if you look at, for example, the McDonald's restaurant. They're pretty efficient in terms of operating their organization and how they serve the customers. I don't think in terms of efficiencies that that is the kind of services and programs that we want for our people in the Northwest Territories in terms of how to cut on money and how to cut on time and just to get the services across as quickly as possible.

We are having a hard time right now in our region in terms of programs and services. Now they're suggesting that maybe we should go into a super

board because of the efficiencies. The Minister has a good argument in terms of the economics and the dollars that are being spent on all the boards in the Northwest Territories. But in terms of the services to the boards and the agencies, I think sometimes people have to be put first before paper and profit. People have to be served in terms of what this government is here for, in terms of their quality of life in our small communities.

Our front-line workers have told me in the Sahtu where they can cut efficiencies. But it seems that our front-line workers are not being heard at a higher level at times. Our front-line workers know the difficulties when they operate in very severe conditions, and environment. They don't have some of the supplies or materials for them and how they get these into our communities. The front-line workers are going to suffer dearly if we continue working into a Board Reform Initiative.

I think more support, more trust and more resources should be given to our front-line workers. We've got to have belief in our workers on how they can look at things. A case in point: When I went back into the Sahtu, many people stopped me on the road and said how things should be looked at in our communities. There are policies today and regulations today that prevent some efficiencies in our communities. So I think that's what we need to look at in terms of any type of reform. What existing policies and regulations stop us from being a service to our people in our communities?

As I said before in my Member's statement, the communities in my region have not been convinced enough to say even a maybe on this board reform. I've received phone calls, I've received letters, and I received a flat out no, do not proceed with the board reform. They are saying let's look at what we have now and how we can improve it. They know some of the issues that are going to take a long time; issues that have been brought up over the years in terms of programs and services in our communities. We are saying in the process of this board reform, would it make a difference in our communities? Will Colville Lake get a nurse and mental health worker, a social worker, an RCMP officer? Will they have that if we are to go with board reform? Can we get some signal from this government saying, yes, Colville Lake will no longer have to be serviced by laypeople who have minimum training in terms of health care in Colville Lake? Can we say that to the people in Colville Lake that they will get a social worker, get home care services for the elders if we are to go with the board reform? We are fighting desperately for these basic services in my region up in the Northwest Territories in the Sahtu.

Mr. Speaker, we fight passionately, as I read in the newspapers, for the Yellowknife Catholic School

Board to have a right for their own education in their own system. We have fought very hard in the Sahtu to have that, our own education system. We support our groups and agencies to also have that same right and accord us to have that same right. With the board reform, you will take this right away that we fought for. We are negotiating self-government agreements. The territorial government is at the table also with our self-government negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, I have faith in our people. I have faith in my people when they say no to board reform. I have faith because I know things could be better and could be done differently if this government had come to my community and sat down with my elders and my people and said we want to do something like this, what do you think. What I heard from my region is that representatives came to my region and said this is what we are going to do. Tell me how you are going to fix it. I have an issue with that, because that type of a relationship and attitude put a lot of fear into my board members and they were angry, just as I see members from the gallery here who are concerned and angry. How would you want to go into somebody's house and say, this is how I want you to run your house. I don't think it is efficient or proper enough. I am going to be the boss of you in your house when you agree with me. How dare they come into the Sahtu house and tell us they should be respectful in terms of that nation building relationship with our people and sit down with us and say we know there are issues here. They don't need to tell us. We know there are issues here, but when is the government going to come and look at the community level and say what can we work on them in a respectful way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this morning I, too, was thinking about this issue here. The question came to me. What is government here for? Why are we around this room representing our people in a government institution? Isn't the government here supposed to be for the people? Isn't it we will put our representatives in our region? Isn't this government created by the people to be of service to the people, to be led by the people? Isn't government taking direction from the people? That is what I have been told about government from my people and from my elders.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to this motion here and ask Members here to think about our people and our communities. It is to have faith in people on the boards right now, education board, health board and the housing boards. Have people have faith in our people. They know a lot, and more than we think they do. They are very smart. They represent their people passionately and in their beliefs and values. Have faith in our people in the Sahtu. They may not quite see the way you see the world because my people are from the land. They are

trappers, hunters and fishermen. But they also have a mixed nation of people in the Sahtu. They have to work together to survive up there. It is very difficult and challenging. It is all about building a relationship. So this is one issue that I can say that unifies the Sahtu region in terms of us coming together as one nation of people in my region. We need to really take this very seriously and have faith in what they are saying to us. We have to have faith in them, otherwise we won't be here and they won't be here. I think that is what government is all about.

Sometimes we lean too much on evidence which is okay, but I think that, above all, it is to have faith that things are going to work out okay for us. Like my elders say, always pray to the one who sits in the heavens. People call him God. People call him Creator. They always say that. If you are going to have a difficult road ahead, you always pray. So this is what this motion is, as I see it, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, a question was asked to me this morning about the Roman Catholics. I said I don't know; I'm not too sure. The reason I said that was because I have attended residential schools. I attended for a long time. In the schools, they have many stories. However, I was forced to go to the Roman Catholic Church and pray the Roman Catholic way. Throughout the years I learned one good thing about being in a residential school. That was to have faith. Faith I have always had. Work out to the best in your life. There is no right or wrong about that but that is what I learned. I learned from my people to have faith in them. I want to say, in closing, that I will be supporting this motion until I hear from my people otherwise on this board reform. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am in support of the motion. My reasons for supporting the motion and not supporting board reform as it stands are many; many of which I heard from other MLAs here today. One of my main reasons is that there are so many unknown factors because nobody really knows what the plan will come, how the plan will evolve.

No one I talked to likes the board reform. I've asked many people in my riding about the board reform and, honestly, not one person said, boy, that's a good idea. You should go with it. I also feel that there is a tremendous lack of consultation, if any real consultation has occurred at all, with the organizations, some of the organizations associated with these three disciplines and also just with the governments of the communities and also the regional governments that support the communities at this time.

I also feel that the management of education at the community level, at all levels across the Territories, and the management of health and the management of housing are all very difficult jobs. They have vastly different mandates. I cannot fathom how we could find people that would be able to be efficient in managing all of the disciplines and how they could maintain focus and maintain the importance of all those disciplines when we have, as I indicated in my Member's statement, health, which is very demand driven, and housing; also it is very demand driven. It may not be as demand driven as health because of the nature of both of those disciplines, yet the majority of education, aside from the income support portion of education, education is very, I'd say, proactive, thinking about the future, trying to figure out ways in the future and how to make the students feel good and have the students take as much education as possible with them throughout their life so that they become productive members of society. So housing and health, a couple of departments which are demand driven are, in a sense, very social departments, and well-educated people will have better health. That is a fact. Well-educated people will have less demands for social housing. One department is trying to be proactive. It is not because of the way that departments are, the people in it or anything, it is just the nature of the beast, I suppose. I feel that that focus will be lost with the amalgamation of these departments.

I also feel that this government has had amalgamation mishaps. I really do. Some they have undone to a great expense to the people of the Northwest Territories and some are just beginning to prove, but not without great expense and great frustration. We deal with some of the things that this government has done; the amalgamation of the Technical Services Centre. The objective was to create one department that would be efficient, supportive and more cost efficient as well as just being efficient at work. Yet I feel, although I don't have the numbers myself, that was a tremendous cost and it is probably blown way beyond what the initial budgets were, the amalgamation of Human Resources and some of the things that were introduced into Human Resources. That has actually caused a tremendous amount of frustration amongst the public service. When you have high paid managers that have to sit there in front of the computer and figure out how to run a system to approve leave for their staff, Mr. Speaker...It was incredible. When HR was first being introduced and amalgamated, a lot of those things were wrong. It was frustrating. I was amazed that the government didn't stop and say, whoa, I think this is a wrong idea. But that didn't happen. I think things are improving now; again probably at a tremendous cost. But I don't think we are doing this to save money anyways, so I really don't know why.

I thought about it. Things are actually not too bad. I had an opportunity to go to St. Pat's School with Minister Lafferty and meet some of the teachers, and some of the teachers from Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution were there. I know that there is a pride amongst the teachers, students and schools. I know for a fact that in this community of Yellowknife where I live, there is a pride. The kids that are in St. Pat's are proud to be in St. Pat's and the kids that are in Sir John Franklin are proud to be in Sir John Franklin. Those are tangibles that could potentially be removed. These are non-tangible items, but they are things that could be removed. Pride could be removed by just making everything the same, just putting everything together. There is nothing that stands out anymore. They are all going to be viewed as one. Sometimes you look at these things and you think about where these things evolved from. Mr. Speaker, whose idea was it? Sometimes you think, well, if you go back far enough, it is probably a southern consultant.

---Laughter

I thought that. Every time these southern consultants come in with great ideas -- maybe ideas that fit well when you are managing huge numbers of bureaucrats and huge populations that they are serving -- it doesn't work well here. I don't think there has ever really been a tendency for this government to look at more than consultants and the people that live here and know what will work. It is often the high-priced southern consultants that come up with these ideas that don't really work, but no one ever admits that they don't work so we just forge ahead.

The other thing I thought of was, as it is, is it too much work for the government? I can't really see that being an issue because if they think managing 67 boards is cumbersome, try managing three disciplines in seven boards. I'm pretty sure that will be extremely cumbersome and frustrating and the loss of authority to the communities. That, I think, is one of my key issues with this whole thing. The people that want to assist their own kids to get educated, the people that have an interest at heart to make sure that their kids have the right stuff in their schools to be educated the way they want I think would be lost. I think that is going to be a management unit. I think that is what these boards will become, management units. How can they possibly pay specific, detailed attention to one area of housing, one area of health or an area of education? When we do things like this, we never look at things that are not tangible; things like pride. Teachers are proud to be teachers. Do they just want to be viewed as a bureaucrat that may deliver housing? Or maybe they are nurses. Who knows? Nurses are proud to be nurses too. Community development workers are proud to be community development workers. They don't want to be all

mashed together and managed together. They are people. They have special skills. They chose to be what they are. They shouldn't be mixed in with other people that they didn't choose to be managed together. It should be something that should be kept separate.

Most important, I think, is the students. I think it's very important that we do what we can to try to keep things the same. None of the students are actually happy at all about this either. From what I heard anyway, the students are not happy. Those students are excited, especially here, especially in communities where there is more than one school. The students in Lutselk'e, the students in Res, they have pride and they are successful. They are becoming more successful and they have DEAs, local DEAs that watch out for these kids. Those boards will be gone under this model.

So for those reasons and all of the other reasons that I have heard around here today, I will support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much there, Mr. Speaker. I share my colleagues' concerns and I, too, stand with them on this debate on the GNWT Board Reform Initiative. Effective and efficient is an expectation of our public and our people. The people are not convinced that this is what the Board Reform Initiative is about. There are still no clear and important reasons to make people understand why the changes should take place. I don't think that people are afraid of change, Mr. Speaker, but they are afraid of not knowing; not knowing what these changes will bring.

Often in my experience with government, sometimes we've got good ideas out there and we work hard to find solutions to them, but sometimes those ideas fall apart when we choose to implement them. As other Members have spoken about recent experiences and the most recent one was the harmonization of income support. They had this great idea that they would create this one window for people that need income support, need housing assistance, we'll put them in one central area and everybody goes there. But what happened there, Mr. Speaker, is it ended up being a detriment to the people. We created hardships and, in fact, in housing we created a whole group of people that are in arrears to our government and now they don't have to answer those. Still, that was a good idea, a one-window approach, but implementing it was a huge fiasco and I still fundamentally oppose that. Just the same, that is the kind of feeling I am getting about the Board Reform Initiative.

At the best of times, government guidelines and policies are difficult to interpret and understand and now we are talking about creating a whole new way of administering education, health and housing. In question period, we asked the Minister were there any other models or are there any other ways of presenting board reform and they really weren't able to answer that. In fact, the rollout package only included one model, Mr. Speaker. At the minimum, it should have included this model or keep things the same. At least that's an option, but the way it's being presented, there are no options being given. I think that creates a lot of the concern, a lot of the pressures from the public saying wait, slow down, why are you trying to give us something that we know anything about.

In my Member's statement, I spoke about apples and oranges, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we are looking at. We want to take something that has its own unique way of doing things like in health and then we are taking education and we are actually trying to merge these two. They are fundamentally diametrically opposed. They are very, very different entities and now we want to throw in housing as well, Mr. Speaker.

The arguments that the Ministers use, they say they want to gain efficiencies, they want to join HR functions, they want to join administration functions and if they were to use those arguments, they could use those same arguments if they wanted to join, say, the Workers' Compensation Board and the Power Corp Board, Mr. Speaker. Those two are just as fundamentally different as the organizations that the government is looking at joining as well. It really doesn't make sense when you look at it this way.

Just yesterday, I was talking to a constituent that didn't know as much as we do about the issues and I was trying to explain it to them. That person looked at me and said that doesn't make sense and, she's right, Mr. Speaker. It just doesn't make sense.

---Laughter

So I think that the government has no doubt used many resources and staff dedicated to develop the plan as it is. But it will only be overshadowed by the huge resources that we dedicate to the implementation of this Board Reform Initiative. The public is, indeed, looking for leadership, Mr. Speaker, but there are other pressing, important issues in our Territory that demand our attention. There is the high cost of living, power rates, fuel costs, housing costs and, to add to the mix, an economic slowdown.

Our Territory is a year behind what's happening in the United States and southern Canada. We are only going to be impacted at a later stage, probably

at the same time the government would be implementing this. This plan is creating undue stress that our people do not need at this point, Mr. Speaker.

I will just conclude by saying that I believe that our current system is effective. I also believe that the proposed changes will not provide improved services to our people. I am not in favour of the proposed Board Reform Initiative, Mr. Speaker. I will be voting in favour of the motion. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard much today and in the days and weeks building up to this situation, whether it played out in the media or to the event here today. We've heard much today about the need to look again at the initiative. There's been some very good comments made by folks around the table, but I need to set the record straight on a number of things. Number one, this is not a Minister Miltenberger initiative. This is an initiative that was originally looked at through the exercise of board reform that spilled over from previous governments and was supported by the 16th Assembly. Now, the work done to that moment to where we are has been undertaken under the lead hand of Minister Miltenberger and he's taken that duty and he's run with it and he's put his energy into that.

Now, of course, as he's stated recently and he continues to state, that if this was to proceed, we were working to the April date, not a decision for implementation, but a decision of what the next steps that will be, so we can sit down and put lots of the information Members have stated and have raised as an issue of -- the lack of information -- on the table.

With the motion that Members have put out here, Mr. Speaker, the need to look at this again and initiate a process without a predetermined end point with full public input and find efficiencies that improve the effectiveness of government processes and board structures. We do that in conjunction with our employees that deliver the program. We do that with the Members of this Assembly. We do that with aboriginal governments and First Nations. I would agree that we are going to take a different step, a different approach. We need to do that type of work and incorporate their input into this whole process. Obviously, the work that has been done previously by previous governments is not adequate to continue this process as the way it was highlighted here. I must say, though, that one of the Members -- the Member for Kam Lake -- spoke about, and quite a number of times, spoke in this House about past decisions, about past governments and how poor those decisions were.

But when we reference past work by governments it's sloughed off and no attention is paid to that. We have to take the work necessary to do proper implementation, for sure.

Now, also there was a call as process, Mr. Speaker, and for the public, because there was a call made out for the public and the people in the gallery that the process used when it comes to a motion of this House that it is a recommendation to government. Being a recommendation to government, our practice has been that we will sit and we will abstain from the vote and we will watch and see how the vote occurs in the House. Clearly, all Members are in support of that and we will take that under advisement. In fact, I would say that we would agree there needs to be a different process to this. In fact, I have approached the chair of the Priorities and Planning in hopes of finding a way past this, the next steps of we can look at this and try to come up with something that works for the people of the Northwest Territories. I think that's the important thing here. Nobody here is looking for a fight, Mr. Speaker. I save that for the ice.

---Laughter

And it's been many years and I don't encourage it.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet process is one where we will watch the House and we will take that under recommendation. I would say now with the fact that there's a motion here, we need to look at it, we need to work with committee, we need to work with aboriginal governments to come up with a better plan, because, as I believe the Member for Tu Nedhe had mentioned about the students, at the end of the day this is all about what we're trying to do for the people of the Northwest Territories; not for government structures, not for the system as it is. We're trying to improve how we deliver the programs, because many a times, and we can go to Hansard from this Assembly, from previous Assemblies, about the concern that's raised around the delivery of housing, how it's delivered in communities, the delivery of health care, how it's delivered in communities, if there's enough nurses, doctors' visits, dental visits. As well, the quality of education has been raised numerous times during budget process, during questions in the House. That's the impetus for looking at change. It is not just necessarily a southern contractor coming up with an idea, throwing it on the table and saying make it happen and it shall be done. No, Mr. Speaker, there has been much work done.

I can recall back in 1999 when I held, at the time, the portfolio of Health and Social Services, and back then Minister Miltenberger held the portfolio of Education, Culture and Employment. We approached the boards at one point and said we need to start working together to deal with the

student that has trouble in the school room but has a health issue where the two departments can't work together because of privacy policies; where an issue may spill over because of a housing issue but there are privacy policies. It's that case management that we need to focus on and try to change so that we can fix the issues that people are facing in our smallest communities. It is a blessing the fact that if many of us that are healthy and don't have to use those facilities, don't have to see the doctor that often, and have good health care provision in our communities. We're blessed with that, for sure. But there are many people who end up crossing all the boundaries, whether it is housing, education, justice, and our health care system. In fact, it's such an issue, not just for the Territories but the rest of the country. For example, Mr. Speaker, between governments, even there needs to be a better system in place. I use the Jordan's Principle as an example of where departments and governments had too many structures in place that didn't allow an individual to get the proper kind of treatment that was needed. This is what was intended with trying to make some change.

We've heard from Members of this Assembly, we've heard from the people of the Northwest Territories, and would say that with the motion as its worded we would be supportive and look forward to sitting down with the Members on the next steps. How do we take the work -- some of it needs to be put aside, some of it is good work that gives us the detail that Members have started asking about -- how do we structure it, how do we look forward and how do we make it better for the people of the Northwest Territories? We continue to do that and, in fact, we will continue to do that. As one of the Members pointed out, that our fiscal situation isn't better and it isn't going to get better, so we need to find out how we can continue to operate or improve on the delivery of our systems in the Northwest Territories. That would be our goal overall.

As for apples, oranges, bananas, well, I guess if the Members stuck with that, we can make fruit salad and at least share that with the folks. Realistically, there are challenges when it comes to the professions in education, in health care and in housing. We fully recognize that and we know that's a huge task, but we will definitely take this under advisement. I look forward to sitting down with Members to try and come up with a better approach as to how we can make it work for the people we represent in the spirit of consensus government.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will go to the mover of the motion to close debate on the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief. My colleagues here have spoken again very eloquently to the motion, have covered and canvassed almost every point that they could. I just have a few comments that I would like to add in closing.

Mr. Speaker, it's been another interesting day at the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves why did we need to step forward at this point with a theme day and a motion on this particular topic. It's because we have heard from our constituents. They feel strongly about this Board Reform Initiative and, therefore, we feel strongly about it. The Premier has said that no one here is looking for a fight, but when we see an initiative like this come forward and we feel that it is premised on a foundation of lack of information and principles that could do serious harm to the good work and establishment of the boards across the Northwest Territories, we on this side of the House are ready for a fight. I think we showed that today.

I do appreciate the Premier's comments that their side of the House can support this motion, but trust me, without the work of the Regular Members on this side, this motion would never have made it to this and who knows how far this would have gone.

Mr. Speaker, the enemies of democracy are apathy and ignorance and I would suggest that by the participation here today of the public, I would say that democracy in the Northwest Territories is alive and well.

---Applause

People are neither apathetic nor ignorant of the issues; they are following what their elected government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I still have to question why this government would pay such an insult to the leadership at different levels in this Territory. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly, these 19 Members, many of us got here, actually, because of our community participation at different levels of leadership. Many of us sat on town councils, we sat on health boards, we sat on education boards, and that's how we got here, but we don't have the market cornered on leadership in the Northwest Territories. That is what is so refreshing about the public input that we received on this, is that other people are also keenly aware of and concerned about the issues that we face as leaders in the Northwest Territories.

As one Member said, it is a shame in a lot of ways that we had to devote this much time and this much energy to something that...I guess we will look for those efficiencies. But when you look at the fact that people are worried about their jobs, people are worried about the cost of living, they have so many

other pressing issues on their mind right now it does seem a little hollow that our government would expend such an effort on just trying to restructure governance for a reason that they can't really convey to us what's behind it.

Now, I have said this to Mr. Miltenberger before, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say it again: Mr. Miltenberger has obviously never been involved in sales because if he thought he had such a great idea in board reform he should have brought the idea to it. He should have been able to lay it out and say, hey, Regular Members, I have got a great idea and here are the reasons why it's great. He should have been able to sell us on it. He can't even sell us. I don't know how we're going to sell the public. I have not heard any of that kind of talk from Mr. Miltenberger and, like I said, obviously he's never had to try to sell anything.

Mr. Speaker, consensus is alive and well, but, as I said earlier today, it goes far beyond these doors and far beyond this dome that we sit under. We have a type of government here in the North where we will consult and we'll take our direction from the people. As Mr. Yakeleya said, it's people first. It's the people who sent us here we serve. That's where the direction has to come from. It has to come from the grassroots up, not from the top down. I don't want to live in a Northwest Territories that is a totalitarian where we have a government that sits on their high and mighty horse and dictates to the people out there in the regions and the communities how things are going to work. I don't want to be a part of that and I will certainly fight anybody who does.

Mr. Speaker, the theory of this initiative being a lack of communication and some of the most recent initiatives of this government being premised on a lack of communication, I am starting to believe it goes far beyond a lack of communication and I think the Cabinet needs to take a very sober, inward look at some of these initiatives they are putting out there because I am starting to perceive them as an attack on people in our Territory, whether it be the public service, whether it be the seniors for the supplementary health benefit, whether it be the people out there working in our boards and agencies. There's a trend developing here. It's starting to go beyond bad communications. We can try to mop up after the fact but, to a large extent, some of the damage is already done. Some of our credibility has already been eroded and it's very, very hard to get that back.

Mr. Speaker, just on one issue as a personal note and I know we are in Yellowknife today and Yellowknife is the only community that has a Catholic School Board and I just have to share this small experience. I was at church on Sunday

morning and we quite often have a sharing time and I shared my deep concern. I mean, I believe that all the teachers in all the schools are doing a very good job, but I shared my deep concern of the possibility that the work of the Catholic School Board would be eroded. When my children were in Yellowknife, I sent them to the Catholic school because that is not my denomination but that is my faith. I come from a background of a Christian faith. Mr. Speaker, if our government would have the audacity to go against what those teachers and what that school in their mission statement is trying to impart to children, which is about values, it's about faith, it's about things that are going to hold them through the valleys and the difficult times in life, it's a choice that people make and it's an opportunity that's out there. On Sunday, I said to people, I was so distressed about this that I said I am going to use my Member's statement and I am going to stand up for two and a half minutes in the Assembly and I am going to pray over our Territory. People said oh my gosh, you don't have the nerve to do that. I said I was going to do it because I was afraid that I would chicken out by today and I wouldn't do it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful Territory here. We have an awesome responsibility. We have good leadership here. We need to find a way we can work together but not put our people through the stress that we have with this Board Reform Initiative. So going forward, yes. The Premier did come to me and I will commit that we will try to, in a reasonable fashion, look for efficiencies, but we cannot do it in a heavy-handed way.

I heard with my own ears, even though he says Mr. Miltenberger is not the author of this initiative, I heard with my own ears numerous times on the radio, we are going from 70 to seven boards. When a leader of this magnitude in our Territory stands up and says stuff like that, of course the people are going to believe and they are going to have the anticipated reaction which we have seen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do thank everybody for their input on this. It would appear that the Cabinet is not going to vote on this, but I do thank my colleagues for the work they have put into this motion and into this debate today. Again, thank you so much to the people who have participated by bringing their ideas forward to us and I will ask for a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Hawkins, Mr.

Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Lafferty; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the vote: 11 for, none opposed, seven abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Thank you, Members. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy; Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee; Committee Report 3-16(3), Report on the Use of Laptop Computers and Blackberry Devices in the Legislative Assembly; Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010; Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act; Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act; Bill 4, Public Library Act; Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act; and Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. By the authority given me as Speaker by Motion 10-16(3), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'll call Committee of the Whole to order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Committee Report 2-16(3), Committee Report 3-16(3), Tabled Document 11-16(3), Bill 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The wish of the committee today is to proceed with consideration of the budget for the NWT Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we'll take a short break and begin with the Housing Corporation.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. We agreed prior to the break that we will begin with the NWT main estimates for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. At this time, I'd like to ask the Minister if he has opening statements or comments.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's main estimates for the fiscal year 2009-2010, which requests a total GNWT contribution of \$37.820 million.

This is a decrease of 28 percent from the 2008-2009 main estimates and is primarily due to the sunset of the Northern Housing Trust, which provided \$50 million in federal housing investment over the past three years. Together with other revenues of \$69.673 million the corporation will have approximately \$107 million available to spend on housing in the Northwest Territories this fiscal year.

As Members are aware, the federal government has recently announced significant new short-term investments in housing in the Northwest Territories as part of its stimulus package to boost the Canadian economy. Based on information received through federal budget documents and in discussions with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the NWT Housing Corporation anticipates that it will receive approximately \$55 million in new federal investment over the next two years, some of which must be cost-matched. The federal investment in the NWT will include funding for:

- renovation and retrofit of social housing;
- housing for low-income seniors;
- housing for persons with disabilities; and
- northern housing.

This investment will be focused on the construction of new public housing units and affordable homes, the repair and retrofitting of public housing units, and the repair of private homes. Until we receive formal confirmation of the NWT's allocation expected within the next few weeks, we are unable to confirm our allocations related to these additional resources.

Fully utilizing this recently announced federal support will be challenging, however, the delivery of past projects under the Northern Housing Trust has strengthened the capacity of our construction partners in communities. The private sector's

ability to respond and to deliver gives us confidence that they will be able to maintain this momentum over the next few years as we work together to address the housing needs of Northerners.

It should also be noted that the funds recently committed by the federal government come with a strict two-year timeline for delivery. All funds must be committed within a two-year window. We understand that jurisdictions who do not have the capacity to deliver will risk having funds reallocated to other jurisdictions. The Housing Corporation is currently in the process of completing their detailed project plan and I am confident that the corporation will meet the federal requirements associated with this initiative.

As the Housing Corporation completes the plans for this new investment, we can confirm that our current capital acquisition and program delivery plan, provided for in the 2009-2010 main estimates, proposes to invest over \$27 million in new housing and repairs. This includes \$9.8 million to construct new housing units, as well as \$7.9 million in major modernization and improvement projects to upgrade the existing public housing rental stock.

A portion of this \$27 million investment has been funded through the GNWT's strategic initiatives process. This includes a \$2 million increase in the Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancements -- CARE -- Homeownership Program, under the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative, to fund repairs for low-income households. Repairs completed with this funding will focus on health and safety, structural, mechanical, and energy efficiency upgrades of homes. Additionally, \$1.5 million in funding has been allocated, under the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative, to develop and implement, in partnership with the Department of the Executive and service departments, a housing for staff initiative that provides incentives to communities, aboriginal development corporations, and private industry, to develop housing that can be used by essential service providers in our smaller communities.

The Housing Corporation will invest an additional \$1 million received under the GNWT's energy investment plan into its modernization and improvements budget to conduct energy retrofits on 100 public housing units on which home energy evaluations were conducted in 2008-2009.

We also plan to invest \$3.3 million in minor modernization and improvements on our public housing rental stock through our local housing organizations. In addition to the \$2 million that I have previously mentioned will be allocated to the CARE program under the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative, we have set aside \$3

million to fund additional homeownership repair and renovation projects. These will be expended through the CARE program and through federal renovation programs such as the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, RRAP, and the Emergency Repair Program, ERP.

An investment of \$88,000 will also be made by the Housing Corporation as part of a four-year strategy to assist local housing organizations in the hiring and retention of much needed apprentices in the housing trades.

In 2009-2010, the Housing Corporation has also identified expenditure reductions in the amount of \$1.5 million, which reflect our efforts to reduce costs while minimizing the impact on our delivery of programs and services. Forced-growth funding in the amount of \$504,000 is also being requested by the corporation for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, to address a base deficiency in our office accommodation budget.

The Housing Corporation remains committed to meet the housing needs of our residents. While the last three years have seen substantial investments in homeownership and public housing replacement, our housing needs remain high. Our primary focus in the next two years will be on conducting energy retrofits and upgrades to existing units and providing assistance to low-income homeowners to repair their own homes.

In closing, it should be noted that while we are very pleased with the federal government's commitment to the North through new housing investments, the sustainability of our existing public housing stock remains at risk if we are unable to secure a long-term funding commitment from the federal government. We will continue our efforts, in concert with other provincial and territorial jurisdictions, to encourage the federal government to work with us to address the housing needs of our residents and ensure the sustainability of NWT communities.

That concludes my opening remarks. At this time, I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in any witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Committee agree the Minister brings in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses in, please.

For the record, Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, with me I have Jeff Anderson, deputy minister or the acting president of the Housing Corporation; and Revi Lau-a, vice-president of finance and infrastructure services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. General comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Minister for his opening remarks. I do have a few comments to make. I would like to say that I certainly look forward to the \$50 million that the federal government made available to the Northwest Territories to look at housing investments. It will be very interesting to see the game plan how we expend it, how we expend \$50 million to put houses on the ground in our communities. Mr. Chair, I look forward and I am very anxious to see what type of plans will be coming forward from the department to let the people know what is possible out there.

Mr. Chairman, the issues on matching funds, again, I will wait until the Minister gives some kind of signal as to whether we can do matching funds and proceed with that type of commitment to know that we are comfortable to go ahead and match funds to build infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, the other comment I have is on asking for some of the rental stock and where the priorities will be allocated in terms of funding for public rental housing units, how much is going to go into these units, if our core needs are being looked at and some of the core needs that need to be brought down. I know there are some pretty staggering numbers, but I also want to say that some of these numbers have decreased over the years compared to what they were at one time. They have made some improvements. So you can see some significant decreases in these numbers. The government now has extra dollars to put into these units in our communities.

Mr. Chairman, I did want to commend, let the Minister know that he has heard the Members in providing incentives to communities for staff housing for people in our communities. I am very interested to see how this program will roll out, to see how this program would be a benefit to some of the communities that want to take advantage of it and to see how the regional district offices will play a role in terms of this type of initiative brought about by this government.

Mr. Chairman, the other issue I have is with regard to the overstock of housing units, either private or

public, and the energy efficiency support that is going to be given to communities. I am not sure how much each unit will receive based on application, based on assessments being done in our communities. I know when we had these assessments coming through our communities, they were only there for a short period of time and they are fully booked. They are doing good work, but they are fully booked. I think there is not enough time for them to stay in the community to do all the people who want to have their units assessed and to make sure that they fall into our criteria for funding for upgrading their houses. I just wanted to say to the department if there is any way that you could have some communique over to the Arctic Alliance, I think it does it make sense stay a little longer because they are pretty well crammed when it comes to the communities. They are pretty well jam crammed until they leave. Sometimes it is done because there is a real need for it. But also when I went to Tulita, some people didn't know they were in town because they were already booked up and didn't have time. Some people will lose out on this process here, so I would ask if they would give that some consideration.

Mr. Chairman, there are other issues here that could be looked at but I want to tell the Minister that, in terms of the two issues that popped out of my head here in terms of the seniors maintenance program that now is on a regional allocation basis. I believe the application is first-come, first-served. Some of the communities that really need these services here, sometimes the money is already depleted. I am hoping to have discussions with the Minister in terms of if there is any thought, if this program can be relocated back to the community and possibly if this could be a private enterprise business opportunity. I know the staff members in the community are pretty well busy in terms of doing other jobs that is required by them. Sometimes it is the elders that are not quite receiving the care that they would like to receive. I get a lot of complaints in terms of having a special maintenance program done by one or two people for the community. That is their whole focus. The elders could get a hold of them quite easily. Right now they have to go to the local housing authority which, in fact, has to fill out an application which goes to the regional district office which reviews the proposals and requests. Sometimes it doesn't seem like they are responding quick enough to settle the needs of the elders. That is quite a bureaucratic process. Some of the people were asking, Mr. Chairman, if the Minister would consider something in terms of a seniors maintenance program in the community if there are qualified people that could do the job to fill the bill that could look after elders and maintenance needs in the community. That is a request that has been asked to me by my people.

Another one I want to ask the Minister later on in terms of the housing need is the Colville Lake situation. The Minister had some discussions with me and I had some discussions with the district office in terms of how do we deal with Colville Lake. Colville Lake is a very unique situation in terms of the status within the Government of the Northwest Territories and I know they do want some homes. There are other issues at play here that I won't take up the time right now to discuss with the Minister. I have some of my notes upstairs, so I can speak to the Minister when we get through that chapter in the budget here.

Mr. Chair, I guess, in closing, I want to say I look forward to seeing what kind of numbers that the Minister had in terms of affordability of homes in our community, the adequacy of issues, where do we determine what is adequate and what is not adequate and what is going to be available in our regions with the housing. But I want to also congratulate the Minister for working with the federal government to get that for us in the Northwest Territories. I know it is a tough job. There are certainly lots of needs out there that are going to be talked about in the next couple of days here. I want to say to the Minister and staff that it is nice to know that we do have some dollars. I guess the trouble might be can we spend \$50 million in those years? I think we could, but that will be up to the Minister and his staff to work with the community vendors. In closing, I want to say thank you to the Minister for bringing \$50 million to the North for housing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I have four people on my list, so maybe we will just get general comments from each of the Members and then we will allow that Minister to respond after we have general comments. Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley, Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the Minister for his opening comments. I see we are committing fewer funds this year. I am wondering about additional revenues. I guess it is called other revenues of \$69 million. I will be asking questions about what exactly the source of those dollars is. It is probably in here somewhere. We may be getting an additional \$55 million in new federal investments over the next two years, some which must be cost-matched. I am wondering if, when we do firm that up, there will be additional opportunities for review and input of how those dollars will be allocated in this program.

I will also be interested in asking questions on energy efficiency, whether all the new houses now will match the EGH 80 guidelines. I am interested in modernization and improvement projects to the existing stock, what exactly that might mean,

whether energy efficiency would be part of that. I think it is great that we are dedicating some funds to helping provide incentive to communities who need to develop housing for their service providers. The Minister has touched on that in his remarks. I will be interested in how that is going to be administered to ensure the most effective benefits from those dollars.

I note \$1 million for upgrading energy retrofits on 100 public housing units that went through home energy evaluation. That is only \$10,000 per home and I am wondering what can be achieved with that. Will these homes be upgraded to EGH 80? The \$2 million dedicated to the CARE program I will have some comments on that. Later in his remarks, he mentioned \$3 million additional to that program but didn't mention energy efficiency in context to the \$3 million. I am curious about that.

Increasingly, and I suppose in a way a feather in our Housing Program cap, I am hearing about communities that have a surplus of housing and the Minister highlighted the ongoing and high needs for housing. I will be asking questions as we go along in the budget to help flush out some details on that and get some insights like what our housing stock is by community in relation to need. Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Polakoff and Mr. Laua.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is Mr. Anderson, not Mr. Polakoff.

MR. JACOBSON: Oh, sorry. I apologize. Okay. Let's get started here. Good job in regards to getting the monies from the federal department or federal \$50 million. I think it shouldn't be too hard to spend that \$50 million. I can't wait to get my new housing units, hopefully get a four-plex in Sachs Harbour and my new eight-plex in Ulukhaktok for my elders facility that is going to be coming forward in a motion and a petition as well. I am working on that. I will help you spend those new monies.

Regarding Sachs Harbour, on the infrastructure acquisition plan, I see three of my communities that I represent on the infrastructure acquisition plan in regards to either retrofits or new units. All but one is Sachs Harbour. I have young families wanting to have their own housing unit. There is none available either, due to there is none in the community. I think that has to be looked at. It is a real serious matter because people want to live in Sachs but there is no housing, none whatsoever. It has to be dealt with this year. I look forward to

seeing the new monies, if we could put that in the budget.

The elders facility in Ulukhaktok, I have been working with the community. They would like to see if we can put one up similar to Tuk, an eight-plex or a four-plex, in the community where they have to send their elders to Inuvik and family members not being able to see them. I want to see if we can put that with the new monies that we got from the federal government.

Another big concern I do have is the Inuvik office running the office out of Paulatuk running the corporation in Inuvik. I am finding more and more of my constituents getting these eviction notices from the LHO due to non-payment. If there was somebody in the community, I think it would make a difference if it is run out of the community. I really would like to see that put back into the community - the office, the staff, everybody -- to run that housing office in Paulatuk. That is needed badly. I am getting people evicted in the communities. It is the middle of the winter. Corporations evicting people, that is not right. We have to work with the corporation to try to work something out for that.

Going back to the acquisition plan, I see some major retrofits. I look at the whole acquisition plan as a whole. I see a lot like in the South here, units being built in a couple of communities that got seven new units. Maybe the corporation is planning enough to give us one or two for Sachs. I would appreciate that.

My biggest concern right now is for the people in Paulatuk in regards to getting the office put back in the community and getting these rental arrears done, having somebody going into the community, visiting adults, sorting out, trying to work with the people and another unit in Sachs Harbour or two four-plexes. But other than that, the federal investment. I think you could put that money into good use in regards to our elders for persons with disabilities. In the communities, I have people that have wheelchairs. They have a tough time getting into their units because there is no ramp...and low income for seniors. Being the most northerly riding, I think a lot of that retrofit money should be coming to the communities. I went to Paulatuk about three weeks ago. One of my elderly ladies came to me and told me that, you know, any time you have a west wind, you have snow blowing in the house. It is more than one unit that is doing that. I know the maintenance is doing the best job they can, but I really think that, given new windows, doors, I think we could help out with elders not having to worry about just trying to stay warm in the winter. It is the last thing they should be worrying about.

Like I said, I am happy to see three of my communities on the list for retrofits and I just need

Sachs Harbour to be put on for my four-plex, and my elders facility in Ulukhaktok. Thank you, Minister and staff. I look forward to going page by page with the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Next on the list I have Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I wasn't sure if the \$55 million was incorporated into the main estimates. I am looking forward to that being incorporated into the budget. I am assuming that money is going to be incorporated into 2009-10 and 2010-11. That is excellent.

In addition to that, I am confident that the NWT Housing Corporation would be able to expend the money, Mr. Chairman, that was given to them by the federal government. I don't have the same type of confidence levels with other jurisdictions. I suspect that the NWT Housing Corporation is going to be getting an opportunity to get more money offered to them. I hope that the NWT Housing Corporation not only puts a project plan together to address the \$55 million but also to anticipate that other monies will probably be offered by the federal government. History tells us that some other jurisdictions don't expend their money and it goes back to the federal government. I do believe the federal government has already indicated they would be prepared to reallocate.

I have, in Tu Nedhe, specific to that and the Housing Corporation, I feel that both communities will benefit from some projects that would be offered under the Housing Corporation's various programs like CARE and so on. I know that I have talked to one of the governing bodies in the organization. They are prepared to sit down and try to put their own community plan together as far as delivery of homeownership programs, like, talk to them about staying under certain thresholds as far as money goes, Mr. Chairman, in order to allow the flow of money without the issue of having to deal with the status of the land and so on, because land status is a big issue in Tu Nedhe.

Many of the community members in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e are not able to access large amounts of money from the Housing Corporation for repairs to their units because of tax arrears. That has become a real issue. It is something that I am hoping to address with the Minister of MACA and, as the Minister of that department speaks to the local governing bodies, I think some of those things, hopefully, will be ironed out, making it easier for the Housing Corporation to deliver programs in Tu Nedhe communities. Also, as I indicated, I am hoping to get an opportunity to meet with the governing bodies in Fort Resolution and discuss the possibility of how they could be active participants

in making sure that this money gets delivered. I feel that, together, the communities and some of the resources that are available to me, we are able to put some good projects together for the community that will assist the corporation in spending the money, opening the door for more funding from...that may fall free from other jurisdictions. I'm very interested in the corporation working hard on the housing for staff budget. I think that's a very important part of this budget. I think the two communities that I represent, Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e, both have different plans on how to address housing for staff. I know that in Lutselk'e they have some units that could be available for renovations through some of these monies that are available for housing for staff. They actually already have staff housing but they're just dilapidated and would need not a full \$250,000 to build a full-blown three-bedroom unit, but I'm talking around the \$100,000 mark in order to get these units back up to a livable standard for staff that the community needs to bring into the community and for professional staff that come to the community to teach and do nursing and so on.

In Fort Resolution the issue is a little bit different. There is some surplus housing there; however, there are a couple of local businesses that may, with the right deal, take advantage of some of these programs that make it feasible for them to provide housing for staff in the community. Under obtaining some leases through the various other departments, they should be able to address that important issue.

I, too, look forward to completing the detail on the Housing Corporation budget so that the corporation staff can start the process of getting the work on the ground as quickly as possible since there's a relatively quick time frame with the federal dollars. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, I, too, would like to congratulate the Minister and his staff for acquiring the \$50 million from the feds. I know the last time around it took a little arm-twisting of other jurisdictions and other authorities where we're one of the few jurisdictions where we actually matched the funding that we got from the feds. When we did that, we also came forward with a housing needs survey or study that we identified core needs. We identified areas where we have overcrowding in the communities, where we have conditional rating of the different units we had in regard to having to replace some or because they're in such poor shape that we were better off just building new.

I noted that you are going back to the feds. In your comments you made reference that you're

presently developing a proposal to complete the detail of the project plan to take forward, but it would be good if we can have some input into that if it's possible during this process. For me, there are areas that I think we still haven't really done that great a job on in regard to the people in our communities with disabilities and seniors' housing in our communities; more in regard to seniors and care type of housing units where they're going to age in these facilities or these housing units and you have the capacity that when they do age, it's designed for that and that you do have some sort of a preventative care program for our aging population.

We also have to look at the area of programs and services for the core programs and where we put caps on it. I know we implemented new programs that are out there in regard to aftercare and other programs, but I think what we're seeing is that the cost of constructing these units and what we were...I know a number of years ago we were constructing units somewhere around the area of \$185 a square foot. Now we're constructing units in our communities at \$300 a square foot and these units are coming in at over \$300,000. I think that people, to go to the bank in a small community who don't really have the full paying job, are struggling just to get a mortgage and pay for that large a mortgage. I think we have to increase those thresholds that we had. I noticed \$90,000 but I think you've got to look at something that's more practical and realize that there is no real residual value for a lot of these houses in our small communities. Once you've got a mortgage on it, you aren't going to sell it for what you bought it for. I think that those types of things have to be considered either through a program review or assessment in regard to the program that's there. I feel strongly that we know that there are people there who can operate a home. It's either that they're falling between the lines and they either don't make enough to show that they can actually operate a home or they make too much where we can't help them out.

Again, you know we put a lot of houses on the ground, the 500-something units we put on the ground. The majority of those were basically family-type dwellings. I think we have to look at more apartment units so that singles and people who are in their middle age, basically all they need is something small. I think that the big challenge we had last time was just trying to find the land that we need to build these things on in a lot of our communities. Even in Yellowknife here just to try to acquire land for the last round of negotiations, trying to get land, I know it's an issue with Dettah and Ndilo saying how come we don't get housing. I don't think it's that the government not trying to get them houses, but it's that you can't find land to build

them on because of IAB lands or because of the unavailability of land in Yellowknife and communities around Yellowknife. It is an issue.

Also, we do have to look at the seniors facilities. I'm very serious when I say that that \$50 million, you should allocate a good portion of that to seniors' housing, either a seniors six-plex, or a five or four for small communities so that the seniors can all live in one area, they're all close together. They're a closely knit community to begin with and the families can come and go. They have those units already in several communities. We built one in McPherson. We picked up the design from Dettah where they had a similar design. The elders came down here, we went down and took a look at it and they were very impressed with that facility and how it was set up and designed. You could come in from the outside and you could come in through the front door. Everybody had a shared area, they have all their shared laundry space and they also have someone, basically a caretaker, who lives right in the facility with them to take care of them. I think that's the type of housing that can really make a difference in our smaller communities. I heard Mr. Jacobson talking about the situation of a lot of elders being stuck in their units because when there's a blizzard in the Arctic communities, that those units aren't designed, especially when you have a wind shift in those communities.

The other area I think where we have to do a better job is working with aboriginal housing cooperatives. I mean, you can talk about North Slave housing here in Yellowknife or Teepee Housing in Inuvik; I think those were classified as urban housing projects that were designed through the federal government, and they were designed in the larger centres. I know there's housing in Fort Smith. Also, you've got the Kotaneelee Housing Association in Fort Liard. I think that's another area you could possibly expand programs. Just looking at those initiatives and seeing if they're interested in expanding their housing stock so that they can also be able to provide housing like any housing cooperative in the Northwest Territories. You have different housing authorities from Kitikmeot Housing to YK Housing to North Slave Housing here in Yellowknife. I think that we've got to work closely with those agencies.

The issue that I'm probably going to talk about later is in regard to the Joe Greenland Centre in Aklavik. There were renovations that were supposed to take place last year, and again it's a level 3, level 4 facility in Aklavik. It's one of those seniors homes that's been designated by the Department of Health and maintained by the NWT Housing Authority. Again, that unit is almost 35 years old and getting up there in age. It has to either be replaced or you're looking at a major cost to renovate. Again,

that's something I feel that you have to really seriously look at doing some work there.

Just on that, I think there have been studies done. Sandy Lee's favourite subject here is NOVEL housing. I know she just loved that project. I think workforce housing is something that there's a lot of study and work that was done there. A number of units could go into communities. We're looking at land development for these units. There's a lot of baseline work that we need that is already there. I think we should seriously look at that, because we only have two years to spend this \$50 million and I think that's something we should consider.

With regard to the housing needs survey, I don't know if we were able to meet the needs of all the communities, but again maybe go back and take a look at that needs survey and see if we did deliver the units we said we were going to. Did we really make a difference on those needs in those communities?

The other area that I think the Housing Corporation has to do a better job on is expanding your workforce in your communities by way of your maintenance people; looking at putting more money into the local authorities and giving them more money for maintenance people. Give them an extra carpenter. In some cases you probably need an electrician in some of the larger centres. I think you should look at expanding your apprenticeship programs in those communities throughout the Northwest Territories. For most communities that's a big challenge. If you have home-grown talent in those communities it really helps with the other seniors and people like that, that we're trying to help by maintenance programs.

The other area I was just wondering if it's possible that you look at your program staff with regard to the delivery of programs and services for care and aftercare. Is there a possibility that those people could be working in the larger centres and communities where there are enough people to actually make sense to have somebody there serving those larger communities than having them at the regional levels? Either Behchoko or Fort McPherson or communities that can sustain those type of people as program officers in those authorities or whatnot to deliver our programs. Hopefully that's a bit of food for thought. I think it's something that we have to think about because we only have two years to act on this.

I'd like to thank the Minister and his staff for the work they've been doing. I look forward to going through detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Like other Members are saying, the number one issue as an MLA and as I tour my communities and speak to residents, they are concerned about their housing needs and their ability to access programming. I think, indeed, I did mention earlier in the House that I believe the corporation staff is doing their job well. But I think the issue that is facing most of the constituents is not so much the staff as the guidelines and policies of the corporation that are excluding and making it difficult for people to access programming again. I know that many of my constituents have previously accessed programming and, I don't know, it's probably true in some cases that they're not understanding the full implications of previous programs and now it limits their ability to access existing programs. That's causing me concern because now a lot of people want to upgrade their houses. They want retrofits, they want renovations, and even the ability to enter the Homeownership Program as well. But because of their previous activity and their previous past, they're actually denied access to previous programming. I think in some cases, probably because the staff know the file so well, they just tell people that they're denied without even taking an application. In terms of due diligence and due process, I don't think that should happen. I think that people should have the ability to fill out the application, at least. Some circumstances do change and there are life circumstances that change. In some cases there's improved income. Maybe they're dual household earners now. So just to be denied before we even open the door to them is not right. I don't believe it's the kind of service that our people expect from our Housing Corporation. At least they should take their application in and base their assessment on information that's there. It's just getting through the door that's frustrating them to no end. I know, because we have changed our programming, that people have to apply annually.

Just in terms of guidelines and procedures, I still believe that we have to change the parameters of the community income threshold limit. There are lots of good couples out there and hardworking individuals who make enough money that can make these mortgage payments. I believe that those are the people we want. The ones who can afford to make the mortgage payments are the clients we want. I think we should really look at changing some parameters about eligibility for these people. They do want mortgages and so they need our assistance in that. In order to achieve our goal of more homeownership clients I believe that we should make this small change.

Another area of great importance is the ones in the lower limit and middle category have an affordability problem. I believe in the Minister's opening remarks

he does mention a move towards social housing. I support that. And public housing. I believe we have to do more of that. One of my communities, Fort Liard, identified it. I've advised the Minister's office that this is something that they want more of, because Fort Liard, like many communities, has four or five houses that ...Actually, we have three houses there that are unoccupied because clients are having difficulty finding clients for these homes. I don't know if we have to convert these to social housing or public housing, but the key thing is that it frustrates the constituents to no end to see empty homes there when Fort Liard has huge overcrowding issues. There are two or three families to each home, in many cases. So there are 10 or 12 individuals in a two or three-bedroom house. It's a huge issue. These people aren't qualifying for our programs maybe because of previous programs or because of other guideline issues. If there was public housing, if there was social housing available, I believe they would certainly qualify. Many of them are low to no income and that's what this type of house is certainly designed for. I'm certainly in support of it.

Some other communities, we have one guideline that if you have an existing house in the corporation and you want to upgrade or access another program, you cannot. I think we really should have a look at that policy, because what you're doing is you're helping one family perhaps move to a larger unit that's more accommodating to their needs. They've got no problem making the mortgage payments. It's not that they're getting two houses. They've let me know and in many cases people say I'll gladly return that to the Housing Corporation's stock. With a little bit of renovation we can free that up for other individuals. It will probably be lower-cost housing. Probably a chance the mortgage won't be that high. Or we can turn it into social or public housing stock. But the whole key here is that we're taking the ability of moving a family to a larger, newer home that's more accommodating to their larger, bigger families, to their needs. In some cases it's being disabled too. Just another strategy that I think the corporation should look at, because it does free up another home. That's what that does. In many cases there's no one else eligible to access our housing programs for homeownership programs as well. So I believe that if we look at that and try to accommodate those special needs we can make better use of our dollars and we'll get better return on our investment and just a better fit. These clients are a better fit for us.

There's one thing that I've been quite passionate about over the years as an MLA and that is that we have to do this appeal system. I don't see the Minister mentioning it in his opening remarks. Maybe he can comment on it if he's got a moment. But that's something I believe is necessary for our

Public Housing Program with the NWT Housing Corporation. I believe it will be beneficial not only to the Housing Corporation, but to the people, our clients, as well, and those applying. It gives them an avenue to appeal and I've always said that they're often...Currently they're often appealing to the people that denied them in the first place, which is front-line managers and maybe regional headquarters or district headquarters as well. That's the only person they have to appeal to and they say, look, you forgot this information. But their minds are already made up. I believe an independent process is something that we need. Another way that they do appeal, too, is they appeal through their MLA or directly to the Minister's office. That's not really a fair way to treat our people. I believe that they do need an outlet in which to appeal; an independent process, knowing it will be treated with the diligence it deserves and the attention it deserves as opposed to I already said no and we're going to stay at no. In some cases information really does get missed or lost or special circumstances are not taken into consideration, and that's the value of an appeal system. I believe we should work towards it. Previous Ministers of Housing have indicated to me it would take place April 1st of this year, but I would sure like to see something running in this new fiscal year.

With that, I'll conclude my statements. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): With that, maybe we'll just take a short break at this time and then we'll resume with your responses.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I call Committee of the Whole back to order. I've got no other Members on my list for general comments, so is committee agreed that we have no more general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Alright. I'd like to allow the Minister the opportunity to respond to the general comments. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to say thank you for the comments Members have made, the suggestions, observations. Certainly I think everybody is very interested in the new federal funding that was highlighted in the budget. We still have to firm that up. We have a number that has been given to us as an indication of what the dollars are going to be flowing to the NWT. We expect to have those signed off in a couple of weeks and have that presentation to the standing committee, along with

a number of other initiatives that were raised today that we are looking at making some changes, enhancements or introducing.

A number of questions were raised regarding the new money around how we would match the funding. We already have the dollars in our funding that we would utilize as matching funds. This would give us roughly a \$52 million per year investment that we would be moving forward on. Right now, the general idea and our thinking, after listening to the Members over the last while, is to start doing some upgrades in the area of public housing stock, upgrades in the area of energy efficiency and also allow people to access dollars for private home repairs. Of course, we would try to continue with the Homeownership Program, but I think there is a little bit of a shift. I mean, all this will be presented to committee for discussion and we are expecting that as we move forward, that our core need will be done sometime early this summer for 2009 and that will indicate, after spending the last investment by the federal government into housing of the Northern Trust that we will see a decrease in our core need. There are still many areas where we need investment.

I mentioned in the House the other day that public housing is still an issue. We have money for infrastructure and there has been no real investment for some time in the area of operation and maintenance for these units. That is a challenge that we have to deal with the federal government on, along with other jurisdictions.

The other issue that was raised today was housing for staff. That's something that we have put in our budget, \$1.5 million, as a place marker to try to deal with the communities that are really struggling to find accommodations for people that are in the communities working as teachers, nurses and other areas. That is something we are working with the Executive on and the Refocusing Government committee and we'll be bringing those results forward.

There was also a mention regarding the ability or inability of getting people in the communities to do evaluations in the area of energy. Arctic Energy Alliance does a lot of that work right now for us and for people in the communities. We'd like to see our staff start taking on some of that, playing some of that role, staff that are in the communities more and be able to advise people and do some of the testing that is currently being done by other organizations. That might help alleviate some challenges.

That is the same with the mould issues, Mr. Chairman. We are training all of our staff to be able to provide advice, to do the testing, and also advise how to remedy the situation where there is mould in some of the units. The seniors maintenance

program was raised by several of the Members here. We have changed our seniors program somewhat so that seniors can qualify just the same as any individual that is applying for assistance. We have removed any of the caps on home repair so that seniors can come and do more than just the \$8,000 that we had budgeted historically. They can now qualify for up to \$90,000 to do home repairs. We have also carved off some dollars to introduce a seniors maintenance program. We are going to be looking at putting \$2,000 or budgeting \$2,000 per community so that we can have some mechanism for communities to help their seniors, whether it is furnace cleaning or repair, or water tanks, things of that nature that is really challenging our seniors right now. It will be a general maintenance, and we expect a lot of communities will be hiring private companies or being delivered through the band councils or things of that nature.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Yakeleya raised an issue that has been challenging us for some time. That is the potential to put homeownership units in the community of Colville Lake. This is a small community, an isolated community and doesn't have any roads and up until lately, didn't have any running water. It has really been a challenge to find people that would fit the program design of how we bring forward homeownership units. They are a unique community, as the Member has raised, and we expect that we would have to find private, or a special design to accommodate them. We would also have to look at how we could set up a unit that would fit in a budget that they could afford.

We have other communities that have a number of people that are being challenged with some of our programs as some of the people in the Northwest Territories don't have a credit rating, so we need to be able to accommodate that. We think by designing a fairly basic unit that would fall under the grant that we would provide or forgivable mortgage that we would provide will be able to assist them.

Mr. Bromley asked about the investment in energy upgrade and he pointed out the million dollars that we have in revenue, which is correct. That is the revenue that will be coming into the revenue pot. However, we have earmarked \$8 million in MNI expenditures that will be focussed on energy. We have committed that we will follow the EnerGuide 80 and that will go to all our units, whether they are new or they are being retrofitted. That is a standard we have set and we will be incorporating that in our program.

The \$69 million is all the revenues that are identified in this budget as other revenue. There was a question about cost-matching and that has already been accommodated. Mr. Jacobson raised the question and the concern about -- you know it is in his riding -- the condition of some of the public

housing units, and we certainly recognize and have heard from them, and we still expect that we will be seeing a petition from those communities regarding the status and the situation with our public housing units in those communities and the number of new units that are going in there. As we go forward, we will be doubling our budget in renovations in that area. So with actual change, we will certainly be interested to see and hear specifically what Mr. Jacobson has raised.

Our budgets are based and allocated on core need and in this case, because we don't have our new budget or our new core need analysis done yet, we are still working on the 2004 assessment. Next year I expect we will use this new assessment as it comes forward early this summer.

We share Mr. Jacobson's concern regarding the office in Paulatuk. We have been looking for someone there and we would really like to staff that position. Capacity is always an issue when it comes to the smaller communities. We hope that is going to happen fairly soon.

Mr. Chairman, the other issue regarding expending all of our dollars that we have earmarked, what is in this budget and what is coming forward from the federal government, we expect will be done within two years. We plan to have it done in two years. We will, as I said, bring a plan forward for investment. Mr. Beaulieu is quite correct in saying that if we spend all the money and we get the units on the ground and do all the retrofits in two years, we would be eligible for any other jurisdiction's dollars that have lapsed. Up to now we are the only jurisdiction that did match the federal investment and we are, I think, the only jurisdiction that is able, once we do this last year in our housing trust money, we will be the only jurisdiction that has been able to do that. We hope that in year three we will be able to trap any of the surplus money that is lapsing in other jurisdictions.

I am really quite excited to hear that there is some discussion about community planning around housing. That is something that we really need to encourage. We think dollars could flow better. We think people would understand better what the strategy is and information could get out there better if more people were involved and more people were sharing the management decisions.

The issue of thresholds is another that we have, over the last while, heard many Members raise. We plan to look at that when we do our housing choices evaluation. We will be doing that shortly and we hope that will result in changing the thresholds. We recognize that it has been challenging over the last couple of years as we introduce our programs, for some people to fit in the window that we have identified and the criteria that we have set. We

would like to be able to open that up. We do have, still, a number of vacant units and I think the number is at 21 units right now across the Northwest Territories. We are hoping that by opening up the thresholds, changing the thresholds, opening them up and changing the criteria, we will attract more people. We are certainly getting that indication from a lot of the Members in this House.

We have heard that also from the Small Communities committee when we talked about housing. We are also looking at the amount that is given as a contribution or forgivable mortgage, which is a maximum \$90,000 and given some of the costs of construction in the more northern part of the NWT, where common three-bedroom houses are up to \$300,000 dollars, we may have to look at seeing if we can find a number there that is a better fit.

We do still provide contributions of up to \$25,000 for some of the people that are on IAB lands and people that don't or can't attain land tenure, so land is still an issue. We are working on resolving some of these with the band governance and especially issues on IAB land. Mr. Chairman, I think everybody is aware now that the Housing Corporation is not allowed to move forward and build, provide mortgage or any type of assistance unless we have land tenure, and the Auditor General had raised this.

Mr. Chairman, we are also really having a difficult time with the number of people across the Territories that are in arrears to this government through land tax or property tax and I think it's got to be clear that we are not allowed to make an exemption. This is an issue where there is an arrears for taxes and that has to be cleared up through a recovery plan or some type of arrangement with this government before we can do anything.

The housing for staff, as I indicated, is something we are still working on. We are hoping that will get rolled out fairly soon. Our core needs, again this is going to be summer 2009, the allocations in a couple of weeks, we'll present that to committee along with the other initiatives that we are working on.

We are also trying to find a new design unit as a result of Colville Lake, but other communities have also indicated that they would like to see us come in with a new unit. We are not sure what it will be called yet, but we are looking at designing something that would be very basic. It might be a traditional housing package or something that is very simple, very easy to heat, maybe woodstove and electric cook stove and very little else that we can put in communities that would meet some of the needs of the singles, some of the smaller

families that just don't fit in the category to take on a mortgage. So that's something we will continue to work on.

We will also continue to provide programming for seniors in terms of seniors' housing. Our focus is on independent seniors that can maintain their units. With a little bit of care, they continue to live on their own and we want to encourage that. Somebody, I believe it's Mr. Krutko, raised the issue of trying to work better with the co-ops, now that we have some money, to help them with some of their challenges. That is certainly something we will look at.

The Joe Greenland facility was also raised and the question was asked about when we were going to do it. That was a contract that went out to bid and resulted in the bids being quite a bit higher than we had budgeted for, so we are seeing how we can accommodate the repair that needs to be done.

Mr. Chairman, somebody also raised -- I believe Mr. Krutko -- the issue of NOVEL housing and workforce housing. It's not something that we have high on our priority list, Mr. Chairman, but the issue or idea of modular units is something we will keep an eye on especially if we get behind in investing or getting all the units we need to put up in the next couple of years. So it's something we will put on the back burner, but it's a consideration.

The issue of expanding the workforce is certainly something we agree with. The trades in communities are getting harder and harder to attract and having some people who are trained within communities is something we want to do. We embarked on an Apprenticeship Program and so far we've identified 12 positions for apprentices and we'll try to keep that as a program ongoing and maybe even expand it.

Mr. Chairman, in Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche has highlighted the concern of many people not understanding the programs since we've introduced the new housing choices. Since this fall, we've really tried to embark on getting the information out there. We've launched a public campaign. We have staff from our regions going into the communities to have communications shared with the community members, public campaigns in the communities so that people know when the deadlines are, what the programs are about. We are trying to remove some of the misunderstandings. We are also putting ads in the paper so people know when the deadlines are, when they need to come forward to apply.

Mr. Chairman, there was a concern raised by Members regarding the ability of members or community members to come forward and access some of our programs because their history has continued to be a concern. We have a long list of

people that have arrears. We have a long list of people who have done damage or abandoned their units. We do try to work towards accommodating people that are willing to patch up what is not allowed in applying for a new program. Recovery plans have been put in place for a number of people who are really trying to either turn their life around or put themselves back in the good books of the Housing Corporation. We really appreciate that; however, we still have to stay firm. We have a lot of people coming and asking for exemptions. Just write off what I owed for the last 10 years and stuff of that nature. We, as a corporation, are going to stay fairly firm on that. In order to encourage everybody to pay their rents and pay their mortgages, there has to be a demonstration that we aren't just going to open the door every time somebody complains a little bit too loud.

Mr. Chairman, there are quite a few things that we need to come forward to committee with that, as a new Minister -- I think I've been in this position for eight months now -- I've heard from Members of this House in different committees and we're hoping that some of these things we'll be able to share relatively quickly.

The other thing was we also wanted to have further discussion that we committed to on the appeal system. We are hoping to get our stamp of approval from committee and kick it out the door by April 1st. So there are a number of things that we need to expand on but we are still working on. We had hoped to have everything in place by this budget session, given the sense of urgency that came on the Building Canada Fund, and the need to do the correspondence and have the discussions with the federal Ministers has kind of slowed it up, but we are still working on these issues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. As there are no further general comments, is committee agreed that we proceed to detail in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Okay. Page 5-41. You will notice, committee, that the budget for the NWT Housing Corp actually appears in the Department of Finance where it will be approved and considered. Every item within the Housing Corp's tabled document here is basically an information item, but we'll go through each page as we would with the other departments and if you have questions, we'll agree with them or not agree with them as we go forward.

We would like to defer the department summary, the financial summary information on page 5-41,

and go onto page 5-43, corporate summary, information item, operations expenditure summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Any questions? Agreed. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you. Sorry for being so slow. I did want to just ask a question and I apologize if it was covered somewhere and I missed it, but there has been concern on the part of Members and I think local housing organizations, as well, about the number of clients that are in arrears. In some discussions we've had with Housing Corp, we've talked about a target of a 90 percent collection rate I think on mortgages, but I'm not sure. We also talked at one point, as a result of the Auditor General report, about how the corporation is monitoring these arrears and these collections of arrears in rent and mortgage. So I just wondered if I could get some comment from the Minister on where things are at. How do arrears stand at this time for rents and for mortgages and the 90 percent collection rate as a target? How close are we to achieving that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the 90 percent collection rate was the percentage we have been able to collect historically in the year 2004-2005. In 2005-2006, the collection started slipping in the area of rent collection and it dropped down to 76 percent in the year 2006-07. We are now back up to 87 percent collection in the area of rents. Jeff can speak to the mortgages and the collections.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members may recall that we initiated a mortgage payment plan to provide options to homeowners to deal with the arrears situation. We have been working very hard on it. We have made some progress to date but we still have quite a ways to go on the mortgage portfolio. We are working with people. We want them to be able to remain in their homes. We've had about 14 clients so far that have refinanced their mortgage through banks, so we have been able to raise about \$700,000 through that process. We have had six clients to date that have turned the unit back to us for a quick claim process and 55 of them have been working on a repayment plan, so we are making some headway on it but we still have a long way to go on that portfolio. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: I think that is it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Next on my list is Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, under the corporate summary, in terms of municipalities and bands, the Minister had mentioned in terms of the unique challenges in some of our smaller bands and some of our charter communities or some of the hamlets or municipalities for the land. Has the Crown corporation designed a protocol with working with lands, band issues or municipalities? This came up in a discussion with the Fort Good Hope Charter Community that wanted to have some discussions with the corporation in terms of lands that are available and being worked on in the communities. I will ask the question in terms of the corporate summary in terms of how they are working with the municipalities and bands in terms of obtaining these lands in a very unique position to build much needed houses in the communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, in most cases or situations we sign a universal partnership agreement with the community, the band or the municipality that allows us to work together in a partnership arrangement. The other area and probably more challenging is the ability to build houses on IAB lands or federal Crown lands. Our requirements are that there is a land tenure or a document that testifies to that. In most cases we have two ways we can go and that is to deal with the federal government to give the person a direct lease or the community a lease or the band a lease. The other one is to set up a third-party entity that will allow the entity to hold the land in trust for the band or for the organization that we are dealing with. That seems to be working. We are bringing those strategies forward to some of the communities that have been giving us some concern.

MR. YAKELEYA: The strategies that are going to be coming forward certainly would possibly help the communities, I guess. Mr. Chair, I would like to ask in terms of the issues here we are just discussing. I am not quite fully briefed as to the issues in the community of Fort Good Hope because it wasn't given to me over the phone. Basically the request was to look at land issues in Fort Good Hope with the Housing Corporation. I am hoping that this corporation here with the Minister is flexible enough to look at issues such as Fort Good Hope in terms of the issues that they need to resolve to build units in the community and also what he mentioned about Colville Lake with the IAB lands to have units in the community.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the community of Good Hope has already done some partnership arrangement with the NWT Housing Corporation. We were able to develop a number of properties in that community. There is, right now, a desire to start working towards a more formalized agreement in terms of a universal partnership agreement, or a UPA, and will continue to work with them towards that and explain to them and make sure everybody understands what the agreement states.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. We are on page 5-43 which is an information item, corporate summary, operations expenditure summary. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just had a quick question on the operations expenditure summary, other expenses under mortgage and principal. I just want to know why that is an expense. I thought that would be a revenue. Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I will have Mr. Anderson respond to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: The mortgage principal and interest is actually the payment we make on our outstanding debt in the corporation. So it is interest and it also includes a bit of principal because we cash flow that through this budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to follow up on the land tenure question specifically with respect to Dettah and Ndilo and just find out if the third-party entity approach that the Minister had mentioned was actually being put in place for those communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the communities of Dettah and Ndilo have been probably some of the communities that have been most challenging in the area of getting land tenure. We have been working towards a third-party entity and we have had a number of meetings over the last while with the communities. It looked like it was resolved. I believe we have brought that to the federal government's attention. We still have to formalize that but it doesn't seem that that will be accepted, so we have to go back to looking at getting a formal federal lease on these lands. The

land might be something very challenging. We don't know what the communities' response is going to be to that, but we need to qualify the information is up to date.

MR. BROMLEY: What makes this so problematic? There must be similar situations in many areas of Canada and the Northwest Territories, probably. I am wondering why this is problematic here. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, it is a question, I guess, from the aboriginal government as to who owns the actual land. It would be relatively simply if everybody agreed that the federal lease would be in order, but in this case we are not getting that positive response from the band.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chairman, I think Housing had scheduled a number of Affordable Housing Initiative homes to be constructed there. They were delayed. Is there still an opportunity to put those in place? Are the dollars still available once this land tenure issue is resolved?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have carried over I think 10 units because we are not able to settle the land tenure issue. That is still available. We will continue to work with the community to see if we could resolve it. But, Mr. Chairman, it is very difficult if the community refuses to acknowledge the federal lease, then we don't have much choice. We are probably in a position where it is not going to be a concern because we have the ability to invest, carrying it over for some time may be quite challenging in the future. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for these comments. Do we know what the core need has been set at or recognized at in the recent past and where we are sitting relative to that for Ndilo and Dettah? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We are checking, but I believe all our core needs, for the most part, our communities are at 30 percent except for Colville which is at 76 percent.

MR. BROMLEY: I guess I don't have another question. I just would like to comment. I hope progress can be made on that file. If there is anything I can do as the Member for Weledeh to try and help out with that, I am perfectly willing to do that. I think my sense from constituents is the core need is definitely there for these communities. I would like to see that go forward. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I will go to the next person on my list. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Just following up on Mr. Bromley's question, I know that this issue is out there. I know there are ways that you could probably get around it. It is either have some land tenure for 30 years, we get a lease for 30 years subject that that land is in the negotiating process.

I know when we did land selection in the Sahtu and the Gwich'in area, they selected lands where the Housing Corporation had units on it. Basically it was subject to those lands that were IAB lands. We selected those lands but the Housing Corporation was aware that those lands did have that title on it. Once the claim was settled, then you knew which lands were which and either did a land swap in regards to those lands which taken over you either bought it outright or you basically guaranteed to a long-term 20 or 30-year lease with the corporation with the land owner, which now is municipal lands that are owned by the First Nations government. I don't know why that is something that is a problem here.

We have the Hay River Reserve in the Northwest Territories where we are providing houses from the Housing Corporation on the reserve which is, if anything, a more restrictive process than the land claims process. I think there are ways you could work it through. But I think the cleanest way is just agree with them at the negotiating table, that the government take it to the table and say, look, we need land. You have 30 houses to build here. Is there a guarantee that we can build these units subject to a 30-year lease agreement and subject to the ownership remaining with the band through the claims process?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I think times have changed. Historically, the NWT Housing Corporation was dropping houses fairly ad hoc and even on lands that we didn't have clear title to or we had the rules that were quite broad. Three years ago we had the Auditor General lay down the law for us that require us to have, through the homeownership, a land tenure. Now they can either get that on IAB lands through the federal government or they can have their band acquire a lease from the federal government and sublease.

We thought we had a solution and we are not too sure if it is a workable one anymore, by having another third-party entity, maybe a trust corporation, to hold the land. That doesn't seem to be realistic anymore.

Mr. Chairman, for us to have tenure, we need to have aboriginal governments agree to a federal lease. We have jurisdictions in the NWT that do not have a settled claim and are not willing to

acknowledge that the federal government owns the land and, therefore, not willing to subscribe to a lease. Now that really puts us in a difficult situation, because the rules that we have to follow require us to see land tenure.

MR. KRUTKO: I know this matter came up the other day at the Dene leadership meeting when the Premier was there. The issue was why couldn't you give the money directly to the band to build houses for their membership and let them deal with the federal government and the land issue? At the end of the day it is their membership that needs these houses and they definitely need the units that were allocated based on core need. Is there a possibility that you get the band in Dettah and Ndilo and let them build the houses themselves through their development corporations and whatnot and give them houses that they need? Is that the possibility of going directly through those corporations either through the band or one of their corporate arms? I think, at the end of the day, it is either we do it, they do it, or somebody does it. Right now, nobody is doing anything in that regard and the people need these houses. It is one of the few last communities that haven't taken advantage of the Northern Housing Trust money that was there. This was one of the hold-out communities. I think that if there are ways that we can get those houses built, give the money to a corporate entity or get them to establish a housing society or something, but do something. I wonder if he considered some of those other options.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We are trying to do something. We have a number of communities that are in the same situation. We are looking for options of how we can accommodate that. Our dollars come with rules. There are criteria. There are accountability issues. We have had requests from a number of band councils, aboriginal governments, to look at the concept of block funding. We are exploring that right now. We haven't come to any type of conclusion whether that is doable or not.

MR. KRUTKO: Again, it is one of those situations where they are negotiating a claim. There is the process that they call interim protection. There are certain limits made in those interim protection agreements that people know going forward that, if you have lands and it is selected, it is going to be subject to change in regards to who will be the owner or the manager of those lands that you presently have a lease on or basically that you have a...and it does directly state in those agreements that IAB lands will be selected in those communities for those First Nations governments which are designated aboriginal lands. Again, it is something that...

In southern Canada, they provide housing on reserves. They provide housing in aboriginal controlled communities. They have Metis settlements in Alberta. They provide Metis housing in Alberta. I don't know why we are not able to work around this. I know this issue did come up at the leadership meeting. They explored it. I think that it is an issue that should be resolved so that we can pack up the Affordable Housing Initiative and move on to the next \$50 million.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: There are two completely different scenarios in the sense that the southern jurisdictions are able to accommodate new units on their reserve lands and Metis settlement lands because there is a federal government that is willing to under write it by way of a federal loan guarantee. We don't have that luxury here. The situation is in the communities in the Northwest Territories that are on unsettled lands. That, I guess, is a possibility for those jurisdictions to go to negotiate at the negotiating table, Mr. Chairman. I am not at the negotiating table. We can explore different concepts, but that would have to be something negotiated. We certainly can fly that by any of those jurisdictions, but I think that has already been looked at.

I am not sure if some of these communities are far enough along to get the ear of the federal government to start setting aside lands yet. Those are issues we certainly can look at again, but I think we already tested the waters on those fronts.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I have three questions for the Minister. The first question to the Minister is, he was responding to a Member here in terms of the core need, and he is correct on the 76 percent of core need in Colville Lake. He is very correct on that. The information I have is from the 2004 percentage. Deline is 41.7 percent, Fort Good Hope is 46.9 percent, Norman Wells is 8.5 percent, Tulita 35.7 percent. This is the information I received for 2004. With the funding that the Minister will be receiving on behalf of the territorial government to look at our housing across the Northwest Territories, and with what Mr. Bromley is discussing in his community of Dettah with the funding, is a portion of this funding with the vision of the Minister's department...Does he foresee -- I know it is crystal balling -- bringing down these core needs that are high in the community? I know there are other core needs that are probably high in other communities, that I am not aware of, but these are ones that I picked out selectively for the Sahtu region. I think, is that the vision of this department, sorry, this corporation to bring this core need down to a level like Colville Lake, like 76? What we see in two years on Colville Lake, core needs will be

dropped down, I don't know to what percentage, but certainly we cannot sustain 76 percent for too long. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Minister of Housing

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, that is our goal. The numbers are very much correct and our target is to bring the core needs down. They are all relatively high. Based on 2004 information, we have to remember that and we should have our new core need figures for review or for public release in early summer of this year.

Our target, our goal, is to get all the core needs in the communities down to the national average, which I think is around 12 percent. We are still a long ways from that. We have, or will have, spent well over a million dollars in the last couple of years on housing and housing repair. We need to see the core need numbers come down and I would expect that is what we will see.

Again, Colville Lake is very unique and very challenging to put units into that community. We will probably have to work with the MLA and the community leaders as to a strategy and community plan for that area. We can probably look at doing some home repair, but the types of houses, and houses that can be accommodated there, we have to finalize and figure out.

MR. YAKELEYA: I certainly look forward to the new numbers that the Minister indicated. That will be coming out sometime this year in terms of core needs that I am using the 2004 needs, so it might not be too fair to the Minister and his department, but I think those numbers pretty well reflect the needs in the community. It is not fair to the Minister to give a proper answer until he sees the new numbers that are coming out this year and I look forward to that.

Mr. Chairman, the seniors facilities, and I am going to make another pitch for the seniors facilities in our communities that meet the needs. With the list of information that I have for Colville Lake 60 years and over, they have 22 elders. They don't have any public units in that community, they are all privately owned. I certainly agree with the Minister in terms of the uniqueness and the challenge for construction of units in communities like Colville Lake, so that is one. In Fort Good Hope, there are 61 elders that are 60 years and over. Our numbers are high in the Sahtu with elders compared to, probably the same as other regions, so I would like to look at ways that we could look at facilitating new units for elders that would meet their standards and bring down the core needs, also, at the same time.

In this area here, I have looked through the corporate summary. I am very excited that the Minister indicated that some new units are being designed and looked at, and hope that is part of the corporate summary in terms of how we deal with units. I think it is a good move. It is one that would be supported by our region in terms of how you look at housing for single units and single families that are very basic and simple. It is almost like a trapper's cabin, if you want to put a name to it. You have to learn some skills, you have to have some discipline to live that kind of lifestyle and that is what our elders have been telling us. The units that we have, our young people right now are being too used to, too spoiled, and they are depending too much on these units. We haven't done any justice by teaching them what it is like to be self-sufficient, self-disciplined, in terms of having a unit. I am very excited. I know some of the smaller communities are probably happy to look at something like this. Some design that is affordable, with the help of some good people around the Northwest Territories, to show how to have an energy-efficient homes that they could rely on no matter where they live, in town or the community. They will have a sense of they could make it. So I am looking forward to some directive from the Minister in terms of how he puts together, with some discussion with this Cabinet colleagues as to what is affordable, what is reasonable. I hope we are successful in that.

Those are more comments, I know Mr. Chairman, in terms of the Minister, but I am very happy that he makes some mention of these issues here. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, again, I certainly agree with the Member. We have heard and we recognize that there is a need for probably a new type of housing design; a very basic facility, a very basic unit. Possibly something that could be built in the community. We are looking at ways to use this as an economic stimulus, whether it is log - - that is a question that we haven't quite figured out yet -- stick built, and the other option that we are looking at for consideration is a modular. We have some communities that are saying we need units right now, so we are looking at all fronts, all angles. We will come forward with some possibilities.

Mr. Chairman, the Member raises public housing in the community that he represents, Colville Lake, and I think Mr. Menicoche also raised it for Fort Liard. Mr. Chairman, I also have, personally, one community in my riding that historically did not want public housing units and do not have public housing units in those communities of Colville Lake and Fort Liard. There is now a push to have those units. Our challenge is, in order for us to build a public unit, a public housing unit, we would have to take it out of our stock somewhere else, as we do not have new

money for operations and maintenance. It is something we have aligned ourselves in partnership in other jurisdictions. We need the federal government to sit down and listen to us, hear our arguments.

Mr. Chairman, this year, I think our reduction is \$750,000 in the area of operations for our public housing stock and I believe it is 2011 that we are going to see a significant reduction of \$3 million that is going to force us to do either of two things: either reduce, take some houses off the market or raise our rents. Mr. Chairman, we are quite concerned of where we are on this issue, because we recognize we are a couple of thousand public housing units short of what we need to really service all the communities, so we are going to need to be very creative and we're going to have to be very convincing with the federal government not to pull out of the public housing subsidies that they provide for us. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thanks, Mr. Minister. Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a brief comment. First, I heard the term "modular units." I guess there were certainly initially problems with them meeting the EGH 80 guidelines, but I know that they were working on that and perhaps they've achieved that goal.

My question is on the Affordable Housing Initiative carry-over such as for Ndilo and Dettah. Given it's for affordable housing, if we can't resolve the land tenure situation in this particular case within a sufficient time frame, can those dollars, in fact, be used for energy upgrades to EGH 80 for existing houses in order to make housing more affordable in Ndilo and Dettah, and perhaps other communities that have a similar situation? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Housing.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, first of all I should thank the Member for his office to help us try to come to some resolution on the issue. I should mention on the land issue we have put together a committee that involves MACA and CMHC and Indian Affairs, I believe, and ourselves to see how we can find our way through this. We are, of course, going to have to make a decision on the carry-overs at some point if we can't resolve the land issue. Putting into retrofits is certainly an option. Any retrofits or whether it's a modular unit we're going to be putting together, that number that was asked about would have to meet the EnerGuide 80. So that's something I want to reassure the Member is our goal and using these monies.

But I should also mention that through these new dollars that are coming forward and through this budget, we'll see more investment targeted for those communities. So that pot is continuing to grow.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chair, I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will rise and report progress. I'd like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, whatever.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? Honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, item 23, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Orders of the day for Thursday, February 19, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions

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| 10. Returns to Written Questions | 22. Third Reading of Bills |
| 11. Replies to Opening Address | 23. Orders of the Day |
| 12. Petitions | MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 19, 2009, at 1:30 p.m. |
| 13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills | ---ADJOURNMENT |
| 14. Tabling of Documents | The House adjourned at 7:56 p.m. |
| 15. Notices of Motion | |
| 16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills | |
| 17. Motions | |
| 18. First Reading of Bills | |
| 19. Second Reading of Bills | |
| 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters | |
| - Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy | |
| - Tabled Document 11-16(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2009-2010 | |
| - Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee | |
| - Committee Report 3-16(3), Report on the Use of Laptop Computers and Blackberry Devices in the Legislative Assembly | |
| - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act | |
| - Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act | |
| - Bill 4, Public Library Act | |
| - Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act | |
| - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act | |
| 21. Report of Committee of the Whole | |