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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, March 4, 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 1:30 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 Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 50-16(3):
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AND
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
INSTRUCTORS PROGRAM – PROGRAMS IN
THE BEAUFORT-DELTA

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

Mr. Speaker, increasing the number of aboriginal teachers is a primary goal of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. With that in mind, I am pleased to announce the expansion of our Teacher Education Diploma Program and Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructors Program. In September 2009, we will be delivering these two programs in the Beaufort-Delta. The program has been a success at Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith and in Behchoko. Having these two programs available in Inuvik, allows education to be more accessible to those who want to stay in their home riding.

Students will have the option to complete the teacher education and aboriginal language and culture diplomas in their communities or can do their final year in Fort Smith to finish a full bachelor of education.

Making education more accessible will give us more aboriginal teachers, language instructors, and program staff in our schools. The program is a key focus on the language and culture of the Beaufort-Delta region. It will help to preserve our strong past

while teaching our children the skills they need for the future.

I wish to thank all those who have worked and are working to make the Teacher Education and Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor programs a success. We have many partners in these programs, including Aurora College, the divisional education councils, Northwest Territories' Teachers Association, University of Saskatchewan, Indian Teacher Education Program. I look forward to seeing this program grow in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 51-16(3):
SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the impacts of the current economic downturn are being felt worldwide and the Northwest Territories is no exception. We are not immune to global market forces. We cannot control or influence these forces. Now, more than ever, it is critical that the department's programs and services focus on the needs of our business community and can help them weather this economic storm.

The economy is cyclical and eventually the economy will recover. We must look at the key elements of a robust operating environment for our businesses and ensure that these elements are positioned to operate efficiently and effectively when the eventual recovery of the economy occurs. These key elements are markets, policies and regulations, infrastructure, human resources, and access to capital.

The Northwest Territories is blessed with a tremendous resource base. The Territory has been endowed with an abundance of minerals and petroleum resources and, at the same time, its natural beauty is unparalleled. These are the Northwest Territories' competitive advantages. As the economy improves, these attributes will once again drive a flourishing economy.

This government and this department are working to ensure that there is an efficient and effective

policy and regulatory regime in place. The government has been engaged in the Northern Regulatory Improvement Initiative. We have negotiated socio-economic agreements with each of the operating diamond mines and the Mackenzie Gas Project to ensure employment, procurement, and value-added opportunities for Northwest Territories residents; a good example of leveraging our competitive advantages. These agreements have resulted in significant contributions to the evolution and growth of our territory's business sector.

The physical infrastructure must also be in place. This territory needs a transportation network in place that will facilitate the export of goods and the import of material required to produce those products. The departments of Transportation and Municipal and Community Affairs will be moving forward with projects under the Building Canada Fund.

To produce goods and services requires resources, not just raw materials and land, but people in entrepreneurship. The people of the Northwest Territories are one of our most significant resources, but we are aware that there is a significant labour shortage in the Northwest Territories. We are looking to bring workers into the Northwest Territories. To achieve this, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the diamond mines. In 2009-2010 the department will be initiating the National Marketing Campaign, a program intended to promote the Northwest Territories as a great place to visit, work, and live. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be delivering the Provincial Nominee Program.

Last, but not least, our entrepreneurs and businesses must have access to capital and information on markets. To address this, the department has a territorial network of regional community economic development officers, business development officers, community transfer economic development officers, and Community Futures staff to promote and provide information on funding and development resources available through the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation, Community Futures organizations, the Canada-Northwest Territories Business Service Centre, and the Federal Aboriginal Business Canada Program.

As well, we have the newly developed Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development, or SEED, program. This program adds to the support available to small businesses. We have also made a decision to make the Opportunities Fund a more

active fund and will work with the standing committees to do so.

Finally, I would like to highlight to colleagues the ongoing and oft unheralded work that we do as a government to lobby and leverage federal funding and investment to develop, promote, and sustain small businesses in the Northwest Territories. The pending extension of Canada's highly successful strategic investments in Northern Economic Development Program funding, a total of \$30 million for our Territory, was a direct result of this effort. Similarly, the Prime Minister's commitment to establish and fund a Northern Economic Development Agency in the North is also a reflection of long established efforts by our government to secure the federal support and interest of economic and business development in the Northwest Territories.

We remain confident that in time the nature and magnitude of our region's natural resources will allow us to rebound from the economic challenges that we now face. In the interim our government will continue to support and develop the economic conditions and investment climate that will allow us to grow and build capacity in our business and, by doing so, in our people and our communities.

I encourage all businesses to take advantage of the program and services that are in place to help them move through the challenging times and position themselves for the future.

In closing, I believe we have good people and good programs to assist our business community. I invite all of my colleagues in the House to bring forward new ideas to help us address the needs of the business community in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Sorry. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nice of you to remember we're over here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ohhh.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about the public rental housing subsidy and some of the difficulties that we have had since it's been transferred from the Housing Corporation to Education, Culture and Employment. I guess I

could be considered lucky, because I wasn't here in April of 2005 when that responsibility was transferred to the Department of ECE. But I've been hearing about that impact for almost two years now, even before I started work in this building.

The issues of my constituents are with service or, more correctly, lack of service in most cases. Instead of the promised one-stop shop, public housing clients now must visit two offices instead of one. There is a lack of coordination between the local housing office and the income support office, and dealing with two agencies thoroughly confuses my constituents. They tell me there's no consideration or management of the whole person or problem. Income support tends to only consider what falls under their umbrella and/or their policies. They seem unable to look outside the box, so to speak. So housing concerns are ignored; concerns which are often the cause of the income support issue. Income support offices are rigid in their application of policies. Clients report an attitude of "my way or the highway" rather than "what's the problem and how do we find a solution to your problem".

The stated goal of this change in 2005 was harmonization, the famous one-stop shopping reason. We have failed miserably in achieving this goal. In November 2006 this House debated a similar motion. The concerns about the impact of the transfer and the complaints voiced then are still the same today. I'd like to give a couple of quotes from November 1, 2006, Hansard record: "Tenants are having to wait three weeks to have their assessments done;" "It has not added any more benefits to the beneficiaries of the program;" and, thirdly, "What we're struggling with here clearly are implementation problems."

Today, over two years later, the same issues still exist and, despite the efforts of the Housing Corporation and Education, Culture and Employment to effect improvements, things are only marginally improved. Change is not always better and in this case it has been proven to be worse than the original. I believe we need to admit that a mistake was made and we need to use a time travel machine to take us back to early 2005, a time when we had a public housing rental subsidy system that worked, and we need to stay in that 2005 space for this program to operate the way it should.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the Northwest Territories, people are having public housing issues and these issues are common throughout. I would like to mention several today. The income threshold at which whole economic rent is demanded is too high relative to income and ability to pay. A confusing Rent Subsidy Program now involving two-stop shopping rather than one has caused an upsurge in arrears that lingers on and is causing anxiety amongst tenants. Finally, delays in assessments, highly variable incomes necessitating frequent rent subsidy adjustments and delayed payments can combine to yield penalties such as rent increases to full economic rent. This deadly combination can lead tenants into a downward spiral that benefits neither our citizens nor our government.

Mr. Speaker, when our public housing tenants finally get to where they begin making a decent wage and they can begin to establish themselves financially, we almost immediately kick in a requirement for 30 percent of their salary to be paid out in rent. In actual fact, this amounts to 50 percent of their gross income. This substantial burden comes while the tenant is likely trying to deal with other debts and with solidifying their financial status. Further, because it is diabolically based on gross income, this degree of levy does not fully consider ability to pay, which is related to number of dependents, medical situation, et cetera. Were it to be based on take home pay, that would be a different story. Well, this is a federal policy and is an actual problem that GNWT could clearly take the lead on.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the ongoing insistence that the government shows to house the Rental Subsidy Program in ECE has caused an increase in arrears, many of which remain today. This situation is not working, causing people to shift back and forth between income support in ECE and Housing Corporation is confusing and unfair. The remedy is clear.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, many of our housing tenants have unpredictable or seasonal employment that causes their incomes to fluctuate, sometimes wildly as in the case of sport hunting guides. Assessments do not seem to take this fact into account, leading to assessments that the tenant is sometimes unable or late to pay. At this point the rent gets kicked up to full economic rent and thus the spiral begins.

Mr. Speaker, our housing programs are key for the people of the Northwest Territories and we have a good record of getting things built on the ground.

But when it comes to administering rent subsidies, we have less than a sterling record. Let's not cling to our ways, Mr. Speaker, but show our adaptability and change or admit mistakes as required. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DISCONNECT BETWEEN HOUSING
AUTHORITIES AND ECE
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement is on housing. Our situation in Nunakput is a serious problem. In fact, the housing situation in the Northwest Territories is a serious problem. Low capital housing projects are planned for Sachs Harbour. In Paulatuk, the rental officer is flown in to deal with people's arrears and quickly flown out again. More and more administration seems to be done out of the Inuvik regional office level and not being done in the community level. That is wrong, Mr. Speaker. The regional office is working hard and they have good staff, but often they are using Inuvik solutions for small community problems. The government says they are committed to the community capacity building. The government has to start fulfilling their promises made earlier.

Nunakput communities cannot find the manager because the money is given to the regional offices. It is so low that it is unattractive for many people in other jurisdictions. Giving smaller governments responsibility but not enough money is called downloading, Mr. Speaker. There is a serious disconnect between the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the NWT Housing Corporation in small communities. Each community must have one-stop shop where residents can go and not get the runaround, where there problems can be addressed, coordinating in a full complement of administrative services at the community level would start making a dent into the problem.

Each community must be given money, resources and a commitment is needed to fulfill the roles that they have been assigned to do. Without that, it is like setting them up to fail, Mr. Speaker. Housing core responsibility of the government such as water, health care, education, protective services. However, recent developments of the government seem to contradict this principle. This government must get serious and tackle the real issues with real solutions.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. JACOBSON: Last fall I encouraged the government to fund a series of regional meetings composed of all the levels of government, businesses and organizations who, with considerable knowledge in the area of housing, were to generate recommendations to the government to consider while evaluating housing conditions. Many are calling it a crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have more questions for the Minister of NWT Housing Corporation at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SPENDING OF SOCIAL HOUSING MONEY
IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about an aspect of the Public Housing Rental Program that I am concerned about. Like the other Members, I, too, want to see an efficient administration of subsidy programs that provide cost-effective services to clients who need support for their housing costs. We all know that housing costs can be very expensive in the NWT. We understand the importance of this program for our residents, whether they live in small communities or large communities in the Northwest Territories. The area that I am concerned about is public housing when it is supplied by private sector landlords. I know that in Yellowknife and some of the larger communities it makes good sense to provide a rental subsidy to clients who are living in privately owned and operated housing. This increases the housing options available to our residents.

We all know residents who need some assistance with housing costs only. On other fronts, they are managing well, have a job and are meeting their household expenses. Clients like these and the government could be well served with leases with private sector landlords.

However, I'm concerned about the Housing Corporation's program which acquired housing through leases with the private sector landlords; agreements that guarantee rent to these landlords and pay the landlords to provide maintenance costs for the units, something that other landlords would cover through rent collection. My understanding is that the rental rates are at a premium. The additional maintenance costs or services are definitely at a premium. These are long-term leases, Mr. Speaker. It is another premium to the landlords or a significant benefit to the landlords at the GNWT's expense. I think these kinds of services are not a cost-effective way to provide a

public housing subsidy. They are not the best use of the limited financial resources that we have as a government.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will be asking the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation questions about this type of public housing rent and subsidy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUBSIDIZING OF SOCIAL HOUSING FOR SENIORS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this is a housing theme day today. Mr. Speaker, during the 13th Assembly a policy was put in place that would see free rent and full utility costs covered for seniors living in public housing units. Mr. Speaker, this causes a problem in market communities where often seniors have been involved in the wage economy, have pensions, have owned their own homes and do have some means to pay. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong for providing free rent to seniors. Where it becomes a problem is when we can't provide free housing to all seniors over 60. If we could only do it for a few, how do we decide who should benefit from this generous policy? Is it sustainable over the long haul?

All other housing programs that this government has are means tested, but not rent for seniors over 60 who are living in social housing. If you live in a care home, a monthly fee is applicable. If you are in extended care, a monthly fee is applicable. If you live in the seniors home, a fee is charged, so it is an anomaly and I don't think it came about because seniors themselves said we don't want to pay anything. I never once heard that before that policy went into place.

I support assisting our seniors in ways that help them live long, healthy and independent lives, but it seems that it would make more sense to include seniors in the means tested policy of all other housing programs. Then I think our government would be in a position to help more seniors, including those who are challenged with the ever-increasing costs of staying in their own homes. The Home Repair Program, the fossil fuel subsidy program are programs that could be enhanced for seniors in their own homes if we did not have all of our resources being consumed by this very generous free policy.

I would not support anything but a phased-in approach if we were to change this policy, taking into full account the seniors' ability to pay ensuring

that no economic hardship would result. Mr. Speaker, we have created an unfair and inequitable policy that leaves some seniors with little or no support while providing accommodation including all utilities for some at absolutely no charge regardless of their means to pay. Mr. Speaker, I don't know why we as a government cannot devise a policy that would address this inequity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the five and a half years that I've been a Member of this House, some decisions that the last government made are still causing me to wonder what they were thinking. Of course, nothing will ever top the Deh Cho Bridge, Mr. Speaker, and I'll just have to accept that I may never understand that decision. Right behind that was the decision to take \$30 million for Social Housing Policy from the Housing Corporation and transfer it to ECE. The program was being delivered by Housing staff throughout the Territory and for all intents and purposes the system was not broken. For reasons still unknown to me, the government decided to grab the \$30 million, transfer it to ECE and then hire 14 people to deliver the same program that was being delivered by Housing with their existing staff. Mr. Speaker, not only did ECE have to hire 14 new employees, it cost the government \$1.5 million more per year to administer the program. I believe this is completely ridiculous. That \$1.5 million could be better spent in other areas of our operation.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have a crystal ball, but the economy does not seem to be getting any better and you can rest assured our revenues are going to be shrinking. To be spending \$1.5 million that we don't need to be spending is foolhardy.

In 2006 Members passed a motion calling on the government to reconsider the transfer. The last government didn't listen to us at the time, Mr. Speaker. The government wants us to keep waiting for things to improve, but the bottom line is things are not getting any better. Maybe there is some hope. The mover and second of the motion back in 2006 are now both Cabinet Ministers. I know they supported sending the money and the responsibility back to Housing. It was something they believed in. My colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod, stated during the debate on the motion that "I really challenge the government to be big enough to listen to what they are being asked to

do." My colleague from Range Lake, Minister Lee, stated "it is not the right move, the government has not met the burden of making their case."

Mr. Speaker, here we are over two and a half years later and the government still has not made their case. How much longer are we going to allow this to continue? Where is the proof, Mr. Speaker, that this is actually working? Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I phoned communities in the Sahtu and certainly the people have a lot of concerns with the social housing here, and since it's been transferred over to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, things haven't gotten any better. Actually, the one conversation that I had this morning was that it's actually gotten worse and that it's really hindering and frustrating a lot of people in my community because of the implementation that in theory looks and sounds very good but in practicalities, in reality, it's not working very well. It's putting a lot of people in jeopardy in terms of their credit with Housing or with their arrears. It's changing a lot of people's ways of looking at how social housing is being delivered in the Sahtu region.

I received two letters from two students who are living in social housing in Tulita and it doesn't give a very good picture. I'll be tabling these letters in the House for the Members here to read from these two students who are working very hard to get an education, to get a good job, to live in a house that they can probably say is theirs. They are doing everything that they can do to be productive members of society and in the Sahtu community of Tulita; however, because of the transfers and the difficulties that they are experiencing, it doesn't seem like they're getting very far. For them, they seem like they could only just say, what's the use in trying? What's the use trying to get a job, go to school and see if they can do any good for themselves? These young people who have families, who are working very hard to get into school, make some productive choices, but because of the system and the way it is, because of the Social Housing Agreements that were negotiated with the federal government, these agreements here don't seem to be working for the people.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that we should really go after the federal government looking at these Social Housing Agreements and see how it has an impact

on the people in the Sahtu. These young students, they are very frustrated with the Housing administrative programs and they'd like something to be done. I think that it's about time that this government is big enough to do something at this time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk today about my concern about the transfer of the public housing rent subsidy to income support in Education, Culture and Employment. I have always been against this transfer. It did not seem like a good idea to me from the beginning, more than four years ago.

In the NWT we have always acknowledged that many people need help with their housing costs to keep housing affordable. In fact, many people consider that providing access to affordable housing is a longstanding obligation of this government like education and health care. In small NWT communities, no one felt embarrassed to be in public housing. Everyone was located in public housing of some kind. Even the government provided housing for its staff. The Northern Stores provided housing for its manager. The RCMP had housing. There were not very many homeowners except for a few government senior managers in Yellowknife and regional centres.

However, the government changed things. Some of those changes have not been for the better. Now if you need help with your housing costs you have to access the Income Support Program. I know working mothers who pay \$500 to \$600 a month for their rent and have a regular job and now have to be as income support client. They have to report their income regularly to an income support officer. These concepts may work well somewhere else in Canada, maybe in a big city like Toronto; however, they have not worked well here.

I do not think that we have served our people well by making so many Northerners become clients on social assistance. I think we can change back to the understanding we had in the NWT, that housing is an extraordinary expense in the NWT and that most Northerners need assistance to manage those costs. I think it is time for the government to acknowledge that sometimes the way we do things in the NWT is the right way for us and we don't need to change things just to be in fashion with southern Canada. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support the principles of what my colleagues are raising here today. They are bringing forward the frustrations and, if I may define, the swell of frustrations out there in our communities regarding some of the principles of why the social housing transfer moved from Housing over to ECE.

Mr. Speaker, I think, actually, it was a good thing. I think the principles of it were sound, but the problem with the issue really rose when they only did half the transfer. Mr. Speaker, they sent over the auditing process of the application form but they didn't fulfill their mandate by transferring the administration of where that payment goes. That's where the problem exists, Mr. Speaker, because now there are two stops when there really should be one. Before it was simple. Yes, I agree that people could go to Housing if you didn't need income support, but I really believe in my heart that a Service Canada model style of business would help everyone. In these times of need, this issue seems to surface, as it wasn't fully implemented. I think that's where the fault lies.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues will talk about the market rent problems that have emerged out of this and I would agree with them, but I think the real failing of this process was it was never fully fulfilled, which is finish the job by transferring all the administrative positions over the income support and process one application at one time. Mr. Speaker, that is the solution to this problem. It's becoming more evident as we discuss this and go forward. Creating two service shops creates twice the burden, Mr. Speaker. I think the government is on the right track. I think the government needs to make the right decision, though, and finish the social housing transfer all in one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Today I wish also to speak about the transfer of public housing assessments from the local housing

organizations to the income support officers in the communities or the transfer of this function from the NWT Housing Corporation to Education, Culture and Employment. I'm not making this statement because I think that Education, Culture and Employment has done a bad job of this, it's because I think that the government didn't think about the dignity of the people that they were dealing with.

In effect, this government put 2,300 public housing clients on income support, or better known in the community as welfare. That's how it was seen. People who had never been on welfare before were living in public housing. Considering they had pride in their homes, they were able to get a unit themselves to house their families. The government decided, hey, we'll put them all on welfare. And that's exactly what happened.

It was never that all income support clients were in public housing or that all public housing clients were on income support. It is the issue of dignity. This indignity was levelled to the people in public housing. It created major confusion for all public housing clients, especially the seniors. The working poor were paying their subsidized rent. They were going to the LHO each month and went there for decades. Suddenly some of these people had to apply for income support or welfare in order to obtain their subsidy. Many people did not go to the income support office and all of a sudden they were in serious arrears and facing eviction. Some people were evicted. Some had nowhere to live. All of a sudden they had bad credit. Not because they were different tenants or that they were bad tenants, it was because the government changed the policy. People that did not go to the income support office were automatically charged maximum rent.

I seek unanimous consent to finish my Member's statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BEAULIEU: People who did not go were automatically charged maximum rent, as I just said. In Tu Nedhe that's \$1,300 to \$1,500 for a two-bedroom unit. People who were working at the mines came back from the mines and they were going to go pay their rent of \$800 or \$900 and realized they had to apply for income support to get the subsidy for the difference. They didn't go and the rest is history.

The change in the policy has not been good for public housing clients. People who had no arrears, no problems with the Housing Association for years are now facing evictions, arrears, bad debt, whatnot.

Anyway, I will have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SPENDING OF SOCIAL HOUSING MONEY
IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The whole Income Support Program and the \$30 million that was transferred from the Housing Corporation for the social housing funds was there with the intention of those funds to be used for the O and M of some 2,200 public housing units in the Northwest Territories and to cover those costs associated with social housing. Since that time we have built an additional 520 new units under the Northern Housing Trust, through which we spent \$100 million, and now we have another \$50 million that we have to spend in this fiscal year and next year.

The \$30 million was to assist in covering the cost of O and M for those public housing units throughout the Northwest Territories. Now with the additional 500-and-something units and the \$50 million, where is the money going to come from to cover off the O and M for those public housing units?

The whole intent of the Social Housing Trust was to improve the housing stock in the Northwest Territories. Yet we do have a political challenge. Where is the money going to come from to cover the costs for O and M? Those same dollars are being spent through Education, Culture and Employment by hiring more people when those dollars were supposed to be used for O and M for social housing.

Another thing is that now income support clients can go to ECE who may have been evicted from housing or are looking at approaching the private housing market to get into housing in that arrangement in which the money is covered off by ECE using the \$30 million which was supposed to be earmarked for social housing in the Northwest Territories. Again, these dollars are being used to rent public housing stock in the Northwest Territories.

Those dollars were earmarked for social housing in northern Canada. Not for the private sector. Not for rent subs for private individuals. To provide the cost to operate the social housing stock in the Northwest Territories. These dollars are not being spent where they were supposed to. With the arrangement of the dollar there, I would like to ask the government to seriously consider reinstating the dollars with respect to the \$30 million back to the Housing

Corporation for the reason it was supposed to be spent, which was for social housing.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 3-16(3):
CONDOLENCE TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS
OF CHRISTINE BALSILLIE

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to acknowledge Mrs. Christine Balsillie of Fort Resolution, who passed away on February 28th at the age of 77. Christine was born in Old Fort Rae on December 21st, 1931, and was well known and highly respected for her sewing skills. Christine is survived by her sons, Don and Clayton Balsillie, and daughters Joanne Teed, Tracey Balsillie and Dianne Boucher. She was predeceased by her husband, Harold, and daughters Helen and Vivian.

Christine is a Lafferty originally from Behchoko and has many relatives in the Behchoko area. She will be sadly missed by her children, grandchildren, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and many family and friends in Yellowknife, Fort Resolution, and Behchoko.

Funeral services for Christine will be held tomorrow at 11:00 in Fort Resolution.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 4-16(3):
94TH BIRTHDAY OF MARY KENDI

MR. KRUTKO: I would like to acknowledge Ms. Mary Kendi of Aklavik, who turns 94 years old today.

---Applause

Mary is one of the last generations of her family who has lived, trapped, and hunted as a means of survival for herself and her children. Mary lost her husband early in their marriage and, as a result, cared for and nurtured her children and taught them the traditional values and skills of hunting, trapping, sewing, and the family love that she brought to her children.

She contributed to the community of Aklavik by securing and telling the story and history, and also with her traditional knowledge being passed on to

the new generation. As well, she was a major resource by way of knowledge for the people of Aklavik.

I would like to wish Mary Kendi a very happy birthday for today and thank her for all her wisdom, her grace, and the sharing of herself and her family, and, more importantly, the gift that she always had of sharing the knowledge she has with her people, her community, and her children. Mahsi cho, Mary.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 247-16(3): TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in my Member's statement I spoke of the transfer of public housing assessments from NWT Housing Corporation or the local housing organizations to the income support office.

The more I think about this and the more that the departments think this could actually work, I don't think it's a solvable issue. I think that this issue, the only way to solve the issue is to put the thing back into the Housing Corporation or the local housing organizations.

I would like to ask the Minister of ECE if he would be prepared to meet with the Minister of the NWT Housing Corporation to reverse this wrongdoing.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's comments and direction to our Cabinet here. We have done a lot of work in this area over the last four years. We've consulted with various groups and agencies in the communities and we have met with the standing committee as well, giving them an update of where we are. There is a lot of work ahead of us still. It's a huge undertaking. It won't be fixed overnight. I guess you can say any huge project undertaking such as that will take some years to make it work and make it efficient and effective.

At the same time I have been working closely with the Minister of the Housing Corporation and we have met on a frequent basis. We have met with our staff as well, our senior staff, our staff that are dealing with the communities. We are moving forward on working together and identifying the

challenges that still are out there. We do continue to work in this area on how we can improve in these areas.

MR. BEAULIEU: I think the issue, as I see it, is that this can't be fixed as is. That's the problem. It could be effective, it could be efficient, it could be economical, people could have no arrears, but it can't be fixed. The problem is that the people on income support have been, I mean, in public housing that's been transferred to welfare. That's what the issue is; nothing else.

MR. SPEAKER: I didn't hear a question there. Mr. Beaulieu, maybe I misunderstood. I didn't hear a question there.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my question is, how would the Minister hope to resolve that specific issue of how the people in public housing feel about this?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly there may be a perception in the community. As I stated, it has been in the works for four years now. One of the areas we focused on at the beginning of the transfer was a one-stop shop. We have achieved this by offering the office, the one-stop shop, giving the subsidies to clients, income assistance, public housing rental subsidies, senior home subsidy, child care user subsidy. So it's more than just one subsidy.

We did a survey. Clients are saying in the customer satisfaction survey that they are accessing more benefits today than before.

MR. BEAULIEU: There is a technical issue that I'd like to ask the Minister. Has the Minister resolved the issue of the income tax impacts upon people that are being taxed on their subsidy?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly that's one of the areas we've been tackling as one of the challenges. But it's nothing new. It's always been there. Certainly we continue to work with that. There's always room for improvement. This is one area we need to deal with and, simply, we cannot do it alone. We need to work with the LHOs. That's why I did commit in the House that I'll continue to work with the Minister of the Housing Corporation to resolve these issues. That's just one area. There are other areas we need to deal with, but we are making progress and we are willing to sit down with the standing committee to give them an update on what's happening. Both the Minister of the Housing Corporation and I.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the people of Tu Nedhe it has become two-stop

shopping, because they used to just go to the housing authority and get their subsidized rent amount and they actually paid their rent. Now they have to go to the income support office first and apply for their subsidy. When they get their subsidy, then they take their subsidy minus the maximum rent and then they pay their rent. So it hasn't really worked for the people in Tu Nedhe, in any event. I'm just wondering what the Minister means by one-stop shopping versus what was there before compared to what's there today.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The one-stop shop is having all the subsidies in one area. Before there were all these different areas that the individuals could go to. We're still working on that as well. That area, of course, we'll continue to work with. And also ECE expanded service to a number of remote communities, such as Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e, as well. So we identified those small communities that may face challenges of whether it be a one-stop shop. We do have some certain leases that we've agreed to several years back. We continue to respect that. So they may not be a one-stop shop in certain communities, but that's our strive to have a one-stop shop, all the subsidies in one area in all communities. That's our goal. We'll continue to strive for that.

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

QUESTION 248-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of the Housing Corporation regarding the cost to operate and maintain the housing stock, knowing that we originally had some 2,200 units and just put some 520 units on the ground and now we have another \$50 million. Again, at the end of the day there is a cost associated with operating this many units. Now we're responsible for some 2,700 units. The \$30 million that we get from the federal government through the social funds that are being handed over to ECE is supposedly there for the cost to operate and maintain those units.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Housing where exactly we're going to find the additional funds that will be needed, knowing that we have additional houses on the ground that we are responsible for operating and maintaining on top of the 2,200 that we already have. What are we doing to increase those dollars, realizing we have more units to maintain?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number of units we have in the public housing stock is 2,400 units. That number hasn't changed as a result of the Northern Housing Trust. The Member is right; by the end of this year we'll have 500-and-some new units on the ground. Those units were put in place in some cases to private accommodation and in a lot of cases some of the money was spent to replace older public housing units. With these new dollars we intend to do the same thing, including upgrade a lot of the units.

The Member is quite correct when he says where is the new money going to come from. We have not received any new dollars for the public housing operations. We are still at \$32 million. Of that, 15 percent is being raised through rents. The rest is all through government subsidy. We are on a declining subsidy scale. Every year we do get reduced. I believe this year it's \$750,000 that CMHC is cutting us back. Next year my understanding is that it will be around \$3 million. The only way we can recover that is either to raise rents to operate our units or reduce the stock.

We do have a political challenge to convince the federal government that they cannot move away from this area of responsibility in social housing. We're not alone. It's not targeted only to us. It's targeted to all jurisdictions across Canada. We're creating alliances to try to address this to convince the federal government that they have to stay involved and this is a serious concern for all of us and we'll continue to bring that message forward.

MR. KRUTKO: The \$30 million that is earmarked for ECE for social housing, I noticed that the last numbers I looked at the Housing Corporation only received \$27 million. There are \$3 million not spent for social housing but was spent in the private sector for housing in regard to rent supps or people renting from the private sector when they went to ECE, because they couldn't get into housing for one reason or another. I'd like to say, isn't that a concern of the department that you're not getting the \$30 million back that was given to ECE for social housing, which has now been spent in the private sector and not for social housing?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I'd need clarity to see where the actual dollars the Member is referring to are or what the situation is. In response to the question, we are always concerned. Any time there are dollars that are supposed to be coming to us for whatever reason, whether it's through the federal government subsidy, the CMHC subsidy, or through our own government, or from our clients, our public housing clients, and we're not receiving our rents, it becomes an issue. It becomes an issue for us as the Housing Corporation and it becomes an issue for the LHOs. We need to collect at least 90 percent

of our revenues through these in order to operate our LHOs efficiently. Anything under that creates a deficit and really causes difficulty at the LHO level.

MR. KRUTKO: I think the Minister should be concerned because the dollars that are going through ECE are being spent for administration, travel, costs that weren't there before. We have LHOs in all the communities, but we have social workers flying in from the regional centres into communities, overnighing, meeting with clients, flying back to the regional centres. That cost is coming out of your \$30 million. I'd like to ask the Minister what exactly his department is doing to assess the relationship that you originally had where you did both the assessment duties and charging the rent to the client instead of having ECE do it. I'd like to know, is the Minister looking at that in light of the questions regarding ensuring that the revenues that are there to operate and maintain social housing are not being spent on travel for other people and other staff.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: What we're doing is having a discussion with the intention of moving forward in terms of doing an assessment. The decision to transfer some of the responsibility for social housing to ECE has been in place now for several years. The decision was made in 2005. We believe it's high time that we took a step back and did an assessment to see how well it's working, what are the benefits, what are the pros and cons of doing it this way.

Somebody mentioned today in their statement, where is the proof that this is going well? There are a lot of things that we could point to probably that were probably difficulties in getting this in place. There are other things that we can point to that are doing well. This has allowed, as the Member has indicated, for more people to be hired through ECE. They're allowed to expand the area that they service by face-to-face meeting rather than having the region deliver some of the programs. Through the economies of scale they are able to do more. We have to be able to measure that.

The Minister of ECE and I are working on developing a terms of reference. We're looking at signing an agreement so that we can go out and do an independent review. We're not quite at that stage yet, but there is still some more discussion to take place, but that was our intention.

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

MR. KRUTKO: I'd maybe like to ask the Minister if he would do his own internal review regarding the housing authorities in our communities and see exactly what the problems are that they are dealing with in regard to getting the rent supp payments

back from ECE on a timely manner so that they don't find themselves running into a deficit or basically that their cost of O and M on those units are out of line with actually what their payroll is. I'd like to ask the Minister if there are any plans to do an internal review from the Housing Corporation's point of view on the transfer. Has it worked, hasn't it worked from the Housing Corporation's perspective?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We are probably more in a position to analyze the situation as it really has direct bearing on the operations of our LHOs. The ability to collect rent, as I mentioned earlier, is a big part of the operation that the LHO has to utilize as a budget. Our budget now, after some difficulties for a period of roughly two years, we're back to the level of rent collections that we had been at historically. So we're quite comfortable now that most of the people are stable in terms of knowing where and how the system and paper flow is working. We don't expect it to change all that much over the next while.

There is still and always will be, no matter if it's this process or the Housing Corporation did all the analysis and collection by itself, including setting the rent scales, will be the challenge of collecting rent. There are people out there that refuse to declare their income. That was there before. That's going to stay there at any rate, no matter how we set it up. That seems to be an issue we will always be struggling with. My solution or objective is to provide good information, show how the calculations are made, show how the money is being utilized, and educate the people who are in our public housing units.

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

QUESTION 249-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of ECE with regard to the rental subsidy that was transferred over to his department. Our goal as the government is to improve the lives of our people. I don't believe our goal is for harmonization, which means channelling or herding people over to one central area. It makes life difficult. The Minister spoke about the assessment. That's something that's been ongoing for some time. We've been looking for it and asking for it. I'd like to know exactly what stage this assessment is at. It may be internal but, at the same time, how much public focus is he going to give this assessment?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We do have data, of course, over the last four years of what we've done to date; improvement in certain areas. Since the transfer there's been a greater number of computer assessments to date and improved LHO collection of rent. As Minister Michael McLeod indicated, there has been some progress made on the rent collection. As the Minister also indicated, we are analyzing our assessment area and relooking at our shop of one-stop shop where we're at today, where we've been, and where we're going with it. Certainly those are the areas that we need to highlight on a moving-forward basis.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Both Ministers, the Minister of Housing as well, keep talking about good news, but that's not what we're hearing in the communities. They're asking for us to give them time, but we've done a motion about a year ago as well and they indicated then that they'll look at the Rental Subsidy Program. For me, I believe that the transfer went to the wrong department. I believe it should have stayed in Housing. Just as an example, how is the income assessment for housing different from income assessment or just regular income support?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Each client is different in the regions. We talk about the one-stop shop with all the rental subsidies, the child care in different areas. Certainly some individuals have three or four accessible subsidies, so it's convenient for them. So this is an area that we showed interest in to allow as much information as we can. Not only that, we are reaching out to the communities now. Since I met with Minister Michael McLeod of the Housing Corporation, how can we make a difference in the communities. Just updating on the clients and potential clients that we have out there, the detailed information on program delivery. The subsidies are available. Some community members are not fully aware of the subsidies that we offer. So I've instructed my department to be out there, visible, more visible in the communities. They are doing that. They've gone to Behchoko, as an example. They'll be going to other regions as well and providing more detailed information. I think that's required. We're not just...They call us a welfare department. We provide the subsidy area and the money is there. The funding is available to offset the rental. So that is the area that we focus on with our department. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: When the program was with the Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, it was administratively simpler. People showed up with income statements. They were assessed rent of

\$500 or \$600 per month based on income and a few other parameters, but now they are going to income support, Mr. Speaker. Right off the bat we are charging them economic rent, which is something I disagree with because that is \$1,200 or \$1,400 per unit when the market rent is about \$1,000 or \$1,100. Just once again, is there a difference in income assessment for housing clients as opposed to accessing the other income support programs? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, when the transfer came into play, we did not make any changes. How it was delivered through LHOs and what it comes down to now, public housing rental subsidy, the policy and rules were developed by the NWT Housing Corporation so we continue with that trend. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, information has been requested by LHOs at that time. We still continue with that today. It has always been there. It always will be there because we have to follow certain policies. Not just on policies but on subsidies, there are requirements to qualify for subsidies. That is the area that we will continue to work with. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: With the research that the Minister has done to date, can the Minister say with certainty that this program is working for him and his department? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, we did do an income assistance client satisfaction survey: 76.7 percent of the response was satisfied with the outcome of the assistance, 10.3 percent said they are satisfied. So 76 percent is the number we are using. Just recently, December, January, we did a conductor survey. It just goes to show it is working in the community. We continue to improve our service in how we deliver programs in the communities, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with the standing committees, with the Minister of the Housing Corporation. There is always room for improvement. I would like to hear ideas from Members, as well, on how we can improve in certain areas. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 250-16(3):
SUBSIDIZING OF PUBLIC HOUSING
FOR SENIORS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those who benefit from the free housing for seniors, I do apologize, but, Mr. Speaker, there are many other seniors out there in our communities who do not enjoy the benefit of enough support from this government with respect to living independently in their senior years in the Northwest

Territories. It was in the 13th Assembly that this government decided to introduce a policy that would see seniors in public housing over the age of 60 pay zero rent, contribute nothing towards the cost of their units. Could the Minister of Housing please tell me what the rationale was behind that policy? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That decision was made many years ago. The intention behind that decision was to ease the burden of the high cost of living in the Northwest Territories. At the time, the focus was on the small communities. Mr. Speaker, since that time, the seniors are the fastest growing segment of our population across the North. We have experienced in the last 15 years, according to our records, 75 percent in the area of more seniors than we did historically. That is becoming the challenge. It is another issue that is facing us for review. The Minister of ECE and I have had some informal discussions. We will continue to look at that decision, but there is a growing concern in this area. The initial intention was to ease the cost of living for seniors in the Northwest Territories.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That is a very noble intent to ease the burden of the cost of living in the North for seniors over 60. If that is the intent of the government, why would you take a small portion of seniors in a market community and give them everything and give the vast majority of seniors living in their own homes, struggling with the high cost of living, nothing? How would the Minister say or rationalize how that policy that has been left in place...It is good to say it is being reviewed, but it has been left in place and the number of seniors is growing. Why, if that was the intent and real purpose of this government, would they not make that an equitable distribution of resources on the part of this government? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I have been the Housing Minister for eight months now. My task list is growing and growing. Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the Member that this is an issue that we have to look at. I do not agree, however, that we leave people in private housing that are seniors, with nothing. That is not a correct statement.

We do have all our programs accessible to seniors. The last couple of years we have expanded our program so that now the seniors can access up to \$90,000 worth of renovations to their units. We have changed the way we deal with seniors. We have opened it up further. However, there is, as the Member put it, part of our senior population that are

still utilizing our facilities at no cost. It is a challenge as ECE has limited funding. They are the ones with the subsidy money and it is being reduced. We had the Housing Corporation charge full maximum rent to everyone and the subsidy, of course, is offset by ECE. That is an issue that has to be looked at and decisions made. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I stand corrected. It is true; there is something out there for seniors living in their own home. I agree. All of those policies and all of those programs available to seniors living in their own housing are all means tested. Some of them like the Repair Program that the Minister referred to, you can get up to a certain amount of money. If you want to access that, you have to allow the NWT Housing Corporation to become a joint homeowner with you. They need to register a caveat on your title in order to do that. The reason they do that is because they are worried. If you get \$20,000 to fix up your house and then, in five years, you decide to sell your house, or in three years, that you might be receiving a benefit. So it is hard to rationalize that, then, with the fact that the other policy has absolutely no means test as do all the ones that he is referring to that seniors in their own homes have. They are all means tested and the NWT Housing Corporation wants to co-own your home with you in case you receive a benefit. How does he rationalize that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: The Member is correct; there is a forgivable mortgage that assigns liens and security to our new programs. We do not provide free rent to the seniors. The Housing Corporation charges full rent. ECE offsets the rent by paying it 100 percent.

Mr. Speaker, it is an area that needs attention. It was put in place during the days, in the era of one that there were not a lot of high income pensioners in our smaller communities. It was only targeted towards the smaller communities. Now the program has been opened up to the larger regional centres and it is cause for concern. We have a lot of what could be interpreted as windfall situations, so it needs to be looked at and a program has to be incorporated. That is our intention, is to look at it and see what we can do there. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Might I suggest that the policy that allows seniors to live in NWT Housing Corporation's social housing unit for no rent assessed to them is not a policy of ECE? It is a policy of the Housing Corporation. So I am very glad to hear that although ECE may pay that subsidy out of their budget, it is in fact a policy of the Housing Corporation that says to the Department of ECE, do not charge those seniors

anything for rent and utilities regardless of their income. I want to put that on the record, because that is the case.

Mr. Speaker, when the Housing Corporation and ECE do take a look at this policy, would they commit to including the NWT seniors in the consultation about improving this policy? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, first of all I should say that the government policy that requires us to provide free rent to housing is one that is fully subsidized by ECE. They could decide to change that subsidy level with some discussion with Cabinet, I guess. We would, once we have decided how we are going to move forward or how the next steps are going to take place, we do have a lengthy list of to do's. We have a lengthy list of issues that have been raised by Members of this House during this session and the last couple to address...We need to involve as many people that are affected, of course, as possible. That will include the seniors and we will ensure that happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 251-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ECE and it gets back to my Member's statement talking about the transfer of public housing rental subsidy from the Housing Corporation over to ECE a number of years ago. During the debates that we had in the 15th Legislative Assembly, the Minister of ECE at the time told us that the transfer was a critical part of the income security redesign. If it was such a critical component, I am just wondering where this income security redesign sits with this government and this Minister. Where exactly is this income security redesign? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly when the transfer took effect, there was an income security reform established at that time. Part of that is to deal with the subsidies at hand. There is a plan in place since 2005. We are continuing to work with the plan and also expanding if we need to in certain areas, also improving certain areas. It does reflect on the public housing rental subsidy. It also has guiding principles that we follow within our reform. Mahsi.

MR. RAMSAY: I would like to thank the Minister for that. I guess it is nice to hear they have a plan. It was the last government's plan. When has this income security redesign in the plan that the Minister talks about been before the standing committee and this House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, any new initiative that comes before this House is presented to the standing committee. Previous governments had their own government at that time. Today, the 16th Assembly, we follow the principle that is before us. I can certainly easily share that with the standing committee because we are transparent. We can certainly share that information.

I think it is important to highlight that we are working with what has been developed in 2005. We continue to make progress. As the Minister of the Housing Corporation has indicated, we can certainly look at some changes so we need to make some changes for the betterment of the program we deliver into the communities. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, on something as large as income security redesign, this is a new government. The decision was made by the last government and the direction that was taken by the last government, I think we have had numerous discussions in here about decisions that were made by the last government. The current government seems to want to go forward with others. They don't. I don't understand why the Minister and the government wouldn't come forward with what exactly their plan is. There are a number of new Members here. I am not a member of the Social Programs committee, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister should get this plan in front of the standing committee and tell us exactly what is going to happen. When will that happen? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly that is one of the areas that we are looking at, myself and the Minister of the Housing Corporation. We will be before the standing committee to highlight what we have done to date. The plan initiated in 2005 in April until today where we are, where we need to improve, and now what kind of progress have we made since then and where we are going with it. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will commit in the House that we will be presenting to the standing committee on a going-forward basis what we have done to date. Mahsi.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a plan that I believe all Members are going to have to

buy into and I know just today this was the first I heard of an independent review. I believe it was the Minister of Housing that spoke of an independent review taking place. There was a review that was promised to committee back last February, I believe. This issue came up right after the election in 2007. I believe the Minister made some commitments to get us a review on the transfer that was supposed to be here in February of last year. Here we are a year later. Now they are talking about an independent review, Mr. Speaker. Exactly where is the departmental review on the transfer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, within our department there are different types of reviews that are undertaken. Since the transfer of the program in 2005 until today, we have conducted several reviews to see what is working and what is not working.

We continue, as I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to do so. We are making improvements into our program. Again, I stated that, with the Minister of Housing Corporation, we are going forward with a review of our program today. We will continue to share that with the standing committee. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. I would like to remind Members of your rules governing question period. We have used up 38 minutes and only five Members have gotten to ask questions yet. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

QUESTION 252-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask questions to the Minister on my Member's statement. Mr. Speaker, given the current housing conditions in Nunakput, will this government allocate necessary resources whereby communities will get their fair share of administrative funds so renovations could be done at the community level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure what the Member means by fair share of administration to do the renovations. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in Committee of the Whole, this year our budget for housing capital is at \$27 million. We expect the federal government will come forward, once the federal budget is approved, for another \$25 million. That is \$52 million this year.

Our intention is to have a plan that we would present to standing committee along with our many issues or many areas that have been brought forward in the last while and what we intend to do with it. We would like to have that brought forward in front of the standing committee and try to tackle these issues on a going-forward basis with all Members involved so everybody is aware of how we are proceeding.

As the Minister of ECE and I have said already, we are looking at doing a number of evaluations. Some of it is being brought forward as intentions right now and a lot had the opportunity to go in front of committee, but we would like to do that and present the framework.

Having said that, our intention is to work with the LHOs to provide more and additional tools or resources to the communities so they can tackle some of the areas that have been challenging, especially the Nunakput area with the public housing units and the private home units. We would be glad to share that information with the Member once it is all packaged up and ready for discussion with standing committee. I can assure that the information will be there. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Will this government review the current contributions to the communities regarding staff salaries so the communities can realistically recruit and retain staff that we desperately need? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: This is an area that was flagged as a concern with the Auditor General, I believe, and it's an area that we've really been working hard to improve so that we are in tune with what the LHOs are facing. We are able to work with them to try to deal with the challenges. The short answer to the Member's question is, yes, we'll do whatever we can to work with the LHOs.

We have to realize, though, all LHOs are expected to operate on the dollars that we can provide. The onus is on LHOs to collect some of the rent that they also use for operations. There are some areas that we can outright look at and provide wherever we can support, but there are other areas where the onus is on the LHO to enhance. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, will the government commit to implementing more centralized policies so that the regional centres have clear guidelines when developing future plans? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. Of course we need to ensure everybody's on the same page. It's the same instructions that we provided to our regional staff and to the LHOs, that communications are a

priority for us. We want to change our attitude towards providing -- maybe attitude isn't the word but -- change our approach so that communication, information is at the forefront so people are well aware of our programs, including our own staff. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 253-16(3):
SPENDING OF PUBLIC HOUSING MONEY
IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I talked about arrangements that the NWT Housing Corporation has with private sector landlords to provide housing agreements where the government guarantees high levels of rent regardless of usage by our clients. They also provide coverage for maintenance and upkeep, something that other landlords cover through rent. My question is for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. Could the Minister please tell me approximately how many of the 2,400 public housing units have been acquired through these types of long-term lease arrangements with private sector landlords? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The practice of using private sector landlords has been something the Housing Corporation has been utilizing for some time. We have over 200 units that are in our public housing portfolio through this method and I think we expend close to \$3.5 million a year. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: Can the Minister tell me if these units, the ones where we're paying the high premiums for rent and maintenance to provide to private landlords, are still needed. Do we still need to keep doing this given the investment that has been made to increase the number of public housing units over the years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, this is a way to offset some of the capital costs. It's also a way to stimulate the economy in different areas of the Northwest Territories. We've moved away from engaging into long-term, 10, 20-year leases with the private industry. We've now gone to shorter five-year leases. It's still an area we're interested in and probably still need to continue practicing. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: As I indicated in my Member's statement, I actually support the use of some private landlords to cover some of our public housing, but I do question when we actually guarantee high levels of rent even when the units aren't filled, and also why would we be providing these landlords with maintenance fees. In situations where we're actually covering the maintenance and guaranteeing these high rents, can the Minister tell me if he plans to discontinue the use of these types of rental agreements by not renewing the leases when they come due every five years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We do intend to move away from that type of arrangement where we're not getting fair value for our investment. We do need to continue, however, to work with a balanced approach towards leasing some of our units from private industry and also, at the same time, balancing it out against building our own. We want to tighten up the areas and be able to negotiate better and more effective arrangements. It's an area that needs constant attention and we are trying to be very mindful as we enter and set up agreements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: That's very good news. I'm glad to hear that we're going to be moving away from those kinds of agreements. Do we have any timeline as to when we might see some of that start to happen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We, I think, have already started working in this area to be more efficient. By the mere fact that we've shortened up our agreements it gives us more flexibility; however, we are still in some areas, in some parts of the Northwest Territories in some communities really in a difficult situation where we have no other alternative or if there is a situation where there is a type of emergency that comes forward we are going to continue to use this method of providing accommodation, but we certainly will be setting up tougher guidelines than that. That will come into play fairly quick. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 254-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR
SOCIAL HOUSING AND TRAINING
PROVIDED FOR STAFF

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I'd like to recognize -- I mentioned in my statement but I'd like

to say again -- the work that the NWT Housing Corporation and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have done in regard to the transfer of public housing rental subsidy. They did eventually recognize that there was a problem with the harmonization and I think they have managed to effect some improvements, but certainly not enough, in my estimation. The transfer, as has been mentioned, created hundreds of new welfare recipients in just one fell swoop. I'd like to ask the Minister, what training do income support officers receive to enable them to handle the special needs of their housing clients? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we do provide in-house training as well. There is training being conducted with LHOs and how to deal with administration of the program itself and also our regional staff that deal with income security level. There is continuous training that happens in the regions. We do provide an annual gathering of the all the LHOs, client service officers, into -- whether it be Yellowknife or Inuvik -- a region and discuss challenges that they may be faced with and how we can improve in certain areas. That is the ongoing professional development that we're doing with the training of our staff. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I guess I would like to suggest that one of the areas they might concentrate on is service to their clients.

In 2005 when this transfer occurred, there were some 14 positions that were created to handle housing under Education, Culture and Employment. I'd like to ask the Minister, what work are these 14 positions doing currently? Is it only public housing work or has their work expanded to now include income support duties? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the positions that we have within our system do more than just public housing rental subsidy. As I indicated, we do have various subsidy programs and even at the regional level, isolated communities, we have to expand the roles of our client service officers, not just in the public Rental Subsidy Program but seniors home subsidy program, child care subsidy, public housing and income assistance. It varies on the communities and it varies within the region itself. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: These 14 positions were created under Education, Culture and Employment to specifically handle the new duties under housing. I'd like to ask the Minister, the duties that he was referencing, he said income support officers. Is he

talking about all income support officers or these specific 14 who were transferred over? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, there were no positions transferred to ECE. We had to create positions to deal with the program that was transferred to us. With that, we had to expand their roles to deal with all the subsidy programs as a one-window approach. Their role has been expanded and it's just not on the public rental subsidy. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: I guess I would suggest that perhaps there is some inefficiency in ECE if they have to have 14 positions to do what Housing was doing previously.

My last question for the Minister is, it's been indicated that this harmonization was done to create benefits or to realize benefits through the transfer of this program. I'd like to ask the Minister to explain to me what those benefits are. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I did highlight all the subsidies that we deliver. Just to highlight the positions that we have, it is spread out into the communities, small communities that never had those kinds of positions before when the Housing Corporation had that under their umbrella. We've continued to expand our services and try to deliver an effective program through communities and we're doing what we can to do even more. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 255-16(3):
RENT SCALES AND SUBSIDIES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of the Housing Corporation. I want to start with the requirement for 30 percent of gross income -- that's 50 percent of net income. My constituents are finding that too onerous and problematic and I'm wondering if the Minister is finding the same and what his view is on that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the rent scales and subsidies are set by ECE. We, at the Housing Corporation, charge all our clients maximum rent. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: In fact, Mr. Speaker, my understanding was that this was actually a federal policy. Is that not correct? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: There is some subsidy that comes...There is \$32 million that is provided through CMHC and it does come with some standards. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Now that we've established that, I'd like to ask what this government is doing about that, which has been clearly profiled as a problem. Are we advocating the federal government, if need be, or are we going to change it if we have the power to respond to this problem of 50 percent of net income going to rent? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: This is not an area that has been brought forward through the Housing Corporation. That's an area that ECE would have to look at. We have had some discussions, again, as part of our long list of issues that are in front of us. This is a concern. Right now the public housing revenues only generate a small percentage of what we do collect in terms of our needs to operate the whole public housing stock and we have not had any discussions, at least I have not in my time as the Minister had discussions regarding rent scales with any federal department. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: I can't say there's much to thank the Minister there for, but I would like to have an explanation from the Minister how people, tenants...What is the protection for tenants that cannot pay their rent? I understand there is normally a 90-day notice required for increase in rent. Yet somehow through some sort of voodoo administration the Housing Corporation does not need to conform to that rule; they've figured out a way to get around that and if a tenant is late for a monthly rent, one rent, they can bump it up to the full economic rent. I'd like to have an explanation of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I take objection to the Member calling the LHOs or the Housing Corporation voodoo administration. That's very disrespectful to our people in our organization. Mr. Speaker, the Member knows, and we have provided information to him, that there are a number of steps. It's a very lengthy operation to evict anybody. It takes well over a year. There is a rental officer involved. There are about three or four checks and balances that need to be in place and a legal review that's included. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 256-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I support the move, I also see part of the problem and I'm curious why the government has not spotted it yet. I mean, I listened very carefully to the Housing Minister's response to Mrs. Groenewegen when he said, well, it's ECE that provides the subsidy but it's Housing that charges the full cost of the housing. See, that's the problem. I don't know why they can't seem to bring the two together. The two together should be at income support.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are going to be for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment because we have a service model. Why aren't we processing the payments of the subsidy in the same shop as we're processing the paperwork to live in a housing unit? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly that is one of the areas that we continue to look at, how we can improve in certain programs, certain delivery areas. We are looking at our options. As we indicated to the House, we're going to sit down and look at, I guess overall since 2005, what we've done, where it needs to be improved and the progress to date. Certainly that's one of the areas that we can look at. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: I think somewhere in there, in that language, the Minister agreed with my point. I'd like to know what have they done since this change has happened, because there seems to be a clear recognition that if there's a hiccup in any way in the application process for the subsidy, it screws up the Housing application process which then kicks it into arrears and full market process and is nothing but a nightmare for the person living in housing. I'd like to actually know what has been worked on in the last couple of years to solve this problem. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, we have had quite a few get-togethers with the LHOs' client service officers and even at the housing authority. This is where we discuss the challenges that we may be faced with. We had numerous workshops on some areas that we may be challenged with. At the same time, how can we resolve certain issues? We did get generous input from various parties, from various communities, the 33 communities that we serve. We are moving forward on that. There is an annual gathering every year and we provide more information, more detailed information on the program itself and they

provide valuable input as well. We are making huge progress. We can see that. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully say, I didn't hear a single thing out of that answer other than we talk. Mr. Speaker, the issue is this: Subsidy is not connecting to the paperwork for the housing part. I would hope that that answer somewhere would say is we're migrating the Housing people who provide the subsidy over to the income support side, because, Mr. Speaker, that is the problem and that's why we have to have the 14 extra employees that were hired; because they didn't want to move from Housing. So what did they do? They dug in and so you had to create new ones in order to facilitate this. What is the Minister doing at the Cabinet table to create a Cabinet directive to combine these two shops that are operating independently to make one model? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I think I made myself clear that we are sitting down to deal with this matter. Certainly I think there is connectivity. We provide all kinds of subsidies along with the LHOs. We work closely with the LHOs. We're not distant where one community can't access a subsidy. It's all there in the communities. We continue to provide that valuable service to the community. I think the Member may be misunderstanding what I'm saying, but we are continuing to work closely together and if he can't accept that, then we need to continue working on that. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The time for question period has expired. I'll allow the Member a short supplementary. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue to reiterate the fact that the problem is we're not connecting the two shops. I know the Minister is clear that he's clear, but the fact is it doesn't solve the problem. The problem really comes down to what work he is doing at the Cabinet table to put these two groups of people that are operating independently, such as the income support folks and the folks over at Housing, to put them together so that we can have a seamless application process for someone to come in, fill out the forms, and then they can go home without any headaches.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I think I stated five or six times that we will be sitting down. We've developed a plan and we're doing a review. I don't know what else I can say on a moving-forward basis. We are making progress. We are making improvements to our program. I think we have proven to ourselves within our department, the two departments that we work with the communities and regions, for the last four years. We have made great strides. We can certainly prove that. We have

the products before us, the data that was collected. The 75 percent satisfaction guarantee from the survey we conducted clearly shows that we are moving forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 7 on the Order Paper.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. SPEAKER: Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 257-16(3): HISTORY OF TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask either the Premier or the Minister of the Housing Corporation regarding the Social Housing Agreement that was signed in 1997 between the federal government and our Territory. In the principles of signing that agreement in terms of the conditions, was one of the conditions regarding implementing a harmonization policy principle in the Northwest Territories along with the agreement that the federal government signed with us?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I heard the question correctly. I have to apologize, but I need to hear the question again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Could you repeat your question, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Social Housing Agreement that was signed in 1997 with the federal government, was one of the principles in this document, was to look at harmonization of our income support, harmonization of our policies with housing with the people of the Northwest Territories?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't say that I'm familiar with the agreement or all the different components of it. I

would be fairly comfortable in saying that the harmonization of income support programs and housing programs were not part of it. The whole idea and whole concept behind social housing is to provide affordable housing to the people in the Northwest Territories and CMHC has been a party to that on behalf of the federal government. They have now decided, having announced over the last couple of years, that they are moving out of this area and will no longer be providing subsidies. By the year 2038 we will not have any dollars flowing to us through this whole area of the agreement with the feds.

MR. YAKELEYA: In my research regarding social housing, certainly the federal government started looking at that in the '60s and '70s and that the Social Housing Initiative was to help people with low income and low-income seniors make it into a national housing act and to create a one-stop shop for these targeted clientele. Part of the agreement, as is my understanding, was looking at the harmonization. I'm just wondering if this again is something that the federal government is somewhat arm-twisting us to look at this one-stop concept by having this program implemented in the last couple years with this agreement here.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I'm struggling to follow the line of questioning. The Member is raising the issue of income support. I understood that to mean programs. I'm assuming now with this new question that the '97 agreement referenced income levels versus programs and low-cost housing to those people who are seniors or in need of housing and are having difficulties because of their income. That is still the intention. We have, of course, broadened our scope to address the many different needs across the Territories and we now include families that are fairly high on the income scale. We do use thresholds and income means assessments, but we do a lot more than the initial agreement intended us to do. We have other agreements, though, I have to point out, that are in place, new agreements that allow us to invest in other areas. So there is quite a broad area that we are responsible for now.

MR. YAKELEYA: I'm looking at the Social Housing Agreement in terms of the principles and the conditions that we were signators to in 1997. One of my understandings is from the federal government in terms of the harmonization of the Social Housing Agreement, one of the principles was to harmonize the programs. So for low-income families, low-income seniors. Through this, creating a one-stop centre for this issue here in our communities seems like it's not working. The funding will be declined in 2038 by the federal government. It seems that this policy here is something that came out of the federal government. I'm asking the Minister if that is one of the principles

in terms of this agreement that we signed with the federal government.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I don't believe this whole arrangement with the transfer of some of the dollars to ECE to take part of or provide the subsidy component of housing was part of or as a result of the 1997 agreement. The principles behind the 2005 transfer was to be part of an overall income security review to create a one-stop shop for residents to access social programs and services by the GNWT to create economies of scale so that the ECE could look at enhancing their programs. The other principle was to ensure that all residents who lived in public housing understood the true cost of providing public living and accessing public housing programs.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: So the Social Housing Agreement is for low-income families and low-income seniors. That is what was agreed to by the federal government in terms of the definition. Now the program that we have implemented over the last four years was with streamlining a one-shop centre with ECE and Housing. Will the Minister take it with his Cabinet colleagues to look at the distinction between...because he's blanketing everybody now to go into a centre that some people feel they don't need to go to. Will the Minister review this and seriously consider specifically targeting the ones that specifically fall under the Social Housing Agreement with the federal government? Would the Minister consider reviewing this seriously and look at other ways for the people who do not need to go to ECE for subsidized housing?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We certainly will commit to the Member and the other Members that we will look at the 1997 agreement and the principles underlying that, and all the other agreements that we have signed since. We will commit to see if we are still following through to those concepts and principles. We are committed and we have been, myself and the Minister of ECE, have tried to be very clear that we're working towards an assessment of how the whole transfer has been working up to now. We want to look at the different components, look at the pros, look at the cons, look at the issues that were raised by the Members here. Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity to go in front of committee to present any type of framework or any type of principles behind it.

We want to be able to ensure to the people of the Northwest Territories that our public housing programs are efficient. If there are concern, if there is issues and that's why we're suggesting that we

go to an independent company to look at it, because we need to ensure that we're taking an arm's-length look at it. If it doesn't make sense, then we need to make sure we make the changes to adjust it. That may mean looking at transferring a portion of it. It may mean transferring all of it back. It may mean staying with status quo. We're willing to look at that and I think that message has to be out there. We want to be able to present that review and concept to the standing committee as soon as we can.

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

QUESTION 258-16(3):
INCOME SUPPORT WORKERS AND
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was saving the best for the last. I think I just heard the Minister of Housing say that one of the options they would be considering is transferring the housing money back from ECE to the Housing Corporation. I think I heard that.

---Interjection

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Wow. That would be really good, because, you know, when we go back to the pre-transfer era, somehow those LHOs managed to have the clients come into the office, assess their rent, develop a relationship with them through the tenant relations officers, track the folks in their housing, maintain those units. They had that direct connection to their housing clients. Then when we transferred the money over to ECE, in that sweep came the necessity to spend an additional \$1.5 million on 14 new positions for income support workers.

Now, I've heard today somebody told Mr. Krutko this allows there to be income support workers in more of our communities. I want to pursue that. It also allowed these income support workers to provide better and more services at the ECE offices where those clients would come to. We've heard that as well.

I would like to get detail on that. How many communities that did not have a resident income support worker prior to the transfer have one today?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Some of the areas that we've improved

our service delivery when the transfer came into play were additions. The positions in these areas would be Yellowknife, Inuvik, Ulukhaktok, Fort Smith, Hay River, Deline, Norman Wells, Behchoko, Whati.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: How many of those communities did not have a resident income support worker or workers prior to the transfer?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I do not have the detail information before me as we speak today. I can certainly provide that to the Member.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: And for the record, again, could I ask the Minister of ECE to detail for us what the value added, what did we buy in terms of value for an additional \$1.5 million?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly I can commit today to provide that detailed information.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 259-16(3):
HOUSING AGREEMENTS WITH THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier regarding the housing rental. It's been a long standing issue for some of my members in the Sahtu in terms of the first time these houses were situated in the communities. The federal government made some promises over the years. It still holds true to some of the older people in terms of the guaranteed amount that was supposed to be arranged with our elderly people in housing with respect to the amount of rent that over the years has increased to this type of discussion. Some say it was in our treaties. Some say it was different interpretations. I'm asking the Premier in terms of his discussions with the federal government if the housing guarantee to aboriginal people in these units is as true as it was in the early days of housing being in the communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process we're involved in with the federal government when it comes to agreements we sign for funding, those programs, much like the formula financing, are open on a per capita basis. There are times when we know that programs are announced, for example, aboriginal housing, and when we hear those, are our concerns that we raise with the federal government, for example, the last meeting of myself and Minister Michael McLeod and

Minister Robert C. McLeod with Minister Baird around Building Canada and potential additional housing dollars was one. When they announced aboriginal housing dollars, that usually means reserves and we don't get that funding. So the agreements we have in place now are just that, agreements for the housing program that's open to Northerners across the Territory.

MR. YAKELEYA: Some of the comments I heard from around the region that when the old Housing Corporation was starting to build houses in the communities, some of these lots that were in place in the communities that were promised by the government to build houses for the people, people who were moved into social housing were promised to pay a certain amount of rent. In terms of the Northwest Territories, what type of protection in terms of these types of agreements that people hold dear to their hearts when the Premier goes to discuss housing for the Northwest Territories we seem to be lumped into one category in terms of housing for the aboriginal people.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Where the Housing Corporation could find these agreements that were made with individuals, if there's an agreement actually in place, then we're honouring those agreements. Where there are no agreements, and we've heard this from a number of communities or individuals, and problems happen, for example, on IBA lands -- that's Indian band lands -- in communities where housing units were established. That became a problem over the years. They tried to make agreements on that around land tenure. The issue around were agreements made, where there are agreements that can be used, we worked with the groups in honouring that. When agreements were made with the federal government, we don't have a copy of that. We have to pursue the federal government or the groups have to pursue the federal government to confirm that and have them honour that commitment.

MR. YAKELEYA: Certainly in the days of these types of agreements usually done through an oral agreement with promises made either by the federal government and the agency and the land owners or the people who want their houses built. So any types of initiatives or attempts that the Premier could look at in terms of seeing if these long-term agreements could be resolved by the communities...There are issues that are still remaining with some of the people in our communities.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: There are quite a number of communities that are affected by Indian band lands and when the federal government does transfers or no transfers or there's a talk of transfers and swapping land, then parties feel they did not get what was being discussed. We are

trying to re-engage with the federal government. Municipal and Community Affairs, and Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations are looking at are there options or ways that we can sit down and try to clarify these concerns that remain outstanding.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring this up because my mother had mentioned that when they were going to tear down her father's old house there that housing at that time said they were going to build a new house on that piece of land there that belonged to my grandparents. When we moved off they didn't do what they promised they were going to do. I asked my mother how come she didn't pursue it. She said, just leave it alone because it doesn't seem like they're going to follow up with the agreement.

So I think this is one example of many in the communities in terms of these types of oral agreements that haven't been followed through with. That's why I asked the Premier if there are any types of agreements with the aboriginal communities and people themselves who have this type of knowledge that seem to have lost faith in the government to honour their commitments from the days that they were told to give up part of their land for housing units.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: It's very difficult to go back in history to when an agreement was made verbally between the director-of-the-day, maybe under federal jurisdiction. What we have committed to in these areas where there are outstanding issues around IBA lands is looking at an avenue of trying to engage the federal government in settling these outstanding concerns about transfers, IBA lands and what it mean in some of our communities. So we are engaging in that and going to try to see if there is an avenue that we can work on and bring this to a conclusion. I can't guarantee one way or another, but we are trying to work with the aboriginal government and chiefs in the Northwest Territories to look at an avenue where we can approach the federal government to bring some conclusion to this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to 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 of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 22-16(3):
TOWARDS EXCELLENCE: A REPORT ON
EDUCATION IN THE NWT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Towards Excellence: A Report on Education in the NWT. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Notices of Motion

MOTION 15-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, March 6, 2009, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the full responsibility for the administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program be once again placed under the control of the local housing organizations;

And further, that all related budgets now with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment be transferred back to the NWT Housing Corporation;

And furthermore, that this Legislative Assembly recommends the government provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

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. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 9:
NORTHERN EMPLOYEES BENEFITS SERVICE
PENSION PLAN PROTECTION ACT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, March 6, 2009, I will move that Bill 9, Northern Employees

Benefits Service Pension Plan Protection Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Colleagues, before I go to the next item on the Order Paper, the Chair is going to call a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: We'll return to orders of the day. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: 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 15-16(3):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING
CARRIED

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, colleagues.

WHEREAS the responsibility for the administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy was moved to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment from the NWT Housing Corporation, effective April 2, 2005;

AND WHEREAS over the past four years this program transfer has negatively impacted the residents of the Northwest Territories who live in social housing by unnecessarily complicating what was a simple process administered by the local housing organization;

AND WHEREAS one of the consequences of this program transfer has been an increase to the number of households that are in arrears with their local housing organizations;

AND WHEREAS these same local housing organizations and the NWT Housing Corporation have demonstrated their capacity and competence in administering social housing and in dealing with tenants in social housing in a professional manner;

AND WHEREAS many people have expressed concerns to Members centred on the delivery of social housing and problems encountered since the program transfer to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment;

AND WHEREAS the same material facts that led the 15th Assembly to adopt Motion 10-15(5) on November 1, 2006, directing the government to

return responsibility for administering the Public Housing Rental Subsidy to the NWT Housing Corporation and its local housing organizations, still exist;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the full responsibility for the administration of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program be once again placed under the control of the local housing organizations;

AND FURTHER, that all related budgets now with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment be transferred back to the NWT Housing Corporation;

AND FURTHERMORE, that this Legislative Assembly recommends the government provide a response for this motion within 120 days.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The 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. Mr. Speaker, the transfer of the Housing Subsidy Program from the NWT Housing Corporation to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment was an idea that was hatched in the 15th Assembly and it was promoted under the auspices or under the theory that putting all subsidies, whether it be for child care, seniors' fossil fuel subsidies, like you think of every subsidy you can think of government-wide and it was this government's intention under the Minister-of-the-day for ECE that we should harmonize all subsidies under one desk, one-stop shopping in the Northwest Territories. That necessarily included the biggest piece of the subsidy, which was the housing subsidy and the funds associated with the housing subsidy to transfer over to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Mr. Speaker, that was the beginning and it has not worked out. I think it's an idea that the Minister-of-the-day picked up at some national Ministers conference some place that this would be a good idea. You know, maybe it seemed simplified administratively, you know, in style, fashionable way for us to do this, but the fact of the matter is there is a longstanding history of the work and interaction in all of our communities by the local housing organizations who had tenant relation officers, who had the capacity in their offices to deal with their housing clients.

Mr. Speaker, this idea that all subsidies should be harmonized and should all be at one window in the

Northwest Territories, is the idea...I just lost my train of thought for one second. The idea is premised on the fact that everybody who requires social housing or the services of the housing authority are income support clients and that is absolutely wrong.

Not everybody was on income support who went to the local housing organization and got subsidized housing. But be sure now, Mr. Speaker, that we have made sure, as a government, that every person who requires social housing is now an income support client.

There is nothing wrong with being an income support client if you need to receive income support. Nobody is suggesting that is a bad or a disresponsible position to be in. It is income support. It is what it is. But there were many people working in our communities who felt like they were working and they may not be able to afford market rent and maybe there was not any private stock in some of the small communities to rent in the first place. They had to be the clients of the local housing authority. They had to live in social housing because there just wasn't any option for them. That didn't mean that they were not hardworking, trying-to-make-ends-meet people, but now we've said, no, you go over to the ECE. You go to the income support officer.

You subject yourself to the rigorous scrutiny of the assessment that takes place when somebody requires income support. I think it was a mistake. This idea of one stop never developed. It never evolved because, in all of our communities, we still have an office where there is an income support complement of staff or a staff member and we still have our local housing authorities. So the one-stop thing never materialized. All it did was put an administrative burden for those two offices to necessarily have to keep communicating with each other and have to send clients to not just one place but to two places.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this whole idea of this transfer was premised on something that was ill conceived. I don't think the benefits have materialized. I think it has created hardship in many cases for people who maybe, for whatever reason, did not want to go to income support to get their rent subsidy.

If we could just project ourselves for a couple of minutes into a small community, someplace in the Northwest Territories. Pick any small community where there are not that many people and people tend to know a lot about what goes on in people's lives in the community. Let's imagine a young family. Let's imagine a young man who is the provider in that family. Let's say that he has been able, through either traditional lifestyle efforts and

maybe part-time work, to go out there and be able to proudly provide for his family. But he comes back to the community one day and our government has said, no, no. You now will go and join those other people in the community who have not been able, for whatever reason, to be able to maintain a work situation where they can provide for their family. You must go and join with everybody else now, and you must go over to the income support office and you must go to somebody that you probably know really well. Why don't you just lay out everything; how much money you earn, what your fuel bill is, what your power bill is every month? You go there and you lay that out probably to somebody that you likely know very well. There is an intangible issue. I grant you that, but it is an issue of some degree of pride that people take in being able to manage to work and provide for their families. So we are saying no, you are now an income support client, and you will go there, and you will meet with that worker and, you will provide that information to them, otherwise you cannot live in our public housing unit. If you don't go there, we are going to bump your rent up to what we call the economic rent, which is probably not even affordable. So people didn't have much choice. So they didn't go and then they were in arrears and into all kinds of other problems.

Mr. Speaker, that is just one small scenario of a case where I think that this transfer was not thought out well. I think it was, to some degree, and I had it put so well by one of my colleagues, that what we did is we turned every housing client in the Northwest Territories into an income support client in doing this. Like I said, there is no shame in asking for help and going to income support if you need it, but there were people who were managing and there were no choices but to rent from the Housing Corporation through the Social Housing Program. There was not a choice.

Mr. Speaker, I will defer now to other members of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning, from which this motion evolved, and ask them to speak to this motion. I will wind up the communication or the presentation on a motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be speaking in favour of the motion. I was happy to stand my name as a seconder. I have been opposed to the transfer of the responsibility of the social housing to ECE since its inception. I have always thought it was not the right thing to do. It was going to create hardships for our residents and the clients of the NWT Housing Corporation. Indeed, the stories are many about people falling in

arrears because they did not understand the program. I believe even some people to this day are still in arrears because of this transfer. Because of the way the system is set up, it literally forced people to go from a \$600 assessment to economic rent of about \$1,200 to \$1,400, Mr. Speaker. It was a shock to the system. People just could not believe that we, as a government, would do that.

When I was working with the Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, the very same people would go to the Housing Corporation. They felt it was a smoother transition. They knew how much to budget for their rent. Now it is left in the hands of ECE and their guidelines and policies, so they really don't know what to budget for and they are at the whim of what they assess, Mr. Speaker. That creates uncertainty. That creates disharmony within their budgeting cycles, especially now when times are tough, Mr. Speaker.

I asked a question earlier in the House. What was the difference between assessing it when it was with Housing and assessing it now? I wasn't able to get a clear answer, but I know the constituents know for sure. It was, I think, Mrs. Groenewegen who said it best. It was less intrusive, which means that they weren't divulging all kinds of information and bearing their soul to program officers. It is because of the policies and guidelines. Whereas with the Housing Corporation, I believe there was some more flexibility. There was more trust. There was a relationship that clients had with the housing authorities. For me, it always made sense to keep it there. There is an issue of harmonization and one-stop shopping. To me it just doesn't work. It was the flavour of the day back then. It seemed like the right thing to do.

I think it goes further than that too, Mr. Speaker. The Deloitte & Touche report of I think the year 2000 spoke about this harmonization of programs. I don't know how or why it seems that we are still following some of the programming suggestions from that report. In fact, when they talked about creating one big infrastructure department, that comes from that Deloitte & Touche report. I don't know how or why it is a major component of our bureaucracy that it is the best thing to do since sliced bread, but that is not always the case. I spoke about it in my Member's statement. I believe in this case we took a southern solution, fit it up here to make it work, but it is just not working. It is creating more upsets than anything else.

The Minister spoke today during question period that their initial assessments were showing positive results, but that is something we have been asking for too, Mr. Speaker. Show us. Ever since we did a similar motion a year ago, they promised to assess the program and assess how it is working with ECE. The Housing Minister was going to get

involved in this assessment, but to date they haven't given us any feedback at all. They were pretty happy today quoting some of their stats, some of their information and some of the internal assessments, letting us know that, to them, it is working, but they're not sharing that with us.

At the same time, too, something of this magnitude in similar interests throughout all our constituents' courses are the electrical rates. That is something I have been pursuing for some time as well, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to see that there is movement on many fronts and the most particular importance was getting out to the communities, getting the people's input, and I know my constituents are looking forward to that when it begins in April. I believe that this issue is big enough to do something similar, Mr. Speaker, and to hear not only from us but to hear it from the regions and the communities and the larger centres as well. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I am not convinced that it is working where it is at right now. I am not convinced that it is serving people to their best interest. I believe that it is not making life easy. That is why I support this motion. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will just conclude my statement. Thank you very much.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to see this motion come forward. I am in full support of it. Due to the housing situations in my riding of Nunakput, we have a serious problem with the disconnect with ECE and the Housing Corporation. Some of my constituents tell me when I go home -- on the average day I take 60 to 70 calls in my residence -- about being evicted. Since ECE took over this year, Mr. Speaker, there have been evictions in the communities; four or five people. It is the middle of winter, 30 to 40 below outside. Where are you going to go? You are going to go to your cousin's place. Hopefully they will put you up. For myself, the disconnect between the two not having the Housing Corporation run itself as a stand-alone corporation and cut out the middle man, which is ECE, and then we are not going to have the blame game when it is time to...They are not going to be saying you have to go to ECE or Housing. It is not going to be like that. Hopefully we can get it put back into Housing where it is going to be...I think that the Minister, speaking of the Minister today, I have issues up in my riding today that made the news. There are people being evicted and put out in the cold and finding a place to stay. It is not right.

The biggest thing is the evictions, the disconnect between ECE and that is most important, the one-stop shopping in regards to going and paying your

rent and getting it all sorted out with Housing and then you get to go home. See you in a month. Here you have to go and run-around, like Mrs. Groenewegen said, to ECE and see if you are going to be supplied to get help to top up your rent. If you don't get it, what are you going to do? Automatically you don't show up, you are going to get charged economic rent. That is not right. Everybody is going to have a chance to speak to it.

Today, Mr. Krutko and myself, living up in the communities, people don't see the most important thing in my riding is housing. It is the most important thing. People need places to live. You have houses in the communities that are boarded up because of people being evicted. We have to give them the opportunity to work this off through the Housing Corporation. They had a program a few years back in regards to paying off your arrears. Work in the summertime or at part-time jobs to get it paid off. That is having the Housing Corporation and the LHOs managing it themselves and not having ECE as a middle man.

I fully support this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of this motion. This is the second time that I have stood in this House in support of a motion to return the administration of the public housing subsidy back to the NWT Housing Corporation. It is also the third time that many Members who were here during the 15th Assembly have stood asking Cabinet to realize that the current program is not working and return it to its rightful home, the NWT Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong in admitting that a mistake was made. With this motion, we are hoping that Cabinet would see reason, recognize the mistake and transfer the responsibility back to the NWT Housing Corporation, and the \$30 million that came along with it. Allow the local housing authorities to do the job that they have done for years and years, something that they have done really well.

Mr. Speaker, the old system was an easier process for the tenants. We all have to listen to what our constituents are telling us. I have heard people express frustration with how the program works within Education, Culture and Employment. Tenants are having to wait three weeks to have their assessments done. Many people that were never in arrears before are in arrears because of the lateness of the assessments getting back to the LHOs. LHOs have had a reputation of treating tenants professionally and respectfully. The NWT

Housing Corporation's partnership with the LHOs did a good job in administering the public housing. The system was not broken. It did not need fixing. Now, with the new system and the new model of administration through income support at ECE, the Public Housing Program is broken in the NWT, broken and in need of repair.

So I encourage Cabinet to acknowledge and act on this motion in the best interest of all people of the Northwest Territories. Return the responsibility of the public housing subsidy back to the NWT Housing Corporation, and the \$30 million that came along with it.

As I said earlier, there is nothing wrong with admitting a mistake was made and correcting it. I believe the Housing Corporation is ready and able to take this back on if we just give them the authority to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I support this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is like *deja vu* sometimes. This is the third time I have stood up and supported a motion asking the government to reconsider its decision. You take the Social Housing Policy, the \$30 million from Housing and take it over to ECE. Mr. Speaker, this has never made much sense to me. I think there are many other things we could be spending the \$1.5 million per year and the 14 employees we had to hire to administer the program at ECE are costing us. I don't understand why it is that we continue to turn a blind eye to that expenditure when the program was being delivered effectively by LHOs across the Territory prior to the government making that decision. It makes me wonder what is next.

What are we talking about here? What is the government's plan on reforming income security and the redesign? That work was started by the last government. Where exactly is this government in that?

Many Members have talked about where the government got the idea for this. I can think back to the 15th Assembly. I know Ministers travelled to FPT meetings -- it is all the rage in southern Canada. You look at Service New Brunswick and Service Ontario. Maybe things work in southern Canada, but you can't take something that works there, bring it back here and expect it to work.

I think we have just completely dropped the ball on implementation on this transfer. We are still hearing stories from our constituents. That is why the motion is here today. We are not standing up here today because there are no issues and concerns.

There are issues and concerns. We are looking at hurting people and single parents, people are out there. They are now getting into arrears that they could never imagine to get out of. Slow assessments are being done by ECE. It has made it harder for people to access the services from government.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a one-window approach. That is clear. That was the intent of the income security redesign. If that was the true intent, the government has dropped the ball on that. It is two windows now. It is not one; it is two. It is making life more difficult for our constituents. I question it. Where is this master plan on income security redesign? Where is this government when it comes to income security redesign? It hasn't been before a standing committee, Mr. Speaker.

I think we have had lots of discussion in this House about working together. I think this is a good opportunity for the government to bring forward to Regular Members what their plan is on income security redesign. Where are we going to go from here? How are we going to get there? How do the Regular Members on this side of the House plug into that? We are a year and a half into this. There have been issues identified on the implementation on the social housing side. They haven't been addressed. We were promised a review over a year ago. It just hasn't happened. We talked in question period today to the Ministers, both Ministers. There is, all of a sudden, an independent review that's going to be done. That is going to take some more time.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is this isn't working. If it was working, we wouldn't be hearing from our constituents. Arrears wouldn't be piling up. People wouldn't feel that they are being hard done by by the system and right now they are. I can tell you that. I still get calls from constituents who are concerned about how this is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly will be supporting the motion today, like I've done in the past. I know there are people in here, everybody in here has constituents and we need to be listening to our constituents, Mr. Speaker. I would implore everybody that has any way to, you know, take this change. There are Cabinet Ministers over there, and I spoke about this earlier, that had parts of motions that Regular Members moved in the past, I know you are now sitting at the Cabinet table. When this comes up, please, please, fight for the people who are out there asking for this change. It's nothing new. This is the third time. I don't know how many more times, Mr. Speaker, that we can stand up here and we can ask the government that we want to work with you. We want to get this done. We want to make this change so that people can see us actually going to bat for them. We've gone

to bat for them, this is the third time, and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this time we don't strike out again. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not against this motion. I understand full well about the frustration that has been created by this process and this shift. Mr. Speaker, I am just not for the shift back. I think that I feel strongly that the service model was the approach that needs to be considered. In a time of efficiency when we are trying to organize and strategize how we can do business better, this seemed to be the right direction to go.

Mr. Speaker, what you are hearing today is frustration about, in my view, what is a good model but with pathetic implementation. Mr. Speaker, why do you send people to two offices in order to be able to have housing? To me, that's just foolishness. That signal should have been raised loud and clear over three years ago. Mr. Speaker, someone should have been able to put the connect between the frustration of trying to get your paperwork processed and filled out and then get that money and then the transfer over to that office by carrying down the cheque or the money order to make sure that they don't raise your actual subsidized rent to market rent. Mr. Speaker, it's very clear here where the problem is. You know, there was a time when I agreed that switching it back was the only solution and I'll make note of that. I supported those last two motions, Mr. Speaker, but I think after examining the complexity of this problem, it's the fact that it's a good model, just horrible implementation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why people need to go to two offices in order to process this work. I think very well it also explains why we have 14 extra employees on this file. That's because the people from the Housing didn't want to migrate over to the ECE income support side. So the system facilitated the need for two sets of employees that at one time, only one set was required to process the paperwork.

Mr. Speaker, in a perfect world, you know, nobody would need subsidies and everybody would be able to work all the time and take care of their families but, unfortunately, there are struggles. I think the government has misunderstood they've complicated this process by trying to fix it and I think what they've done is they've missed the obvious, which is to bring them together.

Mr. Speaker, I know some people believe that if you get income support, you are on welfare and if you

go get a housing subsidy, you're not. Mr. Speaker, I think those types of terminologies need to end. People are looking for help and that's what it really is, it's a helping hand.

I would hope that we see beyond those types of terminologies. Mr. Speaker, it's about helping people. I think in the long run, the model that needs to be considered is the one that is being looked at and it's about efficiency and process. If they would just sit down... Sorry, if ECE would just sit down and work it out with Housing, they could quit and easily come up with a model by bringing over those extra employees, migrating them over to the income support side and you could go in there and fill out your paperwork from start to finish and your subsidy would be processed at that moment. All the information you need to do in order to qualify for the housing, you can process all in the same shop.

Mr. Speaker, at one time I understood it was if you were getting a housing subsidy support through the housing program and you go down there and file your paperwork, they didn't necessarily quite know what you were doing over at income support. So there was a disconnect between the two offices. So someone could go down and get some support and then go down to another office and come under another type of position and say I need some support too and the two offices were duplicating a process, which this service model was aimed to correct.

The long and the short of it is, Mr. Speaker, as I have said twice, it's a good model, just poorly implemented and the one-window approach is the way to go. I respect my colleagues. They are right in the sense that there has to be a better way to fix it. I can fully understand their call to return it because it makes sense that if it's not working, let's go back to how it was working. My issue really is it should be working and they forgot to do the other part of the job.

Mr. Speaker, with regret, I won't be supporting the motion, but I do fully subscribe to the passion brought forward by my colleagues here. I recognize that, because it is an important issue. All that's being created out of this -- let's fix it -- has created frustration. Mr. Speaker, I once again say to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Housing, go for a coffee, realize that you have to get together and you guys can sit down and sort this out over a small conversation. You can have a Cabinet directive and we could sort this out within a couple of days. That's all it would take, Mr. Speaker, is some vision, some energy and some wherewithal to say we are going to do something today and, darn it, we are going to do it right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, for one, was on the other side of the table when this decision was made some four years ago. The intention was to take the \$30 million from the Housing Corporation, give it to ECE and transfer the money back to the housing authorities, so they could continue to pay for the operation and maintenance of their public housing units; some 2400 units. But the thing is, is through that transfer arrangement, there has been a lot of chaos in that process.

Mr. Speaker, the whole intent of social housing in the North -- at one time they used to call it Aboriginal Rural Housing in Northern Canada -- was to provide housing and subsidize it through the CMHC process. CMHC is the one that basically covers the costs for social housing all across Canada.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing now is because of the cost going up with regard to operating and maintaining housing in the Northwest Territories, there is not enough money to really operate and maintain the number of units that we have. Again, for the amount of money we are spending out of the \$30 million for extra administration costs, the cost of people flying in and out of communities, the scenario that Mr. Hawkins mentioned is a good scenario if you are in a community such as Yellowknife. But when you go to a community and you don't have income support workers and you don't have a housing authority manager, you have to wait for someone to come into the community, sit down, do your paperwork and, hopefully, get the subsidy. If you don't get the subsidy because you happen to miss a pay stub, you are going to get charged at the economic rate. That was not the way the system worked with the housing authorities before this transfer took place.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a system of dependence and also a system where basically people in communities are refusing to work on the basis that they're penalized as soon as they get a job with a local contractor or get a job through a local agent by way of short-term work and they are being charged the economic rate because they went to income support. Sorry, can I see your pay stub? The guy doesn't have his pay stub, so he goes back to Housing and says I don't have my pay stub. Sorry, you are going to pay the economic rate. Then once you do that, you're stuck in a situation where you're in arrears. Because you are in arrears and you are no longer working, the cycle goes where the person was able to go to work, find a job, improve the quality of life for his family and he is not penalized because we have a system that is really

there to control a person's lifestyle of I have a job, I am going to work, I am going to earn some money.

Before when the housing authority had it, there was a transition period. If you were laid off for some period of time, you were an income support client or paying the \$32 a month, they will allow you a three or four-month transitional period to get back into the workforce. In the system we have now, that system is no longer there.

When I was up in Aklavik this last weekend I met with a business gentleman there who is trying to find people to work in the local cafe that he just opened up. He's having problems and he knows good people that he wants to work, but they refuse to work because they know that as soon as they go to work their rent is going to go through the roof because they're going to start paying economic rent. Because of that, people that work for the businesspeople in our communities won't work for them anymore because they've been penalized to a point where it doesn't make sense to work in our communities because the system we have does not allow that to happen. I think it's at a point where it's affecting not only the social well-being of the community but the economic viability of our communities because of the way the system is now in place.

The way it was before, you were able to sit down with Housing and say, look, I just got a job, I'm going to probably work for three or four months, and you were able to sit down with them and say, okay, this is how much I think I'm going to make in the next three or four months. I'll agree to pay you this much, and then do another assessment on me in three months and we'll see exactly how much I made and I'll bring my pay stub in then. For me, that was the biggest downfall of this program. It has totally disrupted the communities' resources by way of our people.

The dependency on income support is now at a point where they control every aspect of your life by way of education grants, housing grants, and also even seniors' fuel subsidies. Seniors are refusing to go to income support because they're going to basically say, well, who's living with you. Can you give me a statement to see how many people are in your household? These seniors in their 80s are saying, well, forget it. I'll pay for my own fuel. I'll take care of my own bills. I've been doing it all my life. I don't need you. Yet these are people who are living in their own homes because income support in our communities, the way they're doing their assessment is not working. The way the Housing used to do the assessment, it was working.

For me, that is the biggest problem that I see with this system, is that it has totally lost the intention that was supposed to be there. It was supposed to

consolidate \$100 million of programs and the government that operates by way of social support programs, and have a system that you can go in, you get your education grant, you can get your seniors' fuel subsidy, you can get your housing subsidy, you can get, you know, check out your allowances that you get for child support. We've got a system that's in one place. But the system that we have now is that we've got people flying from Inuvik to Tulita, or flying into Sachs or going into Tsiigehtchic so that basically they'll come and if you don't happen to be in town at the moment, you missed your assessment. Sorry, go to Housing. Well, we're going to have to charge you economic rent because you didn't make your meeting.

For me, the system is totally broken and we have to basically go back to where we started from and make sure that it works. It worked before and the system that we have now is broken. For me, being on that side of the House when we made this decision, housing authority, all they were thinking about, the Housing Corporation, was holy smokes, social housing is getting cut, maybe let's give that problem to ECE and let them go get the extra money for housing. Then we'll basically realize in 25 years it's going to be zero, but that's their problem. We'll just charge them rent. Well, excuse me. That problem is still there. Thirty million dollars is still in somebody else's hand, but we're spending more money on administration and operational costs with that money, which is getting smaller and basically we have no idea how to replace it.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion and I think it's time that we gave the money back to Housing and run it the way it was.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, at the outset, say that I am in support of this motion and I will be speaking in support of the motion. I mentioned in my Member's statement that I've been hearing the concerns about this particular transfer or change in program for over two years. Like my colleague Mr. Ramsay indicated, these are not new concerns that I'm hearing about lately. Sorry, these are not old concerns, these are new concerns. I'm not responding to complaints that are two years old. These are issues that have arisen for me within the last month, within the last two months, three months. They've been ongoing since I entered this office. It's not an issue which has just surfaced.

We spoke to a motion almost a year ago now about the same issue. The previous Assembly spoke to the motion in November of 2006. One would think that by now, hopefully, somebody's listening and getting a message that there is a problem, there is

a concern and we're not speaking merely to fill this place with hot air, as CBC would have us believe.

A couple of things that I mentioned in my statement, one of them is that there is a lack of coordination. I feel that the complaints that I'm hearing are a lack of coordination between the two offices. People have two different places to go and it seems that the one office doesn't talk to the other office or they don't want to talk to the other office. People are not understanding that they have to go to two places to get their paperwork done, that they have certain things that have to be done with Housing and certain things that have to be done with income support. It's very difficult for them. They're also finding that the two offices have different ways of looking at things. The income support tends to look at subsidies differently than does Housing. It's been mentioned that it has put a lot of people under the term "welfare" that weren't there before. I think that's something that, as Mr. Beaulieu mentioned earlier, it's a matter of pride, it's a matter of dignity, and I fully support his statement as he mentioned it earlier.

One of these things that these two different attitudes create when you have two offices looking at things differently, it creates problems and it creates confusion for people. They don't understand the problem. The problem then tends to probably relate to a lack of understanding. People then don't know that they have to pay their rent at a certain time or that they have to go and get this form filled out so that they don't have to pay the full amount of rent. So that leads them to arrears. Well, the arrears, again, leave them in a situation where they're not fully understanding of the situation that they're in and it leads to eviction or the threat of eviction. I've had a number of calls that have been basically on a Tuesday somebody saying to me I'm going to be evicted on Friday, and it tends to go back to the difficulties of the one hand not understanding the other.

I'm understanding from my people that there's a lack of understanding and management of the whole person or of the whole problem. Again, it's the two offices are kind of looking at a problem piecemeal and not looking at the whole problem and the whole solution.

For me, from what I can understand, prior to the transfer, things were working and they were working well. It brings to mind the adage if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, I'm afraid that we did fix it and clients are bearing the brunt of a really poor repair job.

The other thing that I am having great difficulty with is we created new positions, 13 or 14 new positions, and we also added spending of \$1.3 million to ECE to look after this new program. I

have yet to understand why either of those are needed. If Housing was able to do the job without those positions, why is that ECE needed an extra 14 positions and \$1.3 million? That leads me to believe that we are unnecessarily spending money on this program and I'm willing to hear an explanation. I have yet to hear one that makes sense to me.

In my questions I've asked what benefits have accrued to the government, to the people, that weren't there before with this transfer in programs, and I really didn't hear any concrete items mentioned and no concrete reasons as to why, again, we made this transfer and what benefits actually accrued.

I'll leave it at that. I don't disagree with anything that other Members have said in support of this motion, Mr. Speaker, and I will be voting in favour. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise in support of the motion requesting that full responsibility for the Public Rental Subsidy Program be returned to the local housing organizations.

My list will be familiar now to many. Some of the problems, not surprisingly: communication between the new agencies is proving to be difficult and problematic. As well as communications within the system, we've got a third-party situation for our tenants now. Rather than dealing with one office, the original intent, they're, of course, dealing with a couple and this is leading to a lot of confusion, frustration and failures. The income reporting requirements, again, is pretty onerous on people. Monthly requirements -- my colleague Mr. Krutko has highlighted that situation. There are lots of other issues on the assessments and the basis of gross income rather than net and so on that are actually related to this and the lack of understanding that can accrue with true one-stop shopping for housing services.

Of course, the client service officers, they also have other commitments, as we've heard, and they're not able to focus on housing as officers used to be within the LHOs. Simply keeping those positions, client services officers positions filled in communities is a challenge because, of course, they do have these other roles to play. They are sensitive roles in small communities associated with income support and because it's hard on people, of course, there is a lot of turnover in those positions and thus it makes it even more

challenging for the housing aspects that they are also meant to fulfill.

Having two locations, as I mentioned, not all public housing tenants are on income support and so it's not as straightforward as it was apparently initially conceived, leading to confusion and unnecessary work.

Mr. Speaker, today's shell game of responsibilities that I experienced during question period is probably a good example of what my housing tenant constituents actually experience on a regular basis and I thought was a good sort of reflection of the issue that we're trying to address here.

The Member for Yellowknife Centre highlighted implementation as the problem. That Member seems to have infinite patience for resolving this. We've been four years at this and, my gosh, Mr. Speaker, how long do we need to wait? I think it's clear now that we can't wait any longer. We must act now to get things back to a model we know will actually work. He also mentioned that the new model was more efficient and so on. How can that be so when we've created the 13 or 14 new positions, \$1.3 million and, of course, shifted costs to the tenants now who bear costs such as the monthly administration work that they have to do trying to get proof of employment from employers who are probably slow to report that, et cetera, et cetera, and running back and forth between different offices?

Mr. Speaker, I'll just leave it at that. Many of these issues have already been highlighted. But I do say let's return the Public Housing Subsidy Program to the Housing Corporation specialists that are actually efficient at delivering that program. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion. Mr. Speaker, again, I've indicated, I think, in terms of the way things are going it has to somewhat reflect back to the federal government's Social Housing Agreement. In my documents, in terms of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Social Housing Agreement, the government announced in 1996 it would offer provinces and territories opportunities to manage the existing off-reserve federal social housing. This initiative streamlined administrative arrangements in social housing, provides for one-stop shopping for clients and encourages the best possible use of public funds. The provinces and territories who signed the Social Housing Agreements are subject to national principles and accountable framework that ensure the federal subsidies continue to flow to low-income residents.

Mr. Speaker, in theory, when this initiative was brought up it sounded like a very good theory. However, four years later, still what we're hearing from last year, two years, the practicalities it's not working in our communities. Even as of this morning when I called into the Sahtu they're having difficulties with this one-stop concept in my community. The people who I talked to said that some of the assessments are finally getting caught up, are being done today, that are two or three months behind. It's caused a lot of problems, a lot of frustration; a lot of frustration in my community in terms of how this is supposed to work out. I understand the implementation. There are growing pains. I certainly agree with what Mr. Miltenberger said in 2006 in terms of implementation, in terms of the Hansard, in terms of the implementation and give it time to see where changes could take place and where changes could happen. However, it's been four years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people today that I spoke to haven't seen much of a change in my community in terms of the one office, Education, Culture and Employment and Housing sitting over here. I thought the one-stop shop concept was going to actually physically put the two organizations into one building. But what we see is people being shuffled around. It's causing a lot of frustration. People in my community are totally frustrated. People in the region are frustrated with how this process is being rolled out. I would dare to say, Mr. Speaker, that if things were changing for the good, I would say that we wouldn't be coming forward with this motion here.

Mr. Speaker, this motion here also speaks to the decline of the federal...The federal government will be declining this type of funding in 2038. They are getting out of the social housing initiatives. They said it loud and clear. They're downloading these programs to the Northwest Territories. In 1996-97 I think they started to reduce the federal expenditures and that's when, at the same time, they implemented the increase in the rental scale. That was discussed with us in 2005, the increase in the rental scale, from 25 percent to the maximum to 30 percent. At the same time, we had this program being introduced to us.

Mr. Speaker, in my communities they talk about the social income programs with the housing programs. Now they talk about people who have been in the social assistance category as welfare recipients. They talk about people who have never been in arrears who are actually going into arrears. Sometimes that's very difficult for people who move out of our community to move to another community who want to apply for housing; however, because it's tagged as there are arrears on their application, they are rejected. People are getting rejected in terms of finding places in other

communities because the arrears are following them. I think there should be a limitation on the arrears in terms of people who have run into this problem here.

Mr. Speaker, this issue here is being questioned by my people in the region. The Housing Association has been doing a good job. They had some people there that were doing a fine job of having them done, prior to the new move to the Education, Culture and Employment taking over the program. So they're saying, why are we changing right now. That doesn't make sense. People are saying that no one really came into their communities and talked to the people, similar to what we had, the discussion with the board reform. People are saying that this big shift here in terms of administrating the housing with Education, Culture and Employment, it came down from the departments. People who have worked for the departments will not speak against the government. They fear that they are going to lose their job. It's a fear in the region that if people say that Housing or Education, that they're going to say something, they're not going to say something that's going to jeopardize their work, their income. So they're going along with what the department is saying. The people in the region are saying that Housing, Education, this government should have come in to the smaller communities and really had a good discussion and talked to the people about how this program is going to be implemented in the communities and what issues it should look for. But it came down and said this is what we're going to do. No one talked to the people. That's my understanding today and that's why people are frustrated with this process.

In theory, Mr. Speaker, it sounded good. We read it and it sounded good, but in practicality, you're seeing issues like this come up. I bring it to the same type of scenario with the board reform. This has to be stopped and looked at seriously by this government. If something needed to be fixed, you should have talked to the people in the communities to say, how can we fix this. But it hasn't been done. This is what the people are telling us.

I talked to a few of the students who are going to school at Aurora College. I asked them about the housing and how it is working out with the programs and that. Two of them responded by two letters, Mr. Speaker. Because I can't find them, I won't be able to table them. It is not in accordance with the rules of tabling documents. So I am going to read them, Mr. Speaker.

"I'm a student at the adult upgrading program in Tulita. I can tell you about the difficulties in living in a small, social housing in a small community because it applies to my situation."

MR. SPEAKER: The rules of the House do not permit for reading extensively from a document. That is not done before the House. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I do apologize, Mr. Speaker, and to the House. I did make reference to the document, Mr. Speaker, that these people who are living in these small communities, like my region and social housing, have basic difficulties in the Housing Program. These students speak very passionately how it does affect them in their health, in their financial realities. These young people, who have young families, who their partners are going out and getting jobs and who want to make a financial contribution to the community, to the families, are struggling, that the housing rent is still being a situation where they can't afford to buy furniture, buy things for their children. With limited access to roads, they won't be able to buy airline tickets. My understanding is, on Canadian North, from Norman Wells to Yellowknife and back it is \$1,200. That is a return ticket. They need to get out on the winter road and to be able to come down to Hay River or Yellowknife and see that they could buy some groceries here. They mostly go to Hay River, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these young people who are in the communities write about the situation of the houses that they live in, situations that require some basic types of services by the Housing Corporation. Because now we are into a different one-stop shop concept and we are losing sight of the basic needs in our housing here.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said in 2006 on November 1st that the rationale for this move here is not being understood by the Members. Communities are suffering because of our move. Again, when this was brought up, in theory it sounded very good. In practicality, it is not working.

Mr. Speaker, with this motion here, I certainly hope that the government takes a hard look at it, looks at where they can improve their services. It has been four years since they implemented this program, but according to my phone call this morning in regards to these two documents I have with me, there are some major disconnects -- Education, Culture and Employment and Housing, major disconnect -- with the people in the communities who are affected by this. We have not done a very good job in terms of selling it to them and having them buy into this process here. I wonder where the federal government is in terms of this. I think we should really think about this when we are going ahead, because the federal government in 2038, according to the document, is out of social housing. They are offloading to the territories and provinces. We are going to be responsible for social housing. Every year the funding is going down until 2038.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to some of my aboriginal elders who talk about housing that was promised to them by the federal government or the government-of-the-day. Those elders here still don't have a strong belief of these verbal agreements that were put in place when the federal government asked them to move into housing. These agreements by our elders, the verbal agreements, are not documents, so sometimes it has a very difficult time towards making it into what the federal government has said.

When I was doing my research on the housing, somewhere in the agreements with the federal government with the aboriginal housing issues there was a guarantee by the federal government that aboriginal peoples with native ancestry would only be paying up to 25 percent of their household income for shelters. Somewhere we lost that agreement there.

With all this complexity and the issues that come before us, Mr. Speaker, we have somehow lost touch with the people. Somewhere along the way we are not on our agenda, I believe. I believe there is a bigger picture out there that somehow we are going to be paying for this if we continue doing what we are doing. I think our services to people who are in social housing, people who are receiving support through the subsidies that the government has to offer, are going to be worse off than ever we want to in a way that we want them to be better. They are going to be worse off in terms of how we are going to help them.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion to see if the government here will have a change of heart in looking at this program here. Do the right thing and give it back to the Housing Association. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate all the Members' comments on this particular item. It has been a true discussion that we have been having here. The transfer of the program itself since 2005, it has been four years now. We are, as I stated earlier, making progress. We have compiled information on what we have done to date. The Minister of the Housing Corporation and I will certainly meet with the standing committee to show them this is where we are at and this is where we want to go.

I just want to reflect on some of the comments that were made here today. We were told that this whole thing is broke today. I think I don't see anything broken today. We continue to deliver the service that we have been providing for the last four

years, even before then. But since the transfer, I think we have made great strides on delivering an effective program into the communities. Sure, there are gaps here and there, but we are improving those areas, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were talks about the positions, that it is costing us additional to deliver a program. That is not going to change even though it is transferred back to the Housing Corporation. It will still continue to cost us to deliver a program, because we need to reach out to communities. That is what we are doing today. We train our own client services officers. We train community members, LHOs and board members. We are doing what we can as a department to give them more detailed information on what is available, what is working and what is not working. How can we fix it? Let's find a solution. We continue to strive, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that is part of the reason why it is costing us money. If we don't do that, we get criticized for making decisions at a headquarter level. I am a firm believer in going to the communities and reaching out. The 33 communities that we service, we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there has been some improvement in assessment and also income security reform that the Members have alluded to. That will be before the committee. We did make a commitment today.

Arrears have been brought up. Arrears were there before the transfer happened. Even up to 1996 I remember there were arrears, people being evicted. That is nothing new. We took it on and we are making efforts to change that. We are making progress. As the Minister of the Housing Corporation has alluded to already, we have made great strides; 70 or 80 percent on average on rent collections since we took over the program. That is a huge progress to date that we have made. It wasn't there before. Members need to be aware of that also.

Mr. Speaker, the ECE, when we took over the program back in 2005, we have not made any policy changes. We still continue to deliver the program under the regime of the Housing Corporation guidelines at that time. But, then again, we have improved in some areas. We do continue to make changes as well.

Just talking about transferring back to the Housing Corporation, some are saying that it should be done right away, like today. It would not be an easy transition. When it was transferred to us, we had to learn the last four years. Transferring back will certainly cost. We don't know how much it is going to cost us. Time will tell. Those positions did not transfer to us, so we created our own positions dealing with all the subsidies that we currently deliver. The last four years the positions were there and are there now. I don't think they are, because

they are probably spread out to other areas so that means transferring back over there, hiring more people. Try to keep those in mind. There are additional costs of transferring back, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to highlight some of the areas that we talked about, how our staff, the committees, the regions happen through the system. I would just like to say, I guess, I give some kudos to my departmental staff that has worked tremendously hard to make this a true success. I think we are achieving the goal, Mr. Speaker. It is not an easy ride. At the same time, we are doing what we can to deliver the most effective program in the communities, the regions and the Northwest Territories, and most especially those client service officers in the regions and in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is not an easy position to be in. This is a real stressful job that these client services officers are undertaking. They don't get any credit whatsoever. It is always a negative aspect. They need a pat on the back every now and then. The last four years has been a tremendous struggle to make this a perfect program that we can deliver. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of pressure and stress pertaining to these roles that individuals are undertaking in the communities.

On behalf of the government, I am not going to speak for long, Mr. Speaker, because we are going to be presenting to the standing committee. They are either watching or listening today. I would just like to say thank you for your hard work and patience. I would just like to say to them, keep up the good work. We deserve every effort that you put into the system. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. To the motion. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say up front that I am not going to spend too much time on this issue. We have had some good discussion today. I certainly appreciate the comments the Members have made. There are a lot of issues in the area of housing needs in the Northwest Territories and many of them are raised today. I can't say all of them can be blamed or should be attributed to the transfer of the housing or the dollars to Education, Culture and Employment. My intention was to have an assessment. We had some discussions with the ECE. We recognize there is a need. It is timely that we do an assessment, we do a review. We wanted to be able to frame that out and bring it to committee. This motion came rather unexpectedly to us.

Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that. There are other issues we need to deal with. As I mentioned

earlier, I had indicated that there are a number of things we need to talk about, how we are going to address and just some of them I would like to highlight today is the issue of seniors' rents. That has come up. We need to address that. There is the issue of an evaluation for our Housing Choices Program. The review needs to be done. It has been a couple of years in the making now. We need to see how they are working. We have to do this public housing rental subsidy and get an independent audit to look at that.

Mr. Speaker, it was my intention to do this. I am not sure if this motion is going to allow us to do the due diligence that needs to be done. One hundred eighty days to respond is fairly short.

---Interjection

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: One hundred twenty is even shorter, Mr. Speaker. We need to do an evaluation on the affordable housing units. We need to do something to look at the income threshold. We have already started that. We need to do the 2009 community survey, the core needs assessment. We have to incorporate a new fuel system. We have to deal with the issue of housing for staff. We have to improve our communications. All these things were raised with us. We also have to deal with the energy issues and look at long-term strategies.

Mr. Speaker, there are issues that will come up as a result of our review. There are probably recommendations that we could work with. There was a good comment made today that, where is the proof that it is working? Well, we need to look at the proof that it is working or not working. There are benefits that we can point to. We know that the collection is back to where it was historically. We know that our LHOs that are in arrears, there are less of them in arrears now than there was at the time prior to dividing the responsibilities. We have done satisfaction reviews. They point up to 76 percent satisfaction of the process. We know that it is 10 percent of the population today that are not paying their rent for one reason or another. We don't know if it is because there is a new system, because 10 percent was the number that we had historically. Maybe that is the number we are always going to be dealing with. For some reason or other, people are refusing to pay. There are a lot of things. There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed.

I certainly appreciate the concern being brought forward from the MLAs. I am still very much in favour of allowing us to do a formal review. I'm not sure if the motion can be amended to allow for that. We certainly will look at information that comes forward, if we are allowed to get all of this compiled

in a timely manner, to make a decision that makes sense based on true fact.

We heard today that some people were concerned that there wasn't enough input. There wasn't enough analysis done when this decision was made to separate the responsibilities. Well, I am concerned that there may be some impact that we haven't fully analyzed yet, if we reverse this decision or parts of it or do nothing. So it is really difficult to respond ad hoc. We need to formalize it. I am asking, I guess, for consideration that we amend the motion to look at giving us some time to do a true analysis. Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been many comments made today in regard to the motion; many examples of concerns about housing across the Northwest Territories. In fact, there are a number of Members here who have been around for quite some time and have heard, whenever we've gone to communities, probably the two most commonly raised issues when we go to communities is housing and health care and then probably followed by education. Those are commonly raised and have been since I was first elected in 1995, and continue to be even on some of our more recent trips. The fact, I think if we look back at Hansard of previous Assemblies we would see much discussion about housing, about arrears, about programs, the level of service provided in communities. There has been quite some time spent on that. In fact, I think we can go back to the Hansard and see when there were calls for past audits by the Office of the Auditor General on the Housing Corporation proper and how it delivered the programs that it was in charge of.

There has been much talk about this change that has been four years in the making. The first year was purely a financial change between the Housing Corporation and Education, Culture and Employment. The second year is when they started actually transferring program operation between the two departments. Yes, Members have highlighted that the implementation of that definitely raised many concerns in our communities, and how that flowed and continued to a certain degree in today's environment. That's why both Ministers have highlighted that they are going to work together to come up with a report and work with Members and, if allowed, would be looking at what options would be available. If in fact the options come back clearly that this is not going to work in this environment, then we would have to look at reverting back to a different process or original process.

Before we make the decision on that let's recall past work done in the area of the Housing

Corporation. In fact, the Office of the Auditor General just filed a report on the NWT Housing Corporation public housing and homeownership problems in February 2008. It was based on a motion of the Legislative Assembly of the day of March 2nd, 2006, that referred to the Housing Corporation and its operations. A response in that report, in a response to the motion made March 2nd, 2006, the Auditor General reported the corporation needs to improve its monitoring of the LHOs' financial reporting against plans and assist those LHOs that have accumulated deficits. Further in there it also stated that action is needed by the corporation to improve the collection of rents by the LHOs. So it shows that there are ongoing problems in the whole area of housing, rents, how the programs are operated, the monitoring that happened. In fact, I think if we again look at Hansard, there was much agitation of the Members of the previous Assembly. In fact, there was much frustration with the Housing Corporation and the Minister-of-the-day in looking for solutions at that time. Things turned out differently and, in fact, we're now finding again concerns about this.

The Ministers have confirmed that we will look at this, work with Members, hopefully give us the time that we can get a good response back to Members and look at the options, even if that means reverting back to the old system. But again, as both Minister Lafferty and Minister McLeod pointed out, we need to take a good look at this process and if it means an independent look at it, then let's do that and let's put the energy in before we scrap the whole program, because history shows this is an issue, it continues to be an issue, and going back to the old program where the Auditor General reviewed past operations. Will that continue without change? No, we need to make some change, and that's what we're looking for here.

As well as convention, being that it's a recommendation, we'll be abstaining from the vote and looking to Members for their work with us.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will allow the mover of the motion to offer some final comments. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all the Members for their comments on this very important matter and on this very important motion. Certainly with the transfer of this program from Housing to ECE there has been a lot of misunderstanding. We hear that the arrears have not changed, so that's something I guess that could be proved by more of a review.

We do know that we are spending at least \$1.5 million more to have it handled by ECE than we were paying for Housing to do the same program. We can't really afford to be throwing dollars around

by the millions here. There are 14 positions. I suppose Members could have chosen to try to make the point by deleting some of the positions out of ECE, but we are not convinced that there is not value added in those additional functions that have been taken on by those income support workers. However, that does not mean that housing needs to be in their mandate to continue to have some of those income support workers at the local ECE and regional ECE offices at this time.

Let me say again that not every income support client lives in public housing and not every housing client is on income support. So I'm very glad to hear that transferring it back is an option. We've heard that from Minister McLeod, we've heard that from the Premier that it is an option. What we need to do is quantify the issues, validate, confirm what the issues are and then make an informed decision. Granted, a lot of what we hear as Regular Members does seem a little anecdotal. You, with the resources that you have -- or that the Members have on the other side of the House -- are probably in a better position to quantify some of the issues.

As to the comments made by Minister Lafferty about the survey, the satisfaction survey, I don't know how scientific a survey like that is when you're asking people that you're giving income support and housing to, to say here, how would you like to do a survey on how we're treating you. I mean, these are folks, I'm sorry, by the very nature of what they're coming to see you about, who are a little vulnerable. So I'm not really sure how scientific your satisfaction survey is.

We have not criticized the income support workers today. I want to make that very clear. I did not hear one person on this side of the House stand up and criticize the income support workers. We are criticizing the government, if anything, for what we perceive is something that happened that should not have happened. They are just doing their jobs to the best of their ability in the environment that we have put them in. But let's be very clear that nobody here is criticizing the income support workers.

Mr. Yakeleya likened this kind of rationale of this one-stop shop, let's put everything together, kind of does give you *deja vu* on the whole board reform thing. Somehow we're going to have these mega, all-encompassing, omni-offices that are going to deal with our people on all things. I think that is a wrong approach up here. As I said before, housing authorities, LHOs have a longstanding history in our communities of not only maintaining and ascribing rental units to people to meet their needs, but I think that the good work they have done over the years needs to be recognized as well.

Mr. Hawkins talked about the model is a good model, the problem is no one's seen the model, not in its fullness of what was originally envisioned when this all started off. What we've seen is just a little portion of it and we're saying the little portion we've seen we don't really feel works very well.

How much would it cost? Let's take that model a bit further and talk about that one window and co-locating. What are we going to do? Are we going to put housing over to ECE? I mean, my gosh, ECE is one of the biggest departments in our government. I think ECE has enough to do. I think ECE has enough stuff within their mandate. Housing in and of itself is a large issue. It's a huge issue. It is at the very, very crux of the quality of life that people can possibly hope to aspire to in our communities. Having a home to go to is the very basic foundation of the quality of life for our people. Housing is a large, and I think should be, stand-alone issue. Someone said, if it ain't broke...Or I guess the motto we want to say is let's not break it. If it's not broke, let's build on what's good.

Also, repeating Mr. Abernethy's comments, there's no shame in admitting that we made a mistake. I don't know how much it would cost for things to revert back, but let's not just take a position over there that if we say yes, you say no, we say black, you say white. Let's get together. I don't think this is going to be solved over a cup of coffee between Mr. Lafferty and Mr. McLeod and a quick conversation, but thank you for committing today to coming back to the Standing Committee on Social Programs. Thank you for the overtures which we've heard that said let's find a solution together and let's make sure that the people who need our support in our communities and who need housing are looked after in the best way possible.

Could I also please request a recorded vote?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member is requesting a recorded vote, Madam Clerk. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Mrs. Groenewegen, 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.

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Hawkins.

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

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Robert C. McLeod, Mr. Bob McLeod.

MR. SPEAKER: Results of the motion: nine for, one opposed, seven abstaining. The motion is carried.

---Carried

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; Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010; Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee; 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'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Tabled Document 11-16(3), Committee Report 2-16(3), Bills 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7. What's the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We would like to get into the Department of Education, Culture and Employment budget deliberations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Okay. With that, Minister of ECE, do you have opening comments or general comments?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the 2009-2010 Main Estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Our vision of northern people leading fulfilled lives and contributing to a strong and prosperous society is the driving force for where we are going as a

department. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment strategic plan, Building on Our Success, along with the government's strategic plan and initiatives provide the direction for our 2009-2010 Main Estimates.

The proposed 2009-2010 Main Estimates for Education, Culture and Employment totals \$299.631 million, an increase of 3.3 percent over the previous year's main estimates. The main estimates incorporate funding for ongoing programs and for strategic initiatives for each of the department's key activities. It includes \$4.6 million for proposed new initiatives in language and culture, in the arts, in labour market literacy, in immigration support, in client services and in the trades.

Early Childhood Development

Overall, in 2009-2010, we propose to spend approximately \$6.069 million on early childhood development activities. These activities help provide children with a healthy start in life and give them the learning tools they need to succeed in school and beyond. The department plans to conduct a review of the Early Childhood and Family Literacy training programs in 2009-2010 and to bring forward plans to further improve early childhood programs for 2010-2011.

School System

This government knows that addressing the needs of students is paramount to ensure that children have the best possible start to their learning journey. The proposed 2009-2010 budget for school programs totals \$160.910 million. Most of this money will go directly to education authorities at the regional and community level.

In 2009-2010 the department will work with Northwest Territories education authorities on a strategy to eliminate the education achievement gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. A proposed investment of \$225,000 will enable high school students from small communities to access the programs they need to fulfill their individual career and education plans.

We will also work with education authorities to develop a framework that supports high school trades initiatives. An additional \$145,000 is being proposed to establish a curriculum coordinator position responsible for apprenticeship math and accountability for new "trades in schools" programming.

On a broader level, the department will work with the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association to complete recommendations on how to promote a safe school environment for students and teachers across the Northwest Territories.

A total of \$6.864 million is being included in the proposed 2009-2010 budget to cover negotiated Collective Agreement increases for teacher salaries and benefits. School funding reductions in line with lower enrolments are offset by increases required to maintain the level of student support funding and the pupil-teacher ratio for the remainder of the 2008-2009 school year, covering the period from April to June.

Library Services

In the area of library services we propose to spend \$1.044 million for 2009-2010. A proposed \$150,000 investment will increase the hours of operation for 11 small community libraries. A proposed additional \$137,000 will be contributed to community libraries to offset operational costs.

Culture And Heritage

In 2009-2010 the department proposes to invest an additional \$700,000 in the arts to increase supports for individuals, projects and organizations that showcase Northwest Territories arts and cultures. This is in addition to the \$500,000 added in 2008-2009 and will bring the annual budget for arts and cultural contributions to \$2 million in 2009-2010.

The department also proposes to invest \$300,000 for the collection of museum and archival materials for the development of exhibit storylines with elders and other community experts, and for the design and production of museum and on-line exhibits representing the culture and heritage of the Northwest Territories.

Official Languages

We propose to spend \$6.146 million on official languages activities during the fiscal year. Education, Culture and Employment is working with the language communities, other Government of the Northwest Territories departments and the federal government to support service in and the acquisition, maintenance and revitalization of our 11 Northwest Territories official languages.

Four of the six modules in the Aboriginal Language Interpreter Translator Pilot Training Program has been completed. The Northwest Territories French Language Single Window Service Centre opened in Yellowknife in June 2008. In 2009-2010 the department proposes to invest an additional \$100,000 toward piloting single-window service centres for one or more of our aboriginal languages. These centres will provide information and services in the aboriginal languages based on needs identified through consultations with the aboriginal language communities.

College And Literacy Programs

In 2009-2010 we plan to support our college and adult basic education and literacy programs with a proposed expenditure of \$35.475 million. The new Literacy Strategy targets youth who are not in school and do not participate in the labour market. Completion of college, university or trades training equips Northerners to take advantage of economic opportunities. A \$600,000 literacy investment is being proposed to increase the number of adult educators in small communities and to raise literacy programs in 2009-2010.

A proposed \$419,000 investment will support Aurora College trades and technology programs and an additional proposed \$240,000 will be used to maintain equipment and to support the Aurora College heavy equipment operator training in Deh Cho and South Slave communities.

Apprenticeship, Trades And Occupations

In 2009-2010 the department proposes to add \$150,000 to pay fees and tuition on behalf of apprentices due to increased apprenticeship registrations and \$100,000 to encourage women and aboriginal people to enter and complete apprenticeship training.

Career And Employment Development

In 2009-2010 the department is proposing to invest \$535,000 to support immigration. This initiative will make it possible for the Northwest Territories to actively participate in the immigration process in support of northern businesses. A proposed Nominee Program will address the concerns of Northwest Territories employers by expediting the processing of permanent residency of those immigrants who bring skills and resources that are lacking in the Northwest Territories economy.

Income Security

The department proposes to further the work on the consolidation of income security programs that began in April 2005. The department has rationalized its income security programs under a common policy framework and introduced a new benefit structure designed to encourage greater self-reliance.

The department is also moving toward the establishment of one-stop community service centres to deliver the range of income security programs. In 2009-2010 the department proposes to add \$318,000 to improve service management capacity in the Deh Cho and Sahtu regions.

Concluding Comments

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the 2009-2010 Main Estimates for Education, Culture and Employment were developed to further both the goals of the Government of the Northwest Territories' strategic plan and the objectives of the departmental strategic plan.

I would be pleased to answer any question that Members may have at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, we'll call a short break and we'll begin with the Minister and his witnesses.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'll call Committee of the Whole back to order. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister of Education if he'll be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree that the Minister bring in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my left is Dan Daniels, deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and to my right is Mr. Paul Devitt, director of strategic and business services. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. General comments on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for his introductory comments. I would like to start by noting an increase of 3.3 percent for this department. That's sort of on the low end, which I am appreciative of. Zero is even better. The first thing I noticed was a reduction in the early childhood development of \$200,000. To me this is a real priority, which I've highlighted before and I know the Minister is aware of that. I also see that there is a review plan of the early childhood and family literacy training and plans to improve that the following fiscal year. I am happy to see that. So I guess I am wondering what we are cutting out of Early Childhood Development Program there or \$200,000. I am concerned about that.

Just going through, there are many things I do appreciate; the \$150,000 investment to increase the hours of operations for small community libraries. That seems like a good investment to me. I am hugely supportive of the additional dollars for the arts, \$700,000 bringing the annual budget next fiscal year to \$2 million for arts and cultural contributions. I think it's well demonstrated the economic return that you get back from those investments, so I think we'll see that.

I note the \$300,000 for collections and museum archival materials. I wonder, I've had a number of constituents ask about displays related to the Residential School Program and the impacts thereof, especially aboriginal people who are concerned that their young children are unaware of the implications and import of that issue. I'm hoping there might be some thinking along that line.

I also appreciate the \$600,000 investment in literacy. I'm wondering if that's an addition to the literacy program. I also think that's an area where dollars spent are a true investment, that give us good return both economically and otherwise, health and so on. So a good way to address a broad range of our goals and objectives.

The proposing to increase our support for apprentices and women in apprenticing and aboriginal people, I'm very supportive of those things. I notice that we have two apprenticeship training officers who I think each are trying to sort of administer 100 apprentices. I think things are starting to burst at the seams there. I note that those officers...and I can't even tell you, are they Public Works and Services or...I'm not sure where they're housed. There's getting to be a rapid turnover in those positions, so hopefully there's some broader cross-department thinking to address that end of things and make sure those dollars stay effective.

The increase for immigration support, I know we seem to have taken it away from one of our non-government organizations that works with immigrants and I'm hoping that this new interest in supporting immigration will, in fact, re-establish support to organizations such as the one in Yellowknife that does such important work that is, apparently, closing its doors or close to it.

Under the income security remarks that the Minister made, further work on consolidation of income security, the department has rationalized its income security programs under a common policy framework and are going to introduce a new benefits structure to encourage greater self-reliance. That's something that I'm interested in but I'm not sure exactly what this means, so I'd appreciate some further explanation of what that's all about. That's all I have, Mr. Chair. Thank you

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the area of Education, Culture and Employment, I believe that this department has a very important role to play in light of the economic downturn that we're in. I think it's a good opportunity that we have to not only provide training and stimulus to our communities and also throughout the Northwest Territories, and get our people ready for the potential of the upkeep of the areas such as development and, more importantly, around our communities.

I note that you do have programs and services in regard to the college programs, trades, and I think that the Arctic College in Inuvik with the portable trades unit that they have going to Tuk this spring and then to McPherson next summer. I was in Aklavik last week and this is something that they'd also like to see. I think it's the small communities piggybacking on community projects.

Right now there's the construction of the road in Aklavik and Tuk to Site 177 and I've spoken with the leaders in Aklavik about looking at some sort of a training program. I noted that you had the Arctic College Heavy Equipment Operators Training Program in the Deh Cho and the South Slave communities. I think that something like that should be considered whenever the government spends money to look at these types of projects, especially in regard to the road from Aklavik to the gravel source. It's a good opportunity to get the people trained in regard to operating equipment and the potential of getting them certified, so when the pipeline does come and the development comes behind it, that you have people ready to go, giving them their certification that they're going to need and, more importantly, take advantage of those programs in our small communities where there's high unemployment. In regard to Aklavik, they don't really have much economic diversity by way of any industry of any sort, but this is an opportunity where they can possibly extend that project over a two or three-year program so that you can actually train the people, get them certified and also get the job done to build a road to the gravel source.

I think it's something that this government should consider working with Education and the different departments, either Transportation or Public Works, so any time there's any major capital dollars being expended, the Department of ECE should look at a training component for those capital expenditures and see how we can best drive it at getting people trained up for those jobs. The same thing should apply to the Housing Corporation, working with ECE in regard to the trades unit that I talked about in Inuvik through the Arctic College there. Getting people trained in regard to the apprenticeships by

way of carpentry, electricians, plumbers. It's equipped to do that and I think it's a good start in using that asset.

I think that we do have to realize that there is going to be a slowdown here. I think that in some cases there are pros and cons to slowdowns, but I think it's a good opportunity for government and communities and the people of the Northwest Territories to just step back, take a deep breath and get some training in and, more importantly, take advantage of those capital projects that we, as government, put out there.

The other area in regard to the trades is looking at enhancing women and aboriginal people to enter the Apprenticeship Training Program, again, I think it's those types of investments that we make that really improve the quality of life for people, especially in those different segments from women and aboriginal people to take advantage of those economic opportunities in the North and, more importantly, the programs that we try to deliver on behalf of them. Also, I think it's very important that we start working closer with aboriginal organizations in regard to groups that are responsible for delivering programs and services on behalf of the aboriginal organizations in regard to the scholarship programs they have, the dollars they're able to get through the federal Indian Affairs programs and services and match their programs with ours. I think by doing that it will be able to help more people out.

The other areas in regard to income support, I know we had a long discussion about it today but I think that...I mentioned, you know, trying to find ways to make people make positive choices and being self-reliant. I think income support has to find a way of not making people feel like they're going to get penalized if they go to work. If anything, through income support you should be supporting the local entrepreneurs either saving money by way of you pay a portion of their salary, they pay a portion of the salary, get the people on income support to work three days a week, or a week, every two weeks, but I think at least get them back into the workforce. But don't find a way that basically people are not stimulated to do that because they feel that they're going to get penalized if they basically...I thought that was the whole intent of income support when we first rolled it out, is that people will make positive choices, either go to Arctic College or take upgrading or take a trade or take a course or get part-time work. I think we're not seeing that here and I think that this government has to do more to find ways of working around that.

The other thing that I feel that we have to do a better job on income support is the seniors' support programs we have. It very much alarms me when we hear people speaking at the Beaufort leaders

meeting talking about an 80-year-old grandmother being refused income support because she has one of her family members taking care of her in her own home and because of that, she wasn't able to get the fuel subsidy from the Housing Corporation. The person was just so frustrated that they just gave up and she continues to pay for her own fuel. I think that the whole idea of the seniors' programs and support program is to keep them in their homes, keep them in their home communities and keep them out of institutions and save this government money. The cost of putting someone into a health care system or even through the corrections system is somewhere in the range of \$80,000 a year. Keeping someone in their home, we are probably looking at \$8,000 to \$18,000 a year for the cost to operate and maintain that home. Those are the things we have to look at when we look at income support.

I know there was an attempt to increase the threshold by way of the fuel subsidy, so you could try to get more people involved. Surprisingly or not, it did the opposite. We increased the threshold and people went to apply for the fuel subsidy program and they found out that they were only getting 400 litres or something for a whole year, which didn't work out. Because of the way our thresholds are scheduled and the way we allocate the program, it should be universal right across the board. I think that is something we have to look at too, especially with the high cost of maintaining their home and especially seniors. We have to find a way of how we determine those thresholds. How do we do the assessments of how much of a subsidy program you are going to receive? Get away from the thresholds and how we do the assessments. Find ways to get these programs and services to these people. While people are up into their 70s and they have to go back to work or get a second job because they just can't make it on their pensions, but they still can't be eligible for the income support programs, for me, that's something that has to be considered by ECE regarding how those programs are delivered and administered. Those are the areas that I wanted to raise questions on.

On the issues regarding official languages, I know you are looking at spending over \$6 million. The issues I hear from my communities are they can only hire people on a short-term basis. In most cases, they cannot operate and maintain their language and cultural centres in our communities and regions because there is inadequate funding. I think we have to find a way for those languages that are in distress and that need assistance from this government, especially the Gwich'in language and Inuktitut language in my region, I think we have to be able to look at that. Again, that's something we have to seriously consider looking at in light of the challenges that we face. We do have to find

ways to keep those organizations functional but keep them fighting the uphill challenges of trying to retain and enhance the languages in the different cultures.

Thank you for the opportunity to ask you questions in general comments. I look forward to the rest of the presentation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I have nobody else on my list. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to add a couple of more comments very briefly. I would like to see the department reinstate the \$80,000 for Skills Canada support. This is something that is not costly, but I think it's an effective program. The department had some conditions there which they would support. Committee was in touch with Skills Canada and provided the department with a copy of their response. Obviously they are doing exactly what the department would like to see happen. So I will be bringing a motion forward on that later.

I also want to mention the Aurora College programs in the area of renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy planning that's completely missing in action still, despite the fact that we have been moving strongly towards spending tens of millions of dollars in this area as our people themselves in every community. We are saddled with the unfortunate situation where we know it should be done, but we just don't know how to do it. The opportunities are huge for both employment and savings, reducing costs to people, if we have a skilled workforce here. So I am hoping the Minister will tell us some good things are going to be happening very soon on that front.

Again, highlighting with Aurora College, the loss of the diploma program for translators. I know there are programs happening in communities and stuff, but it's not a certification diploma program and that's what is needed for the sorts of jobs that are available such as in this very Legislative Assembly. I still encounter through your examples and situations, we hear about on the news where programs are dropped because of low subscription in Fort Smith, whereas the evidence is when those things are moved to another campus, the attendance goes up, the number of students goes up. I hope there will continue to be some tune-ups to Aurora College to address some of these issues. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. General comments. I have nobody else on my list. Is committee agreed that we have concluded general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I will go to Minister Lafferty and give him an opportunity to respond to the general comments made so far. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, certainly the early childhood has been brought up. We certainly will get into more detailed information at a later time, but certainly this is one of the areas where there are no impacts on the services on a moving-forward basis. There is sufficient flexibility within the existing budget to make plans in that respect. So that's one of the areas that we have highlighted.

Of course, the \$700,000 plus \$500,000 for arts, that's a worthwhile investment and we will continue to focus in that area.

The museum, the displays, whether it be the residential school era or the past histories, those are the areas that we will continue to monitor and work with and produce more funding if we need to in these areas. We've been told over and over in the communities that we need to tell our stories, our traditional stories, our elders' stories. So we will continue to keep an eye out for that and then work with it.

Of course, the Literacy Strategy, there is literacy funding highlighted here to deal with the Literacy Strategy that I have announced in Inuvik. I think that's an exciting part of the year, I guess, to start implementing that. As a department, we are looking forward to working with the communities, the regions, on making that a success.

Apprenticeships, of course, we are investing quite a bit in the apprenticeship area. Those are the areas that we needed to focus on as a Northwest Territories because, as you know, the Northwest Territories are lacking trades people. Not only that, but within Canada. So we've been told we need to produce more trades people in the North, so we will continue to work with that.

Immigration services, that has been brought to our attention. Finally it's coming before us to deliver the program to meet the needs of the businesses in the Northwest Territories to have highly skilled people brought to the North. So the Immigration Program that we will be initiating will be part of the process. Not only that, but those services are also being provided by Aurora College. I am thinking long term in the immigration area, but Aurora College does deliver that through funding through the federal government. There is going to be another submission to the federal government for additional funding. The organization that you referred to, Aurora College is willing to work with the organization on having a storefront operation, per se. So we are in discussions in that respect.

Portable trades, Trades on Wheels in Inuvik, has been a success to date. Certainly one of the key focuses is to deliver those trades into most isolated communities. As the Member alluded to, we'll be going to Tuk and different small communities. That certainly is in the works and we're looking forward to having those three super-B mobile trade units into the communities, and we'll certainly be producing more apprentices out of that.

I think we certainly are open to other interested training areas, such as heavy equipment, if it's needed in the region. There are all kinds of activities happening down the road, so we need to prepare ourselves. We'll certainly be open to discussing more ideas in that area. We need to take advantage of all training that's required, the programs that we need to deliver.

Training component to capital expenditures, that is another area that we'll certainly keep an eye out for other departments who are pursuing capital planning into the communities. Certainly there should be training attached to that because it does involve apprentices.

Women and aboriginals in trades. This was an area that we needed to tackle. The apprenticeship and trades in general perspective we are on focusing that area as well. But, more specifically, the women in trades and also the aboriginal people. That's one of the next focuses that we are pursuing. Certainly they are areas we need to improve on.

Income support, making positive choices. I think this is the area that we have made several changes since its inception. Ready to Work Program, just having subsidies available to individuals that may find employment in the community but with a minimum wage that can't get by. So we provide additional subsidy for them to get by, because that's one of our goals. Our goal is if the individual is willing to work, we can assist them to enter the workforce. We do provide training as well, basic life skills training, to get them ready for the workforce. So we'll continue to provide those key areas. Certainly we're not in a position to penalize those individuals that are seeking out employment. We're here to support them and will continue to do so.

The Seniors Support Program, yes, this is an area we talked about earlier; that seniors' fuel subsidy. Maybe some seniors are being penalized because their kids are living with them. Household income. Those are the areas we talked about that we need to sit down and work out a solution of how we can get around the system. It's across the board in the Northwest Territories, the 33 communities that we serve. We've heard over and over why some elders and some seniors are not qualifying, because of the regime that we have. So we clearly highlighted that and we need to work on resolving those issues.

Official languages, that's an area that I've highlighted on numerous occasions that we need to do more in this area. The Member also talked about short-term and not knowing if there's going to be long-term funding. That's an area that we also need to highlight on a going-forward basis. The TLCs that we work with, the teaching and learning centres, teacher and language centres, and not only that but the 11 official languages, nine aboriginal official languages that we have in the Northwest Territories. So we'll continue to make some improvement in those areas.

Skills Canada, the \$80,000 that's been talked about, the reinstatement of that. There's been, I met with...My department has met with the Skills Canada group in 2007. I do believe that was the first time we met, in the fall time. That's when we talked about the broader perspective of covering the whole Northwest Territories. They came back late 2008, I do believe, and they came back with a plan to offset that and cover the Northwest Territories on how they deliver services. So we will continue to work with them and there are some talks about the program that we've proposed in the women in trades area. Maybe it could fall under the Skills Canada area. But we need to discuss it further, on how we can integrate and how we can make it a successful program.

The Interpreter and Translator Program, there have been several modules delivered and, yes, it had very positive impact several years back when Aurora College was delivering it. We highlighted that and we need to relook at this area as well. Due to low enrolment, the program was dropped at that time, but we need to look at the overall program itself. How many interpreters, how many translators do we have in the system to date in the 33 communities? Is there a lot of interest? Those are areas we'll continue to talk with the aboriginal language group and get direction from them to say this is what we should focus on. Those are just some of the key areas that Members have touched on.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The committee has already agreed that we've concluded general comments. Is committee agreed to move on to detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We're going to defer page 10-7, which is the departmental summary. We'll move along to 10-8, which is an information item, infrastructure investment summary. Any questions? Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: In regard to the recovery from CMHC of the \$13.3 million, I'd like to know exactly how that flows to the department. Does that come

through the Department of Finance or direction from CMHC?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The revenues, I think, are on page 10-9. It flows into the Department of Finance revenues.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Mr. Krutko, page 10-8.

MR. KRUTKO: I'm on page 10-9.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We didn't finish with page 10-8. Committee, page 10-8, infrastructure investment summary, information item.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Page 10-9. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the recovery from CMHC for the subsidy, what is the subsidy supposed to be used for?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. That funding has been identified to cover or offset the overall public rental subsidy area.

MR. KRUTKO: In regard to the \$13 million that we're recovering from CMHC, where is the rest of the housing funds in the budget for the remaining \$30-odd million?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: This is revenue that's coming from outside, but there is another \$15 million that's coming from within the GNWT itself.

MR. KRUTKO: If the Minister or his deputy could point out in the budget where the remaining \$15 million is.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That information clearly highlights on page 10-27 the \$33.967 million for public housing rental subsidies.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question on the early learning and child care. I see revenue of \$265,000. I'm wondering what the source of that is. Who are we collecting those dollars from?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. That \$265,000 is from Human Resources and Social Development Canada funding to support early childhood and child care program.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for that. I see in 2007-2008 we were at a million dollars. Is there a reason that has decreased? Is that coming back? Are we getting the other \$800,000 or \$750,000 somewhere else? I'm just wondering if there's some potential that we're not realizing there for more revenue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chairman, there was a one-time payment of \$941,000. I think it was referred to at the time as the payment into the trust. It was reflected in 2007-2008.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. We're on page 10-9, information item, revenue summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-10, which is also an information item, active position summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-13, activity summary, directorate and administration, operations expenditure summary, \$7.769 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-14, information item, directorate and administration, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-17, education and culture, activity summary, operations expenditure summary, \$179.023 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I could get the Minister to use this opportunity to explain where the efficiencies, the \$200,000 of efficiencies in early childhood development are or, if not that, how they've reduced costs or what we're giving up in child care, early childhood development.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. Through that process we're going to, through Aurora College, we're going to do a review of the early childhood program delivery. That's the area we'll be focusing on as an efficiency.

MR. BROMLEY: So we're taking \$200,000 out of here without knowing where we're going to take it, but we're anticipating that our review will reveal that opportunity. Is that what I'm hearing?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly there won't be any impact on the front-line workers. It's just that we're conducting a review of the program, so there's no impact on our services that we provide currently.

MR. BROMLEY: I guess it's a good faith situation. I'll have to take the Minister's word on good faith here, because I don't hear anything that's going to tell me how that's going to happen. Maybe I'll just leave it with the comment that I'll stress again that this perhaps is the most important thing we could be doing and the most important and largest significant opportunity we have for really contributing to people's well-being by working with their potential in the early years. That goes for language and health and many of the broader goals that our government has and this 16th Assembly has. I'll leave it at that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I didn't hear a question, so I'll go to the next person on my list. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions. The first one is related to, I think it's the Aboriginal Student Initiative that was mentioned by the Minister recently. I wonder if I could get a bit of an explanation as to what that strategy is, what the intention of the department is to try to increase aboriginal students' grad rates, I think. If I could get clarification, that would be helpful.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. The strategy I was referring to is at the preliminary stages where we need to eliminate the student achievement gap. That is one area that we need to identify non-aboriginal and aboriginal students for the Northwest Territories. We will be working within the regions and communities, identifying those key areas.

Another strategy that we will be looking at is the Aboriginal Languages Strategy. Those are at the preliminary stages at this point and we will be briefing...We've already briefed the standing committee on identifying and eliminating

achievement gaps. Aboriginal language will certainly come into play as well.

MS. BISARO: Can I hear from the Minister where the funding for the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative is located?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That specific strategy that we are pursuing is from internal funding.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for that answer. I have another question in regards to some of the funding. I can't remember the title now. The intention is to try and provide, there is somewhere to provide funding for students to get access, particularly in high school, to courses that they need in order to graduate. I wondered if the Minister could comment on...With high schools having grown out of the larger centres and into the smaller communities, there has been a concern in some quarters that some of the competencies of some of the Grade 12 grads in some of the high school programs are not what they should be. I wonder if the Minister would care to comment on whether or not that's something the department thinks is a problem and, if it is, are they working on it.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The Member's talking about certain students. This year we do have approximately 15 students, with a budget of \$225,000. The work is underway with the DEC's on a plan to look at this key area. They will continue to work with them.

MS. BISARO: So I guess from that answer, then, it means there is no plan or strategy developed at this time. The money is there, but nothing has been developed yet. Is that correct?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: At this point we are asking for money to proceed with the plan to work in this particular area with the DEC's. That's why we're before the committee.

MS. BISARO: I guess one last question. If you're working with the DEC's, this is a wide open initiative at this point, I think is what I'm hearing. Is part of the intention to have students move from their home community to a high school in another community in order to get their courses?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: There have been questions in the House pertaining to this as well. Yes, we will continue with ECE in this area because we do provide funding as well. We will continue to work closely with them to resolve this issue. We are also looking at various options on the distance learning. We do provide some distance learning in some isolated schools, but how can we provide some support mechanism? We need to look at those options as well. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: It is fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there a possibility we can go back to 10-10? I just have one question on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Pardon me, Mr. Krutko. Which page are you looking to go back to?

MR. KRUTKO: Page 10-10.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): The Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to page 10-10.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I have been asking every department this question in regards to active positions, I would like to ask the department if they can give us a breakdown of these positions based on the Affirmative Action Policy in regards to the class of these people by way of P1s, P2s and P3s. Also, are there any people with disabilities working in these areas by way of these positions? Is there a possibility I can get that breakdown from the Minister? I don't need it right now, but if it is something that he can get to me and the rest of the Members, it would be helpful. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, certainly we have that available. We can certainly provide it to the Members. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We are on page 10-10, active position summary, information item. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regards to the official languages division, I was here in the 14th Assembly where we had the languages...We have moved off of page 10, right? Okay.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we are done with page 10-10?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We will be returning to page 10-17 and we will go to Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Sorry about that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regards to the official languages division, I know that being a member of the Special Committee on Official Languages in the 14th Assembly, we passed some 60 recommendations.

In those recommendations was the establishment of the different board structures in regards to the revitalization board, in regards to the language boards. I was surprised to note that a lot of people who were on these boards weren't aware of these recommendations made back in the 14th Assembly in regards to a special committee in regards to languages. Yet today a lot of these recommendations are still not being acted upon. I think, as a government, we are responsible, because those recommendations were directed to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to act on those recommendations. Why was there no action on behalf of the Department of ECE and also in regards to the appointment and the structure of these new boards and agencies that we wanted to hopefully find a way to enhance language in the Northwest Territories? Again, it seems like there was very little by way of implementations and for understanding what the intent of those recommendations were. Why is it that we are now finding out that those recommendations weren't acted upon?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, those recommendations were shared with the language and revitalization boards. We do have a status report that shows the progress on each of these recommendations that were submitted to our department. We've tackled some of the recommendations. There are some recommendations that we are still working on, and will continue to work on the remaining recommendations. It is taking some time, but I think one of the best things will be to follow through with recommendations that were brought forward and show the results as to what can be done from our department's perspective. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, again, in regards to our languages, they are basically almost nonexistent because of the decline of the use of those languages. Because of that, which was one of the main findings of the 14th Assembly but now we are in the 16th Assembly. It was eight years later and we are still trying to find some reasons and realizing that the challenges of trying to retain or even save some of these languages is a dismal point in our history. I think we have to do everything we can to either find additional money or whatnot or even trying to find ways of how we can work with the language groups to find ways to enhance those languages and also being able to revive them so that they are used more often in the homes, in the communities and in the workplace. Again, I think that, for me, this issue with the people I represent in regards to the Gwich'in language and in regards to the Inuvialuit, the regions I represent is one of the areas where we are finding the biggest loss. I think

that I would like to see more emphasis put in especially those two languages. What is the department doing to work with the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in to try to find ways of retaining and also enhancing their languages?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, yes, it is important to highlight this key area. We are losing our language quite rapidly, but this is an area that we continue to work with the regions in the communities, in the Member's riding of course, and also I think we need to stress that there is another partner that is in play. That is the federal government. I will certainly continue to pressure the federal Ministers in this respect. I have made a commitment in this House to continue putting pressure on the federal government, because it is their responsibility as well, official and heritage Ministers. At the same time, we as a territorial government continue to contribute towards whether it be the TLCs in the communities, the official language group of revitalization, just for them to provide us more information and how we can improve our program. Part of the strategies that I just highlighted on Aboriginal Languages Strategy, of course we will certainly capture that, Mr. Chairman, the nine official aboriginal languages that we need to tackle. I certainly would like to hear input from all communities and all regions on a moving-forward basis. Yes, we will continue to put our effort in that area. Mahsi.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question in regards to the francophone schools. The francophone commission scolaire, I believe, funds both the school in Yellowknife and in Hay River. I am just wondering if the Minister can advise the status of the school in Hay River in terms of the space, whether they are going to be able to be in proper classrooms in the upcoming fiscal year. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, this has been in the works for a number of months now. We continue to work closely with PWS as well in this respect. We did consult with the local francophone board and also the local community, and just on a moving-forward basis will be the modular units onto the schools. They have agreed to move forward on that. So we are entering into a contract with a firm. It is in the works. That will certainly capture what is needed in the community of Hay River. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I wonder if I could get a timeline on that. Are we talking next school year as in September of 2009 or sooner than that? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, of course, the plan is in place for next school year, 2009. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I would like to also ask about the plans in terms of expanding the French school in Yellowknife. Where are things with that? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, we have met with the school board and the superintendent on numerous occasions. There is also discussion at the federal level through the Heritage Minister, that department. Previous contributions went towards the school as well. We are on phase one, phase two. Those are in the works in the proposal, as has been submitted to the federal government. We continue to work with the federal government on this particular item. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We are on page 10-17, activity summary, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$179.023 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 10-18, activity summary, education and culture, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$52,000. Contributions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are going on to page 10-19. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: On page 10-18, below the \$52,000. In regards to the official languages for aboriginal groups, it is \$2.9 million, but I think we also have to realize that there are nine language groups. How is that distributed by the different language groups?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, certainly this is a contribution agreement on base-plus. There are various communities that did qualify and will continue to qualify. We can certainly provide the list to the Members. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: It will be good to get that. I think it is also looking at the other language group by way of official languages for French is \$350,000, but also I know that under that is already language education, second education, French again. Is any of that money being used for aboriginal languages in communities by minority language education?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, I have to get the Member to repeat that question. Sorry.

MR. KRUTKO: In regards to the bottom of the page where it is called minority language education and second language instruction by way of French, I would like to know about the \$2.2 million we received from Heritage Canada. Is any of that money being expended for aboriginal languages?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, the money is geared towards the French program. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Again, Mr. Chairman, the point I am trying to make earlier on is that, for nine communities, we have \$2.9 million, but yet for one language group who basically have \$2.5 million. Again, I think that realizing that the majority of residents of the Northwest Territories are aboriginal people, it doesn't really correlate with that statistic. I think that, if anything, we have to find ways of putting more dollars into aboriginal languages. I think we have to work with the federal government in regards to Heritage Canada to realizing that aboriginal languages should be funded through the federal Heritage Fund system. I think that they are starting to realize that in regards to the Languages Commissioner for Canada. I think that this issue has come up before. But again, it seems like whatever dollars we get is not equitably distributed, realizing that we have 11 official languages in the Northwest Territories, not just two.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, yes, we clearly highlight the nine aboriginal official language groups here in the Northwest Territories. The number that we are looking at is all federal funding. We do provide additional funding to aboriginal language groups. On page 10-17, as you can see, the \$8 million for aboriginal languages and cultural education. This is just the federal funding. Of course, there are certain guidelines that we need to follow. But I assure the Members that this has been addressed to the federal Ministers, provincial Ministers and territorial Ministers. Our uniqueness, and, geographically, our remoteness, and the high cost of living, and our nine official aboriginal language groups clearly are recognized in the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, the federal government does not recognize that. At the same time, I continue to pressure the federal government to recognize that. The funding itself, we are looking at renewing our agreement as well. So we will continue to stress that. Mahsi, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: Can the Minister let me know when the renewal for the new Languages Agreement is up? When will we possibly see a new agreement coming into place?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, we are in the process of renewing, so we are negotiating with the federal government right now. We are obviously asking for more than what is highlighted here. We are hoping to get more. There will be clearly our portion as a department towards the federal government. Any pressure we can put on them, we will continue to do so. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, in regards to Nunavut, Nunavut has legislation in regards to their new language protection legislation because they feel that they need protection for their languages, in Nunavut. I am wondering, is that something that the Minister and his colleague from Nunavut can use by way of arguing for more funds from the federal government, realizing that our official languages in the Northwest Territories, especially the aboriginal languages, are threatened. They are endangered or being lost. I think that, on that ground, it should be like the whooping crane or the spotted owl that we find out that something is threatened and endangered, they throw a bunch of money at it. I think that maybe that is the approach we should take. Go into Ottawa and try to find ways that we can, along with our colleagues from Nunavut, use the argument in regards to them having to pass legislation to language protection legislation in regards to the Inuit language. I think that is maybe an approach this government should consider. Has the Minister been working with the Nunavut government in regards to such an approach, going to the federal government realizing that we do have our languages being threatened and we do have to do whatever we can to protect them? Has that been something that the Minister can comment on or if he has been working with the Nunavut government on that?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, yes, this is the area of interest from the, more specifically, the two jurisdictions, territorial Nunavut and Northwest Territories. Of course, the Yukon, we still want them to be part of moving forward to push our aboriginal languages. This new Minister of Nunavut, I have had the courtesy of meeting him just last week during the FPT on education. He is also the Minister responsible for official languages. He and I will continue to push, and also with the Yukon Minister that is responsible for Education and also the language itself. We have done that in the past, Mr. Chairman. We partnered up and pushed the federal government to possibly hear us out to say, we are different than other jurisdictions. Not only that, Mr. Chairman, I have been pushing with my counterparts throughout Canada about the possibility of having another FPT pertaining to our official languages, aboriginal languages. We do have one for francophone, but we don't have one for aboriginal languages. So I'll certainly continue to push that. I'm hoping we'll see some light at the end

of the tunnel to say, okay, let's have an FPT strictly for aboriginal languages throughout Canada. So I certainly will be sharing that with aboriginal leaders, as well, to push it forward. So, yes, we'll partner up with our territorial colleagues to push further with the federal government on our importance of existence. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. We're reviewing contributions on page 10-18. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Okay, we'll move along to page 10-19, activity summary. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of questions on page 10-19. The first one is education authority contributions. Mr. Chairman, I'm just trying to get a sense. In the city of Yellowknife, if I understand it correctly, we're the only ones that pay school tax. Is that a normal practice to top up the extra funding that other communities don't, that don't pay school taxes? I'm referring to the communities that have property tax issues, such as Fort Smith, Hay River and I think Simpson and Inuvik, but what formula do they use in the those communities to fund their schools that they don't use in Yellowknife?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, we fund all schools under a similar formula, but in the case of Yellowknife we fund approximately 80 percent and the remainder is made up through the collection of education or school taxes. I'd also point out that in other communities, this government does collect school taxes as well, but it's not part of the school funding. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: By what analysis has this provided us an independent position to say our students are funded 80 percent less, but the local taxes pick up that difference? Is there a formula or how do you base that as a reasonable fact to work and operate under? Thank you.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, originally it came from a K-9 formula at 75 percent and high school at 100 percent. I'm not absolutely sure where the 75 percent came from. It's been around for probably over 30 years, maybe over 40, but I can say that the amount of taxes collected in Yellowknife has been more than sufficient to make up the difference. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Just because it's been around for a while doesn't necessarily make it right. I seem to recall that for a millennium people believed the

world was flat. That didn't make it right. So is there any going-forward analysis on this to make sure that the City of Yellowknife is collecting their share of school taxes on the basis and the principle of the government? What contribution does the City of Yellowknife get for doing this process for the Department of Education in that regard, and when is the next time you're going to take an analysis of this to make sure it's being done in a fair and reasonable way?

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, I can't answer the question specifically in terms of the administration by the City of Yellowknife, although I understand the property taxes, as I said, are collected in all communities. We have reviewed the formula over a number of years and, as I mentioned, we did look at the amount contributed by the City of Yellowknife. At the time we reviewed it, it exceeded the difference between the funding formula amount at 100 percent and the amount that we deduct for taxes. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, could I get a copy of this policy that they must be operating under and as well as the information I think Mr. Devitt referred to as some review had taken place sometime? So there must be some paperwork attached to that analysis. Can I request a copy be sent to my office? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, certainly we can provide a copy of the policy that we have in place to all Members. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. That would be great if you could send it to all Members. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By no means, if anyone else wants to read it they're certainly welcome. Mr. Chairman, I won't get into the mill rate question, obviously that's a MACA issue, it's asking questions outside of the city of Yellowknife. The next question I'd go to is the Early Childhood Program and rather than spending a lot of air time today, would the Minister commit to give me a breakdown of what child programs are offered under this? I assume they have some paper form that they could supply me, as well as any other Member obviously if they're interested or the Minister so chooses, rather than spending a lot of time going through each and every one and I'm trying to write them all down. Can you do that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Certainly we can do that. There's a variety of committees that get sponsorship through this area, so we'll certainly provide that to all Members. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Just one last area at this time. The Healthy Child Initiative, if I could get the same type of information as what that represents and the full breakout as possible, again, including that one and of course the same point stands, as full a breakout as possible under the Early Childhood Program. So could the Minister extend the same process for Healthy Children Initiative? The reason I raise this is because there are programs here in Yellowknife and the Catholic school runs an Early Childhood Program and a Toy Lending Library. They are significantly challenged by getting enough funding through this. They get some funding through their school authority, but they have to turn more kids away than they can provide space to. I suspect that's not an unusual problem and it's a shame that it's a problem. I wish we had more space than kids can subscribe to and I just want to learn a little more about that, because I think this is an initiative that I certainly would like to see all communities subscribe more to and, I mean, I'm of the belief that all early childhood education should be supplied to all children at the cost of the government to help parents in any way. So rather than debating my concerns and policies here that we should be going forward with, I certainly wouldn't mind the information and I'm sure a few other Members would like it at the same time. So if the Minister could commit to providing the Healthy Children Initiative information, that will be all on this page for me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The Healthy Children Initiative contributions to the community are to provide integrated early intervention services. We do have a list of various communities that are entitled to the program dollars. So we can certainly provide a detailed list to the Members. Mahsi.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm wondering about the Early Childhood Program, the \$3.111 million, if that's federal dollars or are those our own GNWT dollars that we're dedicating there? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that is the GNWT funding. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: I also notice that there's a \$200,000 decrease there. Perhaps that's the same as the earlier \$200,000, but I'm wondering if the Minister can provide the reasoning for that decrease. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That's the same as what we talked about earlier, the decrease in the funding from \$1 million to \$800,000. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Do we know how many new child care centres or family day homes started up last year with that support? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, I don't have that information before me, but we can certainly provide the detailed list of the start-up in the communities. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Just on the Early Childhood Program, some of the problems that have been highlighted were the relatively low pay for child care workers and some of the reimbursement adjustments to daycare centres when children were absent for five days or longer last year. I think the department was working on that. Can the Minister tell me if he's been able to address those two issues of child care worker pay and the issue of subsidies to daycare centres on a basis of per child, and that being a bit problematic because it led to unpredictable support to the centres and problems that ended up in some of them folding. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, certainly this has been brought to our attention and I do believe it was brought up in the House last year as well. So we have discussed it as a department and we did make some changes to our contributions last year to reflect that cost, the additional cost that the Member is referring to, but we continue to monitor our programming and improving where we need to improve. Certainly we have made some changes to that fact. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: If it's handy to do so, maybe in the information that we're provided on the Early Childhood Programs those changes could be included too, so we can see what happened there. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We can certainly provide that to reflect the changes that have come forward. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Once again if we can get that distributed to the entire committee. Mr. Bromley. Alright, we're on page 10-19, activity summary, education and culture, grants and contributions, continued. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-20, activity summary, education and culture, grants and contributions, continued, total contributions, \$159.930 million. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of questions here. I did want to ask about the last contribution, \$50,000 for a cultural component of sports, Vancouver Olympics is mentioned here. Is all of this \$50,000 going to Vancouver 2010? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the \$50,000 is earmarked for a contribution towards the Arctic Winter Games and also Vancouver Olympics. The funding, of course, is to promote northern arts and culture and support artists in that respect. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I guess I have to ask the Minister to clarify. The text that I'm looking at talks about the 2008 Arctic Winter Games, which I don't think falls in the '09-10 budget year, and the Vancouver Olympics was '08-09 and also '09-10. So again, how much of this \$50,000 is going to VANOC? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, when I said the Arctic Winter Games, of course the \$20,000 on the previous year, but at the same time it's approximately \$37,000 of that towards the VANOC. Vancouver, the committee, we had to pay upfront for the performers at this function as well. So certainly those are the areas that we've highlighted as I guess our involvement with the VANOC. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: So if it's \$37,000 for Vancouver Olympics, is the other \$13,000 going to the 2010 Arctic Winter Games or someplace else? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Minister Lafferty. Minister Lafferty, did you want somebody else to speak? Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, I think I confused the Minister in answering too quickly. The \$50,000 is for the Olympics and I believe, and I don't have the exact breakdown, the Arctic Winter Games were in the prior year. So 2007-08 would apply to the Arctic Winter Games and I believe the \$20,000 in the revised budget. Again, I'd have to confirm it, but I believe that as well is for the Olympics. I don't have the exact information here with me. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Ms. Bisaro. Ms. Bisaro, we'll go to Mr. Daniels first.

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are some activities in the current year in the lead up to the Vancouver Olympics that we're making a contribution towards the Vancouver Olympics to encourage some northern performers in advance of the Olympics. Then during the Olympic year 2009-10 there is the \$50,000 that we're proposing to spend to support northern performers during the actual Olympics itself.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I think, if I understood Mr. Daniels correctly, \$50,000 of all of this contribution is going to performers for the 2010 Olympics.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, that's correct. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have another question relative to this page and that's similar to a question I asked of MACA yesterday. We've got three different pots of money here, all of which go to support arts and or performers or arts programs. I'm wondering why these particular amounts are separated out and would it not be easier for us to focus where our dollars go if all these three funds were not in one pot and one organization was divvying up these funds so they could then be better focused on the goals and priorities of the Assembly and of the department? So I'm just wondering if the department might consider doing that to try and bring a little clarity to this budget. Thank you.

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

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there are different pots of funding that are intended for slightly different purposes. Some go towards funding organizations that hold different events during the year or throughout the year. The pots of funding give a little more to the individuals where we have proposals submitted to the Arts Council for assessment, for example, and they in turn make some recommendations on which organizations or which events might possibly be funded for which individual performing artists or other forms of art could be supported through the contributions. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that they are targeted and I guess that's my question, is why do we not have one organization that is accepting applications and making recommendations who will dole out these contributions? Why do we have to have three

different pots do it? I think we could have one function with guidelines that does the same thing without having to have three different groups presumably getting applications and awarding contributions. Thank you.

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that's certainly something we can take a look at in terms of how do we improve the overall administrative efficiencies with the different pots of funding.

MS. BISARO: Just one quick comment. I note all over this budget we have all kinds of grants and contributions and we seem to make contributions for basically similar purposes but from many different pots of money. So I would think it would make things a little more efficient if we could bring them together and slim the document down a bit. We could probably save a tree. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Just a comment. We're on page 10-20, activity summary, education and culture, grants and contributions, continued, total contributions, \$159.930 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Total grants and contributions, \$159.982 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-21, it's an information item. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Same question. Can we get a breakdown on these positions by way of affirmative actions, P1s, P2s, P3s, and if there is anyone in those positions with a disability. Maybe to save time, if you can do that with all the different activities in this department and that way I don't have to ask my questions on every second or third page.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Certainly we can provide the breakdown of P1s, P2s and disability in each category or department. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. We're on page 10-21, information item, education and culture, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-23, activity summary, advanced education and careers, operations expenditure summary. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just briefly, under program delivery details, regional management and support, I see in the narrative that the regional offices also provide early childhood program support on behalf of the early childhood and school services division. I'm just wondering what proportion of that support do we know goes to the early childhood program support. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Daniels.

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The regional management support, as he indicated, goes towards supporting a number of different programs: income support, career development and early childhood programs. We do have Early Childhood Program officers in a number of the different regions: one in Fort Smith, a couple here in Yellowknife, one in Inuvik and some other positions in the Deh Cho and the Sahtu as well.

MR. BROMLEY: Going to Aurora College, I mentioned earlier, and I've mentioned before, the need for programs in Aurora College to train people for sustainable community planners and administrators and financiers and for energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy planning and all the things that go with that. We're spending a lot of money in those areas and we need that expertise. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell us if they're working to get those programs going. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, clearly this has been one of the highlights of this Assembly and it is somewhat new to our Aurora College as well, but we are delivering certain, let's say, environmental programming, whether it be renewable resource or different areas. Yes, we're willing to undertake discussions with Aurora College to deliver these programs. These are important programs nowadays pertaining to sustainable or energy efficiency. That's what we hear on the streets in the communities nowadays, how to conserve energy and so forth. Mr. Chair, we can certainly commit today to highlight that with Aurora College to potentially deliver those programs on a long-term basis. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: Again, I've brought this up before and I know the Minister is interested and I don't want to turn this into question period. I'm hoping we can see that come before committee fairly soon and get some things happening on that front. I think it will benefit everybody. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Didn't hear a question. We're on page 10-23. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Yes, I just have a question to the Minister in regard to the certification of the college programs in the Northwest Territories in regard to accreditation by way of national funding sources. Like I mentioned in the House the other day, we're working with the community of Aklavik with the university of Vancouver Island in regard to doing a joint project with the students by way of using university students to work on the initiative to develop a community energy development plan for the community of Aklavik. One of the questions I was asked is, as a government, are we accredited by way of getting funds through federal sources or industry or whatnot by way of that accreditation from the federal government?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Certainly there are certain partners that we also join forces with, southern institutions, and we do accredit specific programs. As you know, there are degree programs that we do offer now through Aurora College. The transfer of these courses onto other jurisdictions is also recognized. We will continue to highlight what the Member has alluded to. Whether it be students working in the field being recognized and working with the federal government, we will continue to make that dialogue. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chair, I think if this is a way that we can access federal grant dollars through universities to work with ourselves either through the Arctic College or Institution of Northern Canada, I think, if anything it's an opportunity that we can possibly be able to access more federal funding if there are ways that we can get some charitable status through our college system and either working with the universities in southern Canada for that accreditation to be able to access a lot of the federal dollars that are going to the provinces that we can use in the Northwest Territories. Again, I'd just like to ask the Minister to look into that and see if that's a possibility, because I think it's a good opportunity for ourselves to get university students from southern Canada to work with the colleges to develop certain pilot projects that we can deliver in regard to the capacity issues in a lot of our communities and, more importantly, develop the curriculum and the criteria for different programs that we can work into either our college programs or even in community adult education programs that we have in communities. I think if there are ways that we can use these institutions to work with ourselves to leverage more money through the federal programs, because apparently that's what

they do in a lot of the universities in southern Canada, they do access a lot for their grant money from the federal systems. Again, I think it's something that we should seriously consider looking into and see if there are ways that we can find ways to get that accreditation so that we can access federal dollars to use in regard to research and development for communities through economic social development. That's something that I would like the Minister and the department to seriously consider looking into. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, certainly any additional funding from the federal government is always welcome. Not only that, Mr. Chair, we are working with other southern institutions as well, and I think we're going to continue to make progress in that area where we have a teacher degree program, nursing degree, and we are looking at other areas of professions as well. Not only that, but we need to fully utilize and enhance our Aurora Research Institute where they can deliver traditional aspects as well, traditional programming that Members around the table have stressed over and over in the past. I think we can certainly highlight those key areas and continue to work with the federal government to access any innovative or creative funding that could be available. Yes, we will continue to push in that area. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple comments here. One has to do with the removal of the contribution to the Skills Canada program. I know that Mr. Bromley has mentioned it, so I'll just simply say that I am dismayed that that money has been removed and I'm hopeful that the Minister will see his way to putting it back in.

I wanted to ask the Minister relative to the Immigrant Nominee Program, we were advised when we did business plans that it's in the works and the program is being developed. I would like to know from the Minister if he can advise when this program will be up and running and in effect. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, that has been in the works for quite some time now, a few months, and we are trying to accelerate that to at least deliver that this summer. We're hoping that it can be introduced this summer and then work with the business alliance in communities that we serve. Yes, the sooner the better. This summer we're hoping that it will be introduced. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I guess this summer is better than not at all, but I would hope that the department would move it along as quickly as possible.

I mentioned this when we reviewed business plans, but I am a little concerned about the funding for trades training, which is kind of scattered about throughout the department's spending. There is some in high schools, there's some for women, there's some in advanced education at the college and so on. I think there are about four or five different spots where apprenticeship and trades type training is mentioned. I just wanted to express my concern about a lack of coordination. I know the Minister seems to feel that everything is okay, but it seems to me that we'd be better off, again, putting the money in one place and administering it from one central location so that everybody knows who's doing what to whom and how often. I think it should be looked at. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, certainly we think that everything's okay, but there's always room for improvement. Yes, we'll take these into consideration as well. We need to coordinate as effectively as we can in the apprenticeship area, so, yes, we'll take those Members' comments into consideration. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. We're on page 10-23, activity summary, advanced education and careers, operations expenditure summary, \$42.476 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 10-24. Mr. Bromley.

COMMITTEE MOTION 11-16(3):
SKILLS CANADA CONTRIBUTION FUNDING
CARRIED

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to propose a motion.

Mr. Chair, I move that this committee strongly recommends that the government take immediate action to reinstate funding in the amount of \$80,000 for the proposed elimination of the Skills Canada contribution funding under the Department of Education, Culture and Employment under the advanced education and careers activity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. A motion has been called. The motion is being distributed.

Committee, the motion has been distributed and the motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've been in touch with the Minister on this. We've had discussions; we've had back and forths. During the business plans the Minister gave us early indication that he was considering dropping this and he proposed three conditions under which he would reconsider it. We've been in touch with Skills Canada and I'm happy to report that those conditions are fully met. The first one that the Minister required was an expansion across the Northwest Territories, the second a focus on aboriginal youth and the third a focus on young women of the Skills Canada programs.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, we provided the Minister with evidence that, in fact, the majority of their youth are aboriginal. They are a bit challenged in the secondary educational level category and they have proposed a solution to that. They've noted that aboriginal youth are disproportionately low among high school youth and the best way to change this is with more community programs like Skills Club, which is a program that they support. They are now trying to implement more of those to address that, noting that they are somewhat limited by the resources that are available.

As for targeting young women, the Skills Canada hosts an annual territorial Young Women's Conference, which they've done for the last eight years. They also hold a similar conference for boys. They found that holding them separate is actually more effective. They have developed a new Regional Youth Conference in the Sahtu, speaking to their expansion of programs within their limited resources across the Northwest Territories. The Sahtu program is specifically intended to involve both young men and young women, but dealing with them in separate workshops.

Finally, the increase for aboriginal youth, there is a major desire to increase the access of these programs to aboriginal youth. To that end, they are developing the community Skills Clubs and they are recognizing the female-only programming is important and necessary, but they also know that it should be balanced with similar opportunities for males as they do with all their youth conferences.

Skills Canada is a program of two people but they have expanded it under contract to three people last year, this current year. That third person has been a major help in getting this expansion on the ground to other parts of the Northwest Territories. That third person, if they do not get the support, will, of course, disappear and that program will be contracted significantly.

This is a fairly straightforward, not a large ticket item, but some significant dollars here. There is strong support for getting these dollars reinstated here. The Minister laid out some conditions.

Obviously, Skills Canada is working hard to meet those and has the committee's support. On that basis, I'll be happy to leave it at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've had the distinct pleasure of helping Skills Canada a few times on some of their events. As well, I've had the chance to help mentor some of the youth that have come to learn about politics, and I think it's a strong organization that helps young people and I think it could do a lot for the Territories if we continue to support this program.

I know they were probably looking for something they could cut, in the sense of balancing budgets, and I can appreciate that from a finance point of view, but ultimately what we're doing is we're hurting youth programs, youth across our North that we really want to continue to strive to give better skills and do more for. I mean, everywhere I turn we talk about trying to empower our younger generation to get plugged in, get good careers, get good experience, learn and contribute to society, and this program is the type of program that offers that. By allowing this deletion to go through, we would be speaking completely to the opposite of some of the principles of why many of us ran here, which is to help empower that generation to then lead when it is their turn. Mr. Chairman, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Question has been called.

---Carried

We're on page 10-24, activity summary, advanced education and careers, grants and contributions, contributions, \$32.4 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Page 10-25, which is an information item, advanced education and careers, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Page 10-27, activity summary, income security, operations expenditure summary. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Again, Mr. Chairman, my question is in regard to the \$33.9 million regarding the public

housing subsidy. I'd like to hear from the Minister what exactly that money is intended for.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, if I can get my deputy to explain in detail where the money is spent.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Daniels.

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That money gets flowed back to the NWT Housing Corporation, so it helps pay for the rental subsidies plus the O and M costs of the LHOs.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Daniels. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister give me a breakdown of how much has been spent out of the \$33 million for rental subsidies?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. We don't have the detailed information that the Member is referring to, but I can certainly make a commitment to provide that information in detail to the Members.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We're on page 10-27. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had a question for the Minister here. The Standing Committee on Social Programs has met with the Minister with regard to income security issues and particularly housing issues a number of times and we have asked for quite some time now for a report, a review of the transfer, change of program from Housing to ECE. I wondered if the Minister could tell me when that report might be bringing forward.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, that's one of the areas that we will be coming forward. I do believe it consists of two departments, our department and Housing Corporation. It is under review right now. We did make a commitment to go before the standing committee on what's been done and what we're working on.

MS. BISARO: I guess I'm having a hard time understanding that it's still coming. I believe the report was promised probably about a year ago. I'm

just wondering why the Minister has not been able to get it done since then.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly we do have that information and we can certainly provide that information. I do have it here. But that information that we talked about earlier is the review of our programming, the rental subsidy area, along with the LHO Housing Corporation. But certainly the rental subsidy review, we did our own review as well. So we can certainly provide that information.

MS. BISARO: Okay. That's good. I thank the Minister for that and look forward to seeing the document.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't see in the list of the benefit programs and so on under income security, I don't see a Ready for Work Program or a get back to work program. I know we're all aware that many of our public housing tenants are able to work, but they're not employed. There are many costs to operating a housing program. I see that as a good overlap. There's a resource there of people who are probably, certainly many, willing and able to work or certainly able. And there's a real increase in cost as our revenue goes down over time here for housing and a real need to start becoming more efficient. I think by getting these people to work we're going to be increasing their skills and increasing their well-being and so on. So my question to the Minister, and I've raised this before and I know lots of others have repeatedly, questions of liability come up, and, of course, I think that's crazy. The HAP house program, of course, must have had to deal with the liability issue. There have to be ways. How are we going to get these people to work?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I did talk about the Ready to Work Program. That's one of the areas that we are tackling. Not only that, but just providing the basic essential skills development, I guess you can call it. Individuals that are willing to enter the workforce, we are willing to assist as well. That is part of our income support area. We provide that type of assistance for individuals who are willing and able to work. We'll do what we can to assist them and they need to do their part as well. We're there to guide them along the way to provide them training as much as possible for them to enter the workforce and also at the same time provide basic subsidy for them to get by, because we know that minimum

wage does not cover everything in the Northwest Territories due to the high cost of living.

MR. BROMLEY: I guess I'm looking for more than that. I appreciate what the Minister has mentioned and the programs he's mentioned. I wonder if there's a way that we can require work. We have to maintain these houses and heat them and so on. We've got lots of renovations that we're going to be doing as we bump these houses up to EnerGuide for Houses 80 and maybe district heating, using wood and wood gasification for heating homes and so on. We're going to need a lot of firewood collected and so on. These tenants that are paying \$32 per month but are able people, is there thinking along those lines to start putting these people to work in ways that certainly will benefit the program, but also benefit the people and contribute to their skill development and so on?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly that is one of the productive choices that we have to have in place. We are working on that. In the small communities there are certain areas we can certainly tackle, whether it be getting wood for the elders or just basic chores that they can certainly do in the community. That's the area that we talked about. I think we need to think innovative and creative within our programming, because there are a lot of able people who can work and can be out in the workforce that shouldn't be on income security. They pay \$32 a month, so they take full advantage of the Income Assistance Program. Our goal is, of course, to get them off income security and enter them into the workforce. So, yes, we will continue to strive for that and push it further within our own department, working with the communities in that fashion.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for those comments from the Minister. I appreciate that interest and willingness and commitment. I think he would find, if he could bring something forward, that committee would be very willing to put some energies into working with him on this. The earlier the better. I think we know we're going to be facing some dollar crunches here this year. The sooner we can get this, the sooner we can reduce our costs in the long run. Just a comment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. No question. I'll go to the next person on my list. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to follow up on Mr. Bromley's comments. Something that we discussed in committee relative to income security and people going from unemployment to employment. We tried to encourage the Minister to look at a transition period. When people have been unemployed, they get a job, in terms of housing and income security

they are automatically pretty much put into a very high bracket in terms of rent as soon as they become employed. It doesn't give them any chance to transition from being an unemployed to an employed person. I wonder if the Minister could say whether or not the department is considering a transition period in terms of analyzing income when people go from unemployed to employed.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. Certainly we do provide that kind of incentive for individuals who are willing to enter the workforce. We'll continue to, of course, improve in that area as well. But we do provide that service to those individuals.

MS. BISARO: I just have to follow up. I heard the Minister say that we do have an incentive. It was my understanding from our previous discussions that we don't have that kind of a grace period or transition period when someone goes from being unemployed to employed. Could the Minister explain what the incentive is that he's talking about?

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

MR. DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The incentive that we have with the Income Assistance Program is that we provide a deduction on the earned income. For a single person we deduct \$200 a month and for someone with a family it's \$400. In addition to that we deduct another 15 percent of the income that they're earning. So it's not a time-sensitive deduction. It's more of an overall income deduction for people who are earning income.

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

MS. BISARO: Okay. So if I go from being completely unemployed to a full-time job, I think that's a little bit more than \$200, if I'm understanding Mr. Daniels correctly. Is there any kind of a transition period for me going from unemployed to being fully employed and earning, I don't know, \$1,000 a week, say?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The incentive that we do provide that the deputy has alluded to, but we don't have the transition period area that the Member is referring to at this point.

MS. BISARO: I guess to go back to my original question, is it something that the department is considering or would consider?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly we need to discuss this further because it would be part of the productive choices that I just had a chat with my deputy exploring other options. Those are the areas we need to think about on a going-forward basis. Yes, we'll certainly take those into consideration on the long-term basis.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Same line of question in regard to the Income Assistance Program. More importantly, in regard to the Public Rent Supp Program. I'll use an illustration of a program that was run in Tsiigehtchic with regard to individuals who were in social housing who had arrears. The housing authority was able to develop a training program for people to rip down the older housing units to make way for new housing units. They tried to salvage what they could and, more importantly, they had a training component for a lot of the single mothers that were on the project. Half of their payment went to their arrears, the other half they got to keep, but they also got training. They managed to get the coverage for workers' compensation to the housing authority. I think it's in those type of projects that maybe this government can learn from and try to illustrate more of those programs. At the end of the day I think everybody went away happy. People had money in their pockets. They got trained. They paid off their bills. More importantly, they were able to salvage a lot of the materials and the community still uses those materials for other renovations they are doing in their community. I think it's those types of incentives that we have to build from.

Again, I think that the whole idea regarding having people retain more money over a transitional period, I think that period you're looking at is more like six months to a year. Allow these people to get the skills, but also have a system that instead of \$200 here or \$400 there I think you have to look at a larger portion. Let them keep 50 percent of their revenues, calculate the other 50 percent by way of what their rent is going to be. I think at the end of the day, once the people develop that relationship between the value of the money and the value of the work and the value of having to pay the bills, I think you'll get a lot better product at the end of the day. I think you have to look at it as a give and take thing. You don't just simply take, take, take. You give a little bit, let the individual that was on income support get some experience, get some skills, get some ability to earn some money, and at the end of the day don't feel like they've been penalized because they happened to earn some money.

I think we have to look at these things and realize that we have some unique challenges in the North. A lot of our aboriginal communities and communities don't have a long-term economy. Most of our economies in our small communities last only two or three months. You might get a winter gravel haul or you might see the summer works project by way of renovations or whatnot in your community. I think that we have to realize that we have these economies in the Northwest Territories and we have high unemployment and dependency on our social programs in a lot of our communities because of that. We have to find a way to stimulate these people to be able to feel that they won't get penalized if they go to work or they know that because they're going to be working that they're going to be clawed back. I think it's a system.

I know there are systems in other parts of the country. From people in Newfoundland, I know when we were there we met with the Newfoundland government in which they developed a lot of their programs around the whole idea of a 28-week period so they could take advantage of the federal unemployment insurance system so that people are able to get the federal dollars and also earn the time they need to get those dollars. I think that's something that we should look at seriously in the Northwest Territories to stimulate employment, but also try to find ways to use federal dollars to subsidize some of our programs so that income support...We spent \$23 million. Is there a way we can leverage another \$20 million from the feds using the EI system?

For me it's more of an overall idea that I think this government should seriously look at. Again, I know the whole idea of the Income Support Program when it was first out there. I know there was a lot of criteria that was put into it, a lot of emphasis was for training, getting people onto income support, they had to take training through upgrading or go to that Arctic College program or go to work. I think that seems like it's not really the push that's out there now. I think we have to get back to that in light of the cost of what this program is. Especially to find a balance between people who are attempting to work their way into the economy and earn their living and seeing other people, struggling homeowners, and seeing that they're trying to take care of all their bills, then they realize that people in some cases are not paying any rent. If other people are paying very little rent yet people are struggling just to keep their lights on and their homes heated, I think we have to find a way to show that we are trying to make a difference, but, more importantly, using those programs.

I'd just again like to ask the Minister if he could consider looking at the concept that I mentioned that was used in Tsiigehtchic in which it was a good effort. Maybe work with the Housing Corporation to

see how that program worked and expand it in other communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I do appreciate the Member giving us ideas on being innovative in certain areas, to have productive choices for the clientele that we have with income security. So, certainly, we will seriously consider that. We need to look at all kinds of options right now.

I talked about possibly getting firewood for the elders, or fish. I think we need to really seriously look into all those in the small communities where there aren't many jobs available. I like the idea and we can certainly take that as well.

I think we need to utilize these individuals that can work in the community. If we provide the subsidy for them to assess elders or assess the community, then we need to utilize their services in the community. There are also other projects in the community that they can tackle as well.

Not only that, but the Member also indicated maybe through the Housing Corporation we can work together. That clearly will be a partnership because we talked about the Apprenticeship Program, skill development and different areas of providing the tools for them to be ready to be out there. I think it is the tools that we can provide to them and then eventually get them off income security. Mahsi, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Next on my list is Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to follow up in a somewhat similar line of questioning on what Ms. Bisaro did earlier in the sense of taking a look at the grace period. For some reason, I seem to recall some information at one time coming forward about an analysis of this stage or step of rent when someone does get employment. To my knowledge, that was about five years ago. If memory serves me correctly, I seem to remember the Social Programs committee-of-the-day had brought forward something. I am going to ask the question this way. Perhaps the elder staff members will be able to remember this. I am hoping they do, if they really did do the work. I seem to recall something to that effect, that there was an analysis on a transition period or that staggered rent increases to what one could call normalized or market rent. Was there any work done that far back on this problem? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, certainly we need to look to see what kind of work has been done in the past. I guess he can call me a rookie in this position, but certainly there are paper trails that we need to follow through with. If there has been a discussion on the grace period, then we need to follow through with that, along with Ms. Bisaro, about the transition period. We are considering that on the moving-forward basis so a grace period and transition period. There have been discussions in the past. Let's move on that. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, this is just quick follow-up to see if there is any interest from the Minister, just to be clear. If there isn't any work that goes that far back or, of course, if it was either lost or not even considered, would the department take a look at considering doing an analysis on what two weeks rent foregone would be, what would one month for rent foregone be if someone were to get a job under the context of a grace period? I think this type of analysis would be useful for Members when we consider something like this. The reason I suggested it in that sort of increment is if we have people who get behind the eight ball the moment they get a job, my fear is that it creates a slippery slope and very difficult to catch up. Of course, we have all heard of that choice. People then struggle with why should they be employed if they can't afford the rent because they are already behind it? When they look into this, can they investigate it from that perspective as well, sort of a staggered approach? When I said that foregoing the whole rent for a couple of weeks, maybe even a month just to allow them get the head start that they could use. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, certainly if we are to go to this area, we need to do cost analysis as well, how much it is going to cost us in order to initiate that process. Yes, we will take those into consideration and find out the true costs of conducting this initiative. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: This is not a question, just a comment. That is exactly what I am looking for, a cost analysis, better breakouts. Of course, it is a policy shift if that was the way they were to go. So I agree with that last point the Minister made. I look forward to any information he brings forward. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. We are on page 10-27, activity summary, income security, operations expenditure summary, \$70.363 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving on to page 10-28, activity summary, income security,

grants and contribution, grants, total grants, \$8.850 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 10-29. It is an information item, income security, active positions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there any way that they can illustrate the positions that have been increased to deliver the public housing funding through income security in regards to these increases? Where are those positions?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We do have two regional positions as part of the next steps in Income Security Reform Initiative. One is in the Sahtu and one is in the Deh Cho. That is what we were proposing right at this point. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister tell me if any of these positions are vacant?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I can certainly provide that information. I don't have it with me right now, because it does vary in these positions. We can certainly clarify that. Mahsi.

MR. KRUTKO: Again, if we can get a breakdown by P1s, P2s, P3s and if any of these people have a disability.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Krutko. I think the Minister has already agreed to do that. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. We can certainly provide that detailed breakdown. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We are on page 10-29, information item, income security, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Page 10-30, also an information item, Student Loan Revolving Fund.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are on page 10-31, also an information item, details of funding allocated to education authorities. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one question on this page. The Western Arctic Leadership Program has no funded positions attached to it but \$275,000 in expenditures. Where is that program delivered? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, that is delivered in Fort Smith. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: Which institution, please?

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

MR. DANIELS: The Western Arctic Leadership Program is a residential facility. There are students from across the different parts of the North from different communities who apply to attend the facility and attend the high school in Fort Smith. There is a society that has been formed that screens the applications and accepts the students into the facility from various communities across the North. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Sorry, I have one last question. Are there any other expenditures anywhere in the budget except this \$275,000 for the students that are part of this program? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: No, that is the funding that has been provided, highlighted here, is all there is. Mahsi, Mr. Chairman.

MS. BISARO: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We are on page 10-31, information item, details of funding allocated to education authorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 10-32. It is an information item, education authorities, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 10-35. It is also an information item, Aurora College funding allocation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 10-36. It is also an information item, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Page 10-37, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued, \$5.313 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Committee, we will return back to the department summary page on 10-7, operations expenditure summary, \$299.631 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we have concluded the review of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I'd like to get the Minister to thank his witnesses for coming in. If I could, please, get the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses out. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, committee.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF COMMITTEES (Ms. Knowlan): Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Thursday, March 5, 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
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Opening Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2008-2009
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
 - 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
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 5, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

