



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, October 27, 2010****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

The House met at 1:42 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 68-16(5):
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE STRATEGY UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, later today I will table the Government of the Northwest Territories Aboriginal Languages Plan - A Shared Responsibility. The plan was crafted after reviewing the Standing Committee on Government Operations' report Reality Check: Securing a Future for Official Languages of the Northwest Territories.

Over 200 delegates at the Aboriginal Languages Symposium held in late March 2010 offered their thoughts, concerns and ideas for this plan. As well, a number of community meetings were held to discuss the future of aboriginal languages. Other guiding documents, such as the Review of the Current Aboriginal Language Strategy, informed us. Over 300 people contributed and committed to the making of the Aboriginal Languages Plan.

This incredible level of commitment and participation is indicative of how vital aboriginal languages are to our people.

We believe the plan we all developed will improve the condition of our official aboriginal languages. It is reflective not only of the priorities of people of the Northwest Territories but of the recognition of this Assembly that languages strengthen our society and are critical to our culture and heritage.

The plan being tabled later today sets out a framework for strengthening aboriginal languages over the next decade. The plan recognizes and supports the concept that, as delegates at the

languages symposium clearly told us, individuals, families, language communities, governments and society as a whole share responsibility for language.

There have been a number of studies on aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories over the years. We've learned much from this work and weigh and considered it in the development of our actions.

There are over 70 actions called for in the plan. We know that some actions will take longer to implement and that we need to identify resources to support various actions. However, there are also actions in the plan that we can implement now using our existing resources and we will begin action on those items right away.

In my travels through the communities of the Northwest Territories I had the opportunity and pleasure of discussing aboriginal languages with many people. It is clearly an issue on people's minds and is one of great importance to them. Our leaders and elders have said that if we lose our language, we lose our identity and lessen who we are as a people. The actions identified in the plan help to address this concern by revitalizing and strengthening our official aboriginal languages.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Government Operations, including the committee's chair, Mr. Kevin Menicoche, for their commitment to this issue and for their guidance in developing this plan. I also want to thank all the Members of this Assembly and this House, who provided encouragement and support for this important work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 69-16(5):
A CLEAR PATH FORWARD:
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS'
STRATEGIC PLAN

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today I will table A Clear Path Forward: The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' Strategic Plan 2010-2015. This strategic plan was developed through an inclusive process involving staff, partners and stakeholders. It is in sync with the 16th Assembly's priorities and

embraces the goal of healthy, sustainable communities.

MACA has a broad mandate involving a variety of stakeholders. The department aims to provide relevant, effective programs and services reflecting innovation, learning and excellence.

Given the many changes of the past three years, it was time to review the achievements and milestones that MACA has achieved in collaboration with community governments, their representative organizations, sport organizations, and other partners. A Clear Path Forward identifies current and emerging issues and positions of the department to continue the positive momentum into the future.

The strategic plan highlights four key themes that will guide the work of the department in implementing its diverse mandate over the next five years.

The first theme, A Foundation for Leadership, recognizes that competent and effective elected leaders are necessary for community governments to function. Financial policies, programs and partnerships encompassing sound financial management need to be in place to support community governments in making solid decisions on their way to a sustainable and vibrant future.

The second theme, Moving Forward, recognizes that MACA needs to ensure it has the tools and resources to support community governments effectively. These tools include:

- up-to-date comprehensive legislation and policies;
- meaningful communications tools for connecting with clients;
- strong partnerships; and
- a skilled workforce that proactively supports community governments.

The third theme, Stronger, Safer Communities, speaks to MACA's role in supporting community governments to address infrastructure planning, land management and public service. Fire protection, emergency management, clean drinking water, environmental planning and stewardship are all part of this theme with the ultimate goal to create stronger, safer communities.

Invest in People, Build Communities encompasses capacity building as a fourth theme. It speaks to the need to improve community government public safety by building the skills of community government staff. The department knows that healthy, active people contribute to the quality of life in our communities. Culturally relevant physical activity programs are supported to promote healthy lifestyles and positive choices. MACA continues to support the development of an active volunteer

sector that in turn contributes to community well-being.

These four broad themes reflect the department's high-level strategic directions over the next five years. Supporting actions and strategies will roll out to balance needs with available resources. Many of the items in the strategic plan are long-term in nature and the department's intent is to report on the progress of the achievements annually.

Mr. Speaker, community governments and MACA's other partners are facing a range of challenges and opportunities. The department is striving to maintain and improve meaningful partnerships with community governments, to meet shared goals and celebrate important milestones. I look forward to providing regular updates to Members on the activities undertaken to implement MACA's strategic plan. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN

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

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about aboriginal language programs in Akaitcho, which Tu Nedhe is a part of, and the need to increase support for these programs.

Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Tu Nedhe there is a combined aboriginal population of around 95 percent. However, the actual number of Chipewyan-speaking residents is becoming less and less every year. Mr. Speaker, speaking the language is important for keeping the culture alive. Speaking the language allows elders to pass on important traditional practices and knowledge to the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, this government recently developed the GNWT's Aboriginal Languages Plan yet provides very little financial resources to support the communities. As I said, most of their money comes from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Minister stated that the department is taking the lead in the revitalization to enhance and support official languages. He also talked about the government's approach to languages being a shared responsibility. Mr. Speaker, if you ask the Deninu K'ue First Nations and Lutselk'e First Nations they will tell you that receiving only \$17,000 is not enough and they feel the GNWT should do more to support the program.

Mr. Speaker, there are programs and services in place to preserve the Chipewyan language in Akaitcho. There are elders, workers, volunteers, teachers and professionals dedicated to keeping the language alive, but this is not enough and more support is needed. Mr. Speaker, these programs are crucial to keeping the language alive.

Currently, the Deninu K'ue First Nation and Lutselk'e First Nation receive \$17,000 each. I believe the bulk of that money comes from the federal government through the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages. Seventeen thousand dollars is not enough to support a meaningful language program, Mr. Speaker. When you take into account the need to hire staff, run an office, cover admin, pay for travel, per diems, promotion and advertising, there is little left to promote the language program. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR HAY RIVER

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today we had a chance to meet with some Ministers and I am pleased that for the first time in his term we have been able to welcome the mayor of Hay River here today, His Worship Kelly Schofield, and our town manager, Terry Molenkamp.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about Hay River a bit today. Hay River prides itself in being a diverse economy, diverse culture, a long-standing community with a lot of resiliency. Mr. Speaker, the mayor reminded me this morning in your office of a phrase that I really like. That is that the cup is half full. I try to stay positive about these things, but I need to be honest with my colleagues here today and tell you that Hay River is in need of some serious attention in terms of our economy there.

We went through, and have gone through, very difficult times in Hay River. I think back to the closure of the Pine Point Mine when we had 2,000 residents that just lived within an hour's distance to the east of us. A lot of their trade, commerce and activity, services that they required came out of Hay River. When we heard that the Pine Point Mine would shut down, it was quite devastating news for Hay River. Then along came the timely decision of the Government of the Northwest Territories to locate the headquarters for NTPC in Hay River and how that decision went a long ways to mitigate the negative impact of the loss of Pine Point as our neighbour.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a time again now where we have seen a change and an evolving in our community. The headquarters of Northern Transportation, a long-standing, large corporate citizen in our community, were relocated recently to Edmonton along with the senior jobs that went with that. This was not good for Hay River.

Again, I don't want to paint a really dire picture, because sometimes that can backfire as well. At the same time, we are happy with the long-awaited and anticipated construction of a trades shop in Hay River, the construction of the assisted living facility which is up and operational now and all the jobs involved in that operation, the renovation of our school and, of course, the new hospital for Hay River on the horizon in our capital budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I really do feel that we need to draw our government's attention to the fact that Hay River, to be sustainable and to continue on the way we have, these projects are good, but we need something long term. We have mining on our doorstep. We have potential of Avalon. We have the potential of what Tamerlane can bring there. We have also the ability to accommodate these activities.

I would like to thank the mayor and the town manager for meeting with Ministers today to draw this to their attention again. We will work together. We will improve things. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS AND HEALTH AUTHORITY DEFICITS

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken at length about the growing deficits of our health authorities and question the Minister about her lack of attention on addressing these issues that are just not going away.

On Monday, when I asked Minister Lee about the deficit at Stanton and the system-wide deficit, she answered that it was \$10.1 million at Stanton and \$16.8 million system-wide. These totals, Mr. Speaker, are only for the fiscal year 2011. What I was looking for was the Minister to state the accumulated totals for Stanton and system-wide. These numbers, Mr. Speaker, are much, much higher.

Somewhere these deficits have got to have our Department of Finance and the Finance Minister hearing some very loud alarm bells.

Mr. Speaker, my belief is that the biggest factors are chronic underfunding and unfunded positions. Government has never managed these issues effectively. With the ever-growing cost to deliver services to our residents, the inaction of

government is magnified and manifests itself in these large deficits.

I am not sure what world the Minister lives in, but where I come from, if you have a problem that you can clearly see, you take action to fix it. For seven years the government has done nothing but to simply bail out the department and authorities.

At times, in order to placate some Members, they might look like they are interested in doing something like hiring a new CEO or senior staff, developing deficit-fighting plans that are never acted on and saying they are greatly concerned when questioned.

Mr. Speaker, words alone are not going to fix the problems. Nickel and diming patients for television, parking and telephone is not going to fix the problems. It will take a concerted effort by the Minister and department to present proper budgets before this House, not something they know is inadequate.

Given the fact it will need to maximize how each and every dollar is spent, we will need to vigorously pursue purchasing partnerships with our neighbours in western jurisdictions across Western Canada. We will need to commit ourselves to reducing our costs and searching out more efficient ways to buy health care supplies, procure services and manage our health care system,

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS IN THE NWT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Homelessness is spreading in our Territory. Where it used to be an issue or a problem found only in the capital or maybe in our regional centres, it is now evident in our smaller communities.

Homelessness has many forms. Absolute homelessness is living on the street, staying in a shelter on a regular basis, or living in places not meant for human habitation. Relative homelessness is living in spaces that don't meet basic health and safety standards; condemned buildings, for instance. Hidden homelessness refers to those who are temporarily staying with friends or family -- it's called couch surfing -- or those who are staying with someone only to obtain shelter, and that includes those living in a home where they are subject to family violence. There's at-risk homelessness; those who are one step away from eviction, bankruptcy or family separation and thus the loss of their home. Finally, people living with core housing need are considered to be homeless. Their housing does not meet the standards of adequacy, affordability and suitability. We've heard

much about GNWT's failure to provide enough housing that meets these standards before and we will no doubt hear Members' concerns again.

All of these descriptions of homelessness affect residents of all ages of children as well as adults. Late in 2007, early 2008, the report of a research study into women's homelessness north of 60 was released. The report was comprehensive and informative, but the content was disturbing, Mr. Speaker, and pointed the very real need for action to address the precarious situation of homeless or near homeless women across the North. There is a need in any community for a continuum of housing services.

Here in Yellowknife we have several gaps. We have transitional housing for single women being the most notable one. There are transitional spaces for families and for single men, but not for single women. We're lucky to have a number of organizations who provide services and shelters to the homeless in Yellowknife, but there's a particular need here for services for homeless women and the need for a permanent transition home for homeless women.

In February of 2009 the city's Homeless Coalition opened the Bailey House, a transition house for single men. It's proved to be very successful. Since its opening, 14 men have transitioned from Bailey House to their own home and we now badly need to provide the same opportunities for single women here in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, I do what I can to support the Yellowknife Homeless Coalition as they work on the Women's Transition Home Project.

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Bisaro, your time for your Member's statement has expired.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: I do what I can to support the Yellowknife Homeless Coalition. I can only hope that our government is doing all it can to facilitate the same project. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROTECTION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about the affect of languages in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal language groups I represent, especially the Gwich'in, whose language is presently classified as critical, Mr. Speaker, we

are now down to 228 language speakers, the majority of them over the age of 60. Mr. Speaker, I think it's a critical time in the life of not only our government, but protection of our language, culture and the importance that all our language groups play in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we not only look at the ability to speak a language but also the ability to use the language on a day-to-day basis regardless if it's at home, regardless if it's at work, regardless if it's talking in a public forum such as this.

Mr. Speaker, I think the importance of the Gwich'in Revitalization Program that has been developed shows you that the Gwich'in speakers, the language groups and the local language societies are doing their part to try to revitalize this language, which is presently classified as critical. We're also using the term "endangered." I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we have to do everything that we can to not only make sure that we make the capital investments in these areas that they're needed but, more importantly, protect the languages and give them the similar protections we allow for the French in the Northwest Territories so that they can feel free to use the language in the workforce, so that they can have service clinics in the preferred language groups in the areas that they operate out of.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to not only include it in the schools but also offer the opportunity for residents, regardless if they're Gwich'in or non-Gwich'in, to have the ability to have offered immersion programs so that they can be taught the language that Billy is speaking and, more importantly, understand the language and culture of those groups and the regions they come from.

The final point is, we have to increase the use of the Gwich'in language in the public forums, at public meetings and in public events. I will be asking the Minister of Education questions on this matter later.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN

MR. MENICOCHE: [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on the importance of the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment's release of the Aboriginal Languages Plan. This is one of the major initiatives that our government can call a legacy for this Assembly.

Last fall I had the honour of chairing the Aboriginal Languages Symposium with the Honourable Jackson Lafferty. We brought together our best and

hardworking language specialists from throughout the Northwest Territories. We said this is not just another symposium but a launching pad as we work towards revitalizing our aboriginal languages.

What I learned from this symposium was by a doctor of languages who has done studies on immersions. His research has shown that in typical schools within aboriginal communities, our aboriginal students have high drop-out rates and low graduation. However, when he studied communities with a long history of aboriginal immersion in the first three years of grade school and then introduced English, he found that they actually had a better command of the English language and had better grades at school, thus better attendance and a higher graduation rate. This speaks volumes about what speaking our aboriginal language means to our people and our children.

Languages are all about cultural identity and confidence in who you are as an aboriginal. Teaching our aboriginal languages in the schools from K to 3 in wholly immersion is positive and beneficial not only for the youth and parents but for the future of the NWT as a whole.

This is the vision that I see for our languages, our children in our schools and our North: having a positive multilingual and energetic youth will indeed guarantee a strong and vibrant future for our Northwest Territories.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR THE WELEDEH LANGUAGE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today focuses on supporting the vitality of the Weledeh language and the need for flexible and effective language support programs.

Akaiicho people in my Weledeh riding don't speak Tlicho or Chipewyan. They speak Weledeh, which is a unique amalgam of the two languages. The Yellowknives Dene First Nation has long been on the record calling for official recognition of Weledeh and I support this aspiration.

Weledeh speaking elders talk about the confusion that results when it is assumed that Tlicho translation can stand in for Weledeh translation. One recalled at an environmental hearing where elders talking about putting their "hooks" in the lake to fish was translated as putting "berries" in the lake. The differences from other languages cause more than occasional misunderstandings.

I've been working with the Minister to ensure that children attending the Mildred Hall School are taught Weledeh, not Chipewyan or Tlicho. Classroom instruction mustn't confuse children and teach them a language their parents don't use or

improper use or pronunciation of language terms. We need to ensure that when the local aboriginal language is taught in Yellowknife schools, we're talking Weledeh.

Funding support has also been a problem. Locally, ECE distributes funding to support community language programs through the Tlicho and Akaitcho governments. Limited funds for Weledeh programs trickle off these two pots in small, random amounts, sometimes too late in the fiscal year to be used to best effect. The Minister has committed to improving distribution of funds to Weledeh and my constituents look forward to that.

Finally, there is a continuing problem of training certified language instructors and granting them credentials. I have told this Assembly that only two course modules are offered each year and that because 20 course credits are needed for certification, it takes 10 years to amass needed credits. Moreover, we still lack recognized evaluators who can certify, so even those who have stuck it out for the 10 years can't get the certification required for the well-paying jobs. This problem has been pointed out for years and we need action now.

We've made some progress in ensuring that languages, the basis of all cultures, are protected and promoted. Let's now get more effective with our programs and dollars delivered at the community level.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for leading his department in the development of the Northwest Territories Aboriginal Languages Plan - A Shared Responsibility. I think this plan is an important step in revitalizing aboriginal languages throughout the Northwest Territories.

As a member of the Government Ops committee, I had the opportunity to participate on the committee in the review of the Official Languages Act earlier in the life of this Assembly where we came up with Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages in the Northwest Territories.

As part of that review I had the privilege and honour of travelling to communities with members of the committee to meet with the champions of the individual aboriginal language groups throughout the Northwest Territories. During these meetings it became obvious and clear that language is inherent to culture and culture is inherent to language. Without one the other is challenged, the other is

threatened. So it's important that we find ways to work with the aboriginal communities to revitalize these languages.

They are under threat. For example, in 2006 there were only 200 people who identified Gwich'in as their mother tongue and, more alarmingly, only 20 of them indicated that they use it as their home language. In Inuktitut we had 800 who claimed it as their mother tongue; only 145 said they use it as their home language. Cree: 205 identified it as their mother tongue; only 20 identified it as their home language. Chipewyan: 410 identified it as their mother tongue; only 115 identified it as their home language. Tlicho is a little bit better: 2,040 identified it as their mother tongue; only 1,095 indicated they use it as their home language. North and South Slavery: 2,170 identified it as their mother tongue; 975 indicated it is their home language. Clearly the languages are in trouble and need some work.

In our report we built upon the report that was conducted and completed in 2003 where there are 65 recommendations made. Unfortunately, at the time it was clear to us that many of these recommendations weren't acted upon. As a result, we built upon those recommendations and came up with 48 of our recommendations which we passed along to the Minister. I know, based on the fact that they have 70 actions, many, and I know that at least 17 for sure, have been addressed directly and they're moving on them. This is an important step and it's going to go a long way to revitalizing aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. Once again I would like to thank the Minister for that work.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT TOURISM OUTFITTERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many years the outfitting industry has been significant to our northern economy. It has represented a good balance between tourism and promotion, conservation, economic investment, business and certainly local employment. For decades lodges brought tourists to the North. That was new money to our territorial economy that helped diversify our economy and certainly employ people.

In a market like ours, there was great confidence, and businessmen, women and families alike met that confidence with investment and kept investing in their lodges and in the North.

Now things have changed. We've all heard about the mysterious disappearing caribou and the outfitters know the writing is on the wall. They see the realities before them and they do want to play a

part. But where is the government in their time of need?

Most outfitters feel they've been rolling out the proverbial red carpet for many years for our economy. Now in their time of need that carpet has been pulled out from underneath them by this government. Most of these people have no other option of where to go or what to do. Furthermore, the reality is these old warhorses of the outfitting industry are not an easy group to retool and say everything will be fine. Many have invested millions and now, without any customers at all, there are no options for those million dollar lodges. They all become worthless because of our new position with the lack of caribou. Where is the government in their support?

Some will say ecotourism is your new herald opportunity. The hard reality is very few people will pay \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000, who knows how many thousands to go take a picture and smell some flowers. ENR said in the hearings that the outfitters were not responsible for the decline. Instead they were an asset, providing biologists samples, by only taking the bulls, and certainly being the eyes and ears on the Barrens. Yet the outfitters are suffering without government support.

We're in a critical time for many of these people. Folks will say they should sit it out and wait, but the reality is they've poured every dollar they earned into their nest egg with the hopes that someday they could sell it as their retirement package. Those millions have turned into pennies, if at all. Surely they can't wait. Most can't start over in three to 10 years because that's really what it takes to rebuild the economy after they can start again.

In closing, the late Jim Petersen said, "Outfitters are an endangered species." I think he missed the mark only by a hair. They've become an extinct species.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

It gives me great pleasure today to recognize a constituent of mine. His Worship Mayor Kelly Schofield is in the gallery today. With him is the town manager from Hay River. I'd like to welcome you both to the Assembly.

The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize an old colleague of mine as well, Mr. Harley Crowshoe. He's the regional director for aboriginal policing from Edmonton, Alberta. Also Julie Day, policy analyst with aboriginal policing from Ottawa, Ontario. Both of these individuals are here as part of the federal aboriginal policing directorate and

participating in self-government meetings. Welcome to the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a long-term resident, very busy and very active yet, Ms. Cece McCauley, who was recently elected as the president of the Norman Wells Land Corp. Also with her in the gallery are Larry Tourangeau and Margaret McDonald.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Snookie Catholique, former resident of Lutselk'e.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would never argue with you, but I would also like to recognize my constituent Mayor Kelly Schofield and my constituent, town manager Terry Molenkamp.

Also today it's a pleasure to welcome especially Cece McCauley. She's not only the elected representative of their land corporation, she is the chief of the Women Warriors.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 269-16(5):

NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about the need to provide more funding for aboriginal programs in the Akaitcho. I have questions for the Minister responsible for aboriginal languages, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Jackson Lafferty.

Does the Minister recognize that keeping the regional languages committee alive is a vital part of preserving the aboriginal languages?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The regional languages committee and the committees play an important role in promoting and supporting the revitalization of our languages and enhancing our aboriginal languages. The

committee plays an important role in the development and implementation of strategic plans to meet our unique needs, circumstances and priorities of the respective languages. They will be part of the ongoing discussion when it comes to implementation of the strategy.

MR. BEAULIEU: I'd like to thank the Minister for that response. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister recognize that the sum of \$17,000 funding allocated to each Akaitcho community is insufficient to do what the communities need to do with an aboriginal language program? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the GNWT spends on an annual basis approximately \$12 million on the aboriginal languages support, including \$1.9 million received from federal funding.

I do recognize that we always need more resources and support to support the grassroots people in the communities. Those are the areas that we are working towards in improving those resources at the community level. Mahsi.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, although the 10-year Akaitcho Aboriginal Languages Plan was fully implemented, they received less than 3.5 percent increase in funding over that 10-year span. This is not enough. Will the Minister commit to increasing the base funding for this program that's run in Akaitcho? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I am fully committed to seeking a way to, of course, provide increased support to the communities, especially in the aboriginal language communities. We are also looking very closely at our existing resources where we can improve in certain programming and increase our investment as well. Those are the areas that we are closely monitoring and with this strategy in place we want to make some changes, as well, on how we distribute funding as well. I will be having further discussion with our federal counterparts, as well, the federal Minister. This has been addressed through the provincial/territorial Ministers meeting, the importance and the uniqueness of language and culture preservation in the Northwest Territories. I will continue to stress that with them to increase funding, possibly. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Your final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past there was some funding for the communities that were used for training translators, interpreters and so on. Will the Minister commit to returning money to the communities for training for aboriginal languages by increasing the necessary core funding to support training in the communities as opposed to at more of a territorial level? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for that particular

question, because I am very much in support of community-based training programs that take place close to the Members' homes and also to the Northerners'. The communities have the best understanding of their core needs and the priorities of their communities. I am committed to having my department work closely with the community and work closely with the Member to make this an effective and successful training program. That is part of that package. That is part of the strategy. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 270-16(5):
RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS
AND HEALTH AUTHORITY DEFICITS

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions again today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, getting back to my Member's statement.

I talked earlier about the growing deficits at both Stanton authority and other authorities around the Territories. Mr. Speaker, around this country, other provinces and territories are taking quite seriously the growing cost to deliver and provide health care services to their residents, and I just do not see the determination or the effort being put forward by our government when it comes to addressing these ever-growing costs. In fact, the way we manage through that is to just simply bail out authorities to the tune of millions and millions of dollars on an annual basis. It's just not a way that we should move this forward.

I'd like to ask the Minister, the first question I have is: How am I and the residents of this Territory supposed to believe that the government is actually doing something when it comes to the growing cost to deliver health care for the residents here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the residents should be comfortable in knowing that their Minister of Health and Social Services and this government is working hard to look at our system and make system changes so that we make our health care system sustainable. We were also successful in obtaining \$15 million from the federal government over the next two years. I have spearheaded bringing together western provincial Ministers of Health so that we look at group purchasing. I am also working with all of the chairs of the health authorities, because we now understand very clearly that sustainability for the health system is for the entire health system.

The deficit at Stanton is not a Stanton deficit; it's a system deficit. We are redesigning business plan models so that we have the right sized budgets for every authority. We are reviewing the physician staffing model so that we use our physician resources better. We have also introduced the accountability framework so that all of the authorities now have a written contract in a way that they have not done before.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is our people expect us to be efficient and effective in our delivery of health care services. Our people have no tolerance for reducing essential service, so we are working very hard every day to make our system sustainable. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I thank the Minister for that. I guess, you know, she said she's leading the way on developing partnerships with western provinces on bulk purchasing of medical supplies and equipment. Last summer the governments of British Columbia and Alberta signed an agreement to co-purchase health care equipment. Just recently there was another agreement signed by the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan on bulk purchasing medical supplies and equipment. Where was the Government of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker? Where was the Minister when it came time to sit down at the table and get in on these discussions on bulk purchasing? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I called a meeting of all of the western provincial Health Ministers in Newfoundland. We had a meeting and on October 21st we signed the MOU as well. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I'm having trouble understanding who the Minister signed the MOU with if these other provinces already have deals worked out with themselves. When is the Government of the Northwest Territories going to actively get involved and get in on a bulk purchasing plan with our neighbours to the south? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: The group purchasing of drugs and equipment is an initiative that's going across the Territories. I've had discussions on that with the standing committee. All of the jurisdictions are looking to see how we could reduce costs of essential pharmaceuticals and equipment. This government is engaged in that. Premier Roland was part of that discussion among the First Ministers. We are also part of that agreement of the western provincial Health Ministers. We are part of that agreement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of questions and perhaps I'll get on the list again and hopefully get another set of questions. I'd like to ask the Minister, if we're part of the

agreement already, are we today bulk purchasing with the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Is that true? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: We are part of that group. We are working with other Ministers. It's a highly complicated process. Yes, we are part of that group. We are part of the agreement. We are a part of the partners and I chaired that meeting and we handed it over to Manitoba as of September. Mr. Speaker, we are doing the right thing. I am giving the Member an answer. Yes, we are very much a part of that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 271-16(5):
NWT TOURISM OUTFITTERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about our new endangered species, the outfitter, and the fact that they've been left not just holding the bag but worthless lodges, because of the direction that the caribou management has taken. Mr. Speaker, many of these lodges have the investment of many people, of generations of money, and are seen as their only opportunity for the future, but that opportunity has been pulled away.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of ITI what is this government's plan to do with these outfitters with these worthless lodges while they cannot attract customers to hunt on the Barren Lands or other places throughout the North? What is his plan for the outfitters? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some time now we recognize that there has been a shift in the tourism priorities and what areas that the younger generation would be participating, and we recognize that the so-called consumptive tourism, the interests in hunting and fishing were declining. We undertook surveys to determine where the new demand for tourism would be focussed on. Our research has indicated that most people are interested in adventure tourism, ecotourism, so we introduced a program, a tourism diversification program, in 2007-08, to help existing outfitters begin to diversify into other areas and develop new tourism products. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister defines it as a shift in the market. I would call it more like a tourniquet. The reality is there are no eco-tourists showing up at the door. The phone isn't ringing off the hook. It would cost hundreds and hundreds of

thousands of dollars to decommission these lodges. The outfitters are left holding the bag waiting for this turnaround in the caribou market, if I may define it as that, which is almost impossible. What is the government doing to help either sustain these lodges through this downshift, which is easily predictable in the area of three to five years they will have to wait to restart, as well as is the government offering packages to help get some of these people out into either new industries or just out of this industry completely? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, since time immemorial, the people of the Northwest Territories recognized that the population of caribou and wildlife was volatile. It was recognized in the Northwest Territories Act where barren-ground caribou has been designated as game endangered of becoming extinct. Our own Wildlife Act recognized that and it developed a hierarchy of priorities for the use of wildlife. Commercial tags for caribou were the lowest priority.

Now, having said that, I already told the Member that we established a tourism diversification market and fund which we have spent \$4.5 million dollars since 2007-08. We also met with the sports outfitters. They indicated that that program wasn't for them because they couldn't see themselves changing. So we set up a separate Tourism Marketing Fund for the outfitters in which there was \$600,000. It was \$300,000 last year. It is \$600,000 this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, it is great to have initiatives with pittance of a dollar called investment that they referred to, but the reality is the customers aren't picking that up. What work has the government done to ensure that this has actually taken any effect in this industry or any industry on this so-called market shift?

The problem still remains: the customers are not coming and these outfitters are left with all of these lodges that are difficult to staff. No one wants to work there because they know they can't make any money. Has the Minister investigated the realities of this so-called bailout program that doesn't really do anything? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have been working very closely with the outfitters and how to spend this money. For the most part, the outfitters have availed themselves of these funds. We have also put in business plans to continue this funding. We look forward to being able to work with the outfitters in future years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Minister's own words, he said that, for the outfitters, this is not a program for them. So, Mr. Speaker, if he is hearing from the outfitters that this program

doesn't work for them, I am hearing from outfitters myself still even just recently as in a few minutes before session started, in an e-mail that the ink isn't even dry. The program doesn't work and is not for them.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is the only person this program works for is the person who does the allocation of these funds who sits in some ivory tower office not understanding what it is really like in these industries in trying to create business in momentum in the economy. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister go back and see if we can retool focus that works for outfitters? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wonder how many programs the Member would like me to start. I already indicated that we have the Tourism Diversification Marketing Program. We also instituted the Sports Outfitter Marketing Program and outfitters are accessing those funds and there is still funding available this year. A lot of the outfitters are using those funds to put their lodges in care and maintenance so that they can keep them operating. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 272-16(5):
RECOGNITION AND STATUS FOR
ADDITIONAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and following up on both his statement and my statement today.

The Official Languages Act made the enormous contribution of making ancestral languages real in the law. We have seen some progress on the basis of that law, but we shouldn't assume the 1998 law was the last word on what is and isn't an official language in the Northwest Territories.

Can the Minister state this government's position on recognizing further official languages under the act? That is, what are the standards and arguments used for or against recognizing other official languages? Mahsi.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As it stands, we recognize 11 official languages in the Northwest Territories. The federal government recognizes English and French, so we are very proud of our Northwest Territories jurisdiction language recognition.

I have heard on several occasions of a language that could be integrated or added to the existing 11 official languages. There are comprehensive steps that have to be undertaken, public consultation.

Members would have to be involved in that. The Legislative Assembly would have to be involved in that. It would take some form of consultation with the communities and the people of the Northwest Territories before it goes to the next level. Those are the areas of discussion that we need to undertake.

Mr. Speaker, as it stands, we have 11 official languages. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, for the record, I, too, am very proud of those 11 official languages. I thank the Minister for those remarks on the process to get this done.

As the Minister knows, the true test of support programs is the ability to deliver timely support to the place where it can be used best. For a grassroots program, we know that it is really at the community level. I have described a situation where funding for the Yellowknives Dene Community Language Program is filtered through the Tlicho and Akaitcho governments' administrative structures and there have been several problems described. The Minister has spoken to me of taking steps to make better arrangements to deal with those difficulties. Can the Minister tell me what the status is on those improvements? Mahsi.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I did meet with the Member on identifying the funds that are being distributed through teaching and learning centres. There have been some concerns in that respect. We are currently rolling out the Aboriginal Languages Plan. It will be tabled in the House today. From there, that does cover the aspects of what the Member is referring to. It is broad. It is just not one region, Mr. Speaker. So I am glad that the Member is referring to that, because it is an important piece of work that we need to start talking and making those changes.

We currently provide this approximately \$12 million that we need to relook at as well, a profile of that, how it has been distributed to the communities and to language groups. Mr. Speaker, it is general. We are seriously looking at those areas. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's comments again. I will be looking for those remarks in the plan.

Today I also re-emphasized the long-standing problems of the lack of evaluators certified to approved credentials for interpreters/translators and the need to reduce the time it takes for course work from the current 10-year haul.

These problems have been pointed out in language reviews, Mr. Speaker, since the 1900s. Can the Minister tell me what progress is being made meeting these basic but crucial needs and perhaps where that's addressed in the Languages Strategy? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: What the Member is referring to is captured in the 70-plus recommendations that will be brought forward and we've also initiated a summer institute for language this past summer. It was very successful and was part of the development stages pertaining to certification, possibly diploma or degree. So the Member has already shared his concern and we are looking at that as part of the strategy that's before us, and there are also talks about the interpretation and translation training program. So that is part of the strategy as well. It is a comprehensive document and we are in the process of implementing it expeditiously. Mahsi.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good to hear. My last question, which you might be able to guess here, is: Will the Minister commit to -- I'm harking back to my first question on beginning perhaps the long process to consider recognition of an additional language -- sitting down and meeting with the chiefs of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and myself to discuss what a process might look like? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. I did receive an invitation from the Akaitcho Government and I'd be more than glad to meet with the leadership, along with the Member, to discuss the process of initiating this process. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 273-16(5):
CLEANUP AND REMOVAL OF ASSETS
FROM TREMINCO MINE SITE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In July of this year I heard a news report about the difficulties surrounding the cleanup of the old Treminco mine site outside of Yellowknife. I have some questions today for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs under whose watch this falls.

The gist of the news report was that Treminco had gone bankrupt and that our government could end up paying completely for the cost to clean up the site. This was after the government had auctioned off the buildings and equipment that were out at the mine site in order to try and defray the cost of cleanup. Contractors have been allocated to remove the assets, but they only removed some of them -- I think "cherry picked" would be a good word -- and they left many of those assets behind. As of July, the government had been waiting 14 months for the buildings and equipment that remained to be removed.

Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister with regard to this situation. I'd like to know the

status of the buildings and the equipment at the Treminco mine site at this time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is absolutely correct; there was some infrastructure that was removed from the site -- cherry picked, as she put it -- but during this past summer we've done an inventory of the site and we're looking at hiring an engineering firm to assess the structural integrity in an attempt to place some value on that. We're going to look at possibly if it's feasible to have it go out again, or to see what steps we can take next to do the actual cleanup. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I'm a little distressed, because that was the information that was available in July, was that the government was going to be finding an engineer and placing a value on these assets. So I'm a little dismayed that it's now October and that it hasn't been done.

I'd like to know from the Minister, we tried to get rid of these buildings. They're now deteriorating. They are still our assets because we have reclaimed them because the contractors didn't do their job. So what recourse does this government have to go after those contractors who didn't fulfill their contract, didn't do their job, and what recourse do we have as a government to try and claim back some of the elements of the contract that weren't fulfilled? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: This is one of the reasons that making the amendments to the Commissioner's Land Act requiring security deposits would have helped us in recovering some of those costs. As far as the actual going after the contractors, I haven't had that discussion and once I have a discussion with my officials, I'll meet with the Member and relay those on to her. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I hate to tell the Minister I told you so, but I'm afraid I have to because that certainly was mentioned by Members on this side of the House before the amendments to the Commissioner's Land Act came into force, that we really ought to have security for things such as these.

I'd like to know if the Minister could advise if we do find that there's some value, if we do find that we can get somebody to remove these buildings and equipment for us, how much is that going to cost us. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: During this winter we're going to find a feasible solution for the removal of those assets and if we can work with somebody that can get rid of them at minimal cost to the GNWT. As far as an actual dollar figure, I'm not able to provide that right now. Once we have the

discussion with the engineering firm, I think we'd be in a better position to have a bit of a dollar figure, but the bottom line is to try and remove these assets with minimal costs to the GNWT. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for his comments and I appreciate that he's saying it's going to be at minimal cost to us as a government. We've already incurred some costs; we're going to incur more, from the sounds of things. I guess I would like to know from the Minister that should we not find a company who can remove these buildings for us, the bottom line is, is the government on the hook to pay for the cleanup of this particular mine site? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As far as the actual mine site, we'd have to work with INAC -- because it is kind of a multi-jurisdictional issue -- on the actual cleanup of the mine site. The infrastructure I think is what's in question here. I suppose if we were unable to find a contractor to remove those, then we'd have to go from there and see what actually it might cost us as a government to remove all of the old infrastructure, because they are starting to age and the longer we delay it, the more dangerous it becomes to have that infrastructure out there. So it is one that we're hoping to have by the end of this winter, a plan as to how we're going to deal with it and I'd be willing to share that with the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 274-16(5):

BULK PURCHASING OF PHARMACEUTICALS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my colleague Mr. Ramsay's questions about the potential savings to this government by bulk purchasing pharmaceuticals for people in the Northwest Territories.

I have a great idea for the Minister, one that will save the government a lot of money. Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that the private sector can do almost anything cheaper than the government can. In Hay River we have a long-established business called Medical Surgical Supply. It is owned and operated by two registered nurses with extensive experience in the Arctic and in small communities. At the present time they purchase pharmaceutical and surgical and medical supplies. They then redistribute these to clients, health centres, hospitals and facilities throughout the Northwest Territories. If the government were going to go to this bulk purchasing idea and this process, this might necessarily require some kind of

infrastructure in order to receive and distribute these bulk purchased supplies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health, rather than putting a long-established business like the one in Hay River out of business, wouldn't it be a good idea for the government to consider contracting them on a cost-plus basis to perform this service on behalf of the GNWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That would be one idea that we would need to look into and I'm willing to do that.

The general idea behind finding savings from bulk purchasing is so that a smaller jurisdiction like the NWT could partner with as many provinces as possible. The one that we're aiming for is the western provinces. This is happening nationally, but provinces like Ontario are big enough that they can find their own efficiencies by doing their own things. The NWT is signed on with the western provinces to see the big ticket items, probably ones not even a small business in the North could buy, but to be a part of the bigger purchasing power so that we can find some savings. We have a lot of work to do on that yet. We have to get all of the authorities in the NWT to agree.

Obviously we need to see how our private sector could play and what role they could play. I would certainly be interested in looking at that.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I know that in the past there was some thought given to putting this function of purchasing pharmaceuticals and medical supplies under the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority and having it actually done through Stanton. Again, no offence to the government, but I submit to you that the private sector could do this cheaper. If this were a function taken on by the government, trust me, it would grow. It would become a massive operation. The thing that is also necessary is when we're sending out to small nursing stations, they don't need a hundred or a thousand of certain things. The idea is to understand their needs, break the packaging down, know the best way to transport and get it there. This is knowledge which is already established with this company.

I'd like to ask the Minister, does she agree that that kind of specialized service could be more efficiently provided by the private sector than a government agency?

HON. SANDY LEE: I understand what the Member is saying and, in fact, I visited that outlet that exists in Hay River. I do believe they already supply a lot of centres in the Northwest Territories. I will make a commitment to the Member and this House that we

will definitely factor that in and do a cost-benefit analysis. I would have to do a lot of work with the Members in the next coming weeks to have the analysis done and how we can find savings and wherever possible we need to bring our NWT suppliers into play. I would be happy to come forward with a proposal.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I am suggesting a process that would be cost-plus. We would still, as a government, realize the savings of the bulk purchasing because it would be a predetermined additional cost for the administration and provision of the service. Does the government at this time procure any other supplies on a cost-plus basis under such a plan?

HON. SANDY LEE: First of all I should clarify that I don't believe there is a system in place or idea in place that Yellowknife Health or Stanton will purchase for everybody. Right now we have a bit of patchwork going on and this is why we have been discussing that at the Joint Leadership Council. We need to work as a group. We need to agree that we need to purchase together. And wherever possible we would use local resources.

There are other things like pharmaceutical drugs that are used in the hospitals, for example. I think the outlet in Hay River deals with supplies. Purchasing drugs, health centres and hospitals would be doing on their own. We have a lot of work to do in coming out with the details of that.

I would once again commit to do an analysis and put a plan together, and I will be reviewing that with the Standing Committee on Social Programs as we move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Hay River we do have infrastructure already in place. We have a lower operating overhead than you would have in other places in terms of costs. We are very accessible, from a transportation network point of view, to get product out. If the Minister would contemplate going to a request for proposal on this, then all of these things could be brought to bear in considering an option. Also the management and capabilities of the proponents that would actually be delivering the service, these are important things. It's one thing to just re-box stuff and ship it off to wherever; it's another thing to know what those front-line workers are doing and have that experience firsthand. Would an RFP be a potential way of looking at getting some information back to the government on the potential for this idea?

HON. SANDY LEE: That would definitely be one way of doing it. Thus far different health authorities have been putting out their own RFPs. There is more than one business, I believe, in the Territories

who does that. What we would be looking at would be doing an RFP for larger and more than one authority at once. It's a detail that we need to work out, but it's something that needs a lot more attention and a lot more detailed analysis and I will undertake to do that.

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

QUESTION 275-16(5):

NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to talk today about A Shared Responsibility that's going to be tabled later today. Once again, I think it's a great step forward. I'm curious, though, has the department, has the Minister developed a comprehensive evaluation framework so that we can actually assess over time whether or not -- the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, yes -- it's actually working. Has an evaluation framework been developed to go along with this plan?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. An evaluation form will come out of this framework that's going to be before us. We seriously want to monitor each and every recommendation that is brought forward and the program changes that we will be making within our Department of Education. So it's all preliminary right now, the recommendations that are before us today. Definitely evaluations will be part of the process.

MR. ABERNETHY: That's good to hear. We've been here before. We've had plans to revitalize aboriginal languages in the North before and I think this is a very good one. It's building upon some of the successes we've had in the past.

Over the last 10 years the number of aboriginal people that identify their aboriginal language as their mother tongue has decreased as has the number of people using it in their homes. What I'm curious about, specifically when it comes to an evaluation framework, is will the department be collecting information on mother tongue and home language as well as the ability to diverse so that we can actually calculate language shift in the Northwest Territories to see that we are getting results. If there's no mechanism to track whether the mother tongue numbers are going up and the home language numbers are going up, we won't be able to determine whether in fact what we've done is working. Will that type of information be collected as we move forward with this plan?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I agree with the Member that we need to have a mechanism in place for the tracking and monitoring and evaluating of our programming. We want this strategy, the plan, to be successful. I believe the Member did indicate that this will be part of the legacy that we'll leave behind for years to come. Revitalizing our languages, there will definitely be a mechanism in place to monitor it every step of the way.

MR. ABERNETHY: Once again thanks to the Minister. It sounds like we're agreeing. I would like the Minister to commit to actually putting in some system to track the aboriginal language shift over time, which means collecting things like the number of individuals who identify their aboriginal languages as their mother tongue and those that also indicate they're using it as their home language. I think tracking the language shift every two or three years could actually be an important indicator to evaluate if the revitalization measures put in place are successful. I think we both want the same thing. I think everybody wants the same thing. We want these aboriginal languages to be healthy and strong. If I can get him to commit to tracking that specific type of information, I really feel that those indicators will help us to determine success in the long run.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The aboriginal languages will likely see some shift, because we want this to work. At the same time, we need to gather the information. We have done that along with the package that we have before us. Mr. Krutko did mention numbers as well that are out there that we have used so far. We will be monitoring that and collecting more data over the next two or three years. We need the committees, the language specialists, committee experts, the community members to provide that information as well. We will be working closely with the community. My department will be working with the Members as well as the communities very closely, a monitoring mechanism.

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

QUESTION 276-16(5):

REVITALIZATION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak in regard to the revitalization of languages and the language groups that aren't classified as critically endangered, like the Gwich'in language and Inuvialuktun. I think we do have to take immediate action. I think we have to take giant steps to get there. I think one of the immediate things that we can establish is an action plan to deal with the Gwich'in Revitalization Program. I'd like to ask the Minister what we are doing to work with those groups that find themselves in the

situation that their language is classified as critical or endangered so that we can implement some action plans immediately.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I think that's the very reason why we're here today producing this package. It has over 70 recommendations. We have done some work with respect to preserving our language and revitalizing our language. We have programs that have been implemented, the ALCIP program. I think we need to do more. Part of the documentation that is going to be provided speaks to immersion programming, elders in schools, specialists in schools on our language, teachers that speak the language. We need to produce those important people, the resources. We have done some work in that area but we'll continue to do more, especially with a plan that will be before us for the next few years. Definitely we want to make it a successful project.

MR. KRUTKO: I believe it is critical that we do have some sort of central language development institute of some sort in the Northwest Territories. When you talk about aboriginal language it's more than a language learning program, it's also looking at the whole area of translating services, training services for language teachers and instructors in those language programs. I think it's essential that whatever programs and services we do deliver are useable. That is one of the downfalls that you see of a lot of languages. You can see the strong language groups in the Northwest Territories such as the Tlicho or the Slavey in the different regions. It is because they use their language on a day-to-day basis. That is one of the critical downfalls of the languages, pressures that a lot of these language groups are under. I'd like to ask the Minister what we are doing to revitalize the language groups and impress on the importance of using those languages.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I'd like to focus on what we are going to be doing with the new package. We had the Language Institute here this past summer. That's part of the strategy that's been highlighted, that we need to deliver more language programming into the region and the communities to the people. That's what we're doing. Not only that, but it also captures Dene fonts onto our computers throughout the system, integrated language curriculum and immersion programming. Those are the key factors that are within the package.

I think, as we move forward, most of the concerns and discussions that were brought forward over the years by Assembly Members will be captured in this document and utilize community expertise such as elders and language specialists. We need their

guidance and support. We also need the support of the Regular Members to make it a very successful project. We'll continue to do so.

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

QUESTION 277-16(5):
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE
IMMERSION PROGRAMS

MR. MENICOCHE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I spoke about how I look forward to the Aboriginal Languages Plan. However, I also mentioned that immersion programs lead to success in many languages. Not only aboriginal languages but throughout other jurisdictions immersion programs really work and they tend to support the local languages. I'd just like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment how many aboriginal immersion programs we have in the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the exact number before me, but within the region I believe we offer... Within the three regions, but I have to get the facts for the Member, because I need to highlight the correct information that I can provide to the Member.

MR. MENICOCHE: The vision that I shared earlier was that I'd like to see our aboriginal communities, of course, begin immersion programs. Even in our smallest communities it would be ideal, and a lot of our smaller communities, the majority are speaking an aboriginal language, like the community of Trout Lake. I don't want to anticipate the Aboriginal Languages Plan, Mr. Speaker, but I'd like to ask the Minister, is there a current strategy to look at starting up immersion programs throughout our jurisdiction? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to focus on what we have before us today. It is part of the package and we are going to start implementing that. The language immersion in all schools, that is also our vision, starting from early childhood. Not only that, but we've heard over and over, even in the Sahtu region, the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative, that there was a language that was spoken that we need to start from home. Parents need to talk to their kids at home. The teachers are there as a resource tool, but at the same time some teachers don't speak the language. So it has to come from home. We are trying to produce more aboriginal speaking teachers, as well, with the credentials. There are some immersion programs in the regions, but we want to do more. This package will allow us to do that and work with the communities as well. Mr.

Speaker, this package has fingerprints of all the Northwest Territories and it is a package of the Northwest Territories and we want to make it a successful project. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: When I speak about immersion programs is where we'll actually be teaching the children from K to 3 in an aboriginal language. Do we have a current program such like that in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, we do. We provide immersion programs in some of the regions, probably not all regions as we wish that we could do, but we are working towards that. We've been given the direction, the guidance and also the support to deliver that. At the kindergarten level, or even earlier than that, the Head Start Program has been successful as well. Those are the discussions that we've had throughout the Northwest Territories and now we need to start implementing the total package that will be before us. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Your final supplementary, Mr. Menicoché.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see that we are working on something. I don't know if there's an evaluation available on some of these programs, but that's certainly something that I would like to see completed. As well, as we move forward with immersion programs, does the direction come from the Minister's office or is that work, again, with the education councils? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I've always respected working closely with the education councils and I will continue to do so. We cannot do this alone, implement this strategy. Definitely I will be seeking some guidance and support from the education councils and the Members as well. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 278-16(5):
RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS
AND HEALTH AUTHORITY DEFICITS

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue with some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services related to the other questions that I had for her. The Minister spoke earlier of all the good things that under her watch the department has been doing. If the Minister has been addressing the root causes of these deficits over her three-year reign as Health Minister, like the underfunding, the unfunded positions, the growing costs for medical supplies and equipment, billing issues, unwieldy accounts receivables, and governance structure, then why do the deficits continue to spiral out of control at our health authorities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is aware, the health care system as a whole as the amount of deficit that amounts to about 10 percent of our entire health and social services budgets. That's quite typical. Jurisdictions across the country are experiencing similar kinds of deficits. Had we not been able to get federal funding in the amount of \$15 million over the next two years, that would add another \$15 million. We were able to obtain that funding.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member stated, we need to find a way to right-size our budget. That's the work we are doing. The deputy minister and all of the senior management, including all of the CEOs and medical directors, are fully engaged in coming up with right-sized budgets for all of the authorities. We know from past experience that infusing cash into the system deals with the bottom line for the moment but it does not deal with the structural changes that we need to undertake. The work is underway and we are fully engaged and seized with this issue. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I thank the Minister for that. I think that's the right approach and we should be pursuing that, but how are we going to get there? I've been here seven years and the Minister's been here longer than that -- 12 years or 11 -- and these are problems that have been ongoing. They've been a problem since the day I got here. I want to believe what the Minister is saying, but how is she sure that come next year when Members go into the business plans, is she saying that the health budget is going to be increased by 10 percent, and where is that money supposed to come from, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Obviously, that money will come from our territorial budget. Our health care system right now takes about 30 percent of the total budget. Across the country, health care expenditures take up somewhere up to 40 to 50 percent of the budget. What we are working on right now is we are reviewing all of the important aspects of our health care system. Physician resources, how we are spending those resources, because that is one big ticket item. We spent about \$26 million on medical travel. We want to make sure that we are doing the right thing in that regard. We are reviewing the business planning model so that we are putting the money in the right place. And we are looking to see how we could find efficiencies so that come next business cycle, we are not going to be asking for 10 percent extra for the health care system but that we can demonstrate that for less money but doing more effective delivery, that we could have sustainability in our health care system.

I know we've been here for many, many years, but the senior management at the Department of Health has been there for a little over a year and they are making huge progress. All the management is very, very engaged and I am very positive and optimistic that we are going to come up with a great plan for us to consider. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, again, I do thank the Minister for that response. The one thing I didn't hear in her response was whether or not the government's going to ask itself and us the hard question, and that is whether or not we can afford to maintain having several authorities across the Northwest Territories delivering health and social services for our people and whether that current governance structure is sustainable going forward. That's a hard question and I'd like to ask the Minister is that going to be part of the discussions with senior management and the government. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, that may or may not be something that this Legislature or future Legislatures have to consider. What we are doing right now is reviewing the government's model and all of the chairs are fully engaged in working together as closely as possible, so that we are not working as eight separate authorities but we are working as a group. We meet every three months. We are looking at how to use doctors and resources better, how to find efficiencies in medical travel. How do we make sure that we collect all the money that is owed to us from anybody? How do we bill for services that we are providing to Nunavut residents or visitors or tourists who are having accidents? We are making sure that we collect every dime from them, any third-party cost. We are looking to change standby and call systems. We are working to make sure that all of our health care professionals are practicing at the fullest level possible so that if we could use nurse practitioners rather than using a doctor's service, then we are doing that. The only way to do that is to have the doctors engaged, nurses engaged. If we could use midwifery, we are doing that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a multi-faceted, fully engaged, complex system change that we are engaged in. We are well on the way to making those changes. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very easy to criticize. I like to be critical of the government from time to time, but I also want to give my suggestions to government and a suggestion, Mr. Speaker, if I could give that to the Minister, would be to look at the authorities and change the way they operate. Take away the management aspect. Make them advisory boards, if anything, and, to me, if you are looking for

efficiencies, that is where you are going to find it. It doesn't make any sense to have eight different authorities in the Territories with 42,000 people in it. If you are looking for efficiency, start there. Instead of 70 to seven, go from eight to one. That will be my suggestion to the government. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, that is a valid suggestion. It is an important suggestion. It is something that I think we need to consider. But, at the moment, Mr. Speaker, I think we could go far and we could do fine efficiencies by combining, for example, purchasing, where really the dollars count. We organize in the back offices so that we lessen the duplication and redundancy. We are making sure that each health facility only provides a service that it should. So the Stanton Hospital should become the territorial hospital that it was meant to be and it is meant to be, that any services that could be done, any practices and procedures that could be done in Hay River or Fort Smith or Inuvik, we want to make sure we do that.

Mr. Speaker, the Member has a valid point. It is something that we need to consider more. We are looking at the governance structure of our health care system. We need to talk about that more. I thank the Member for his suggestion. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 279-16(5):

BULK PURCHASING OF PHARMACEUTICALS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to the questions raised by our Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Jane Groenewegen. I like her approach on suggesting bulk purchasing and trying to leverage the expertise and skills that private industry have. My question would be to the Minister of Health and Social Services just to make sure -- of course, recognizing individual MLAs have every right to advocate for their businesses in their riding -- if the Department of Health and Social Services is going to continue this line of consideration which I would encourage them to do, it would make it an open and competitive process that any territorial business could bid on this if this was the approved or considered approach going forward on the bulk purchases of pharmaceutical products. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we would look at every way where that would allow us to find efficiencies and cost savings by competitive process. We would look at all of that, Mr. Speaker. The cost of drugs, equipment and supplies is one of the big cost drivers. We are

analyzing them very closely. Members on the other side have suggested that we need to look at this. Jurisdictions across the country are looking at those. Mr. Speaker, yes, I take his advice and will keep that in mind. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, if I could add one more issue to this particular problem in going forward, I would ask the Minister reach out to the Pharmacy Association of the Northwest Territories to engage maybe all their association and they could maybe leverage some of the expertise the association would have with their members and perhaps a collective approach could be given to help draw out the direction of this type of health care potential savings. I would hate to think that they would be excluded on any type of expertise that they would probably willingly offer to ensure that the government's bottom lines are being met in an efficient way. They are truly a critical component in this solution and overlooking them would be quite insulting. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, yes, we would do that wherever possible and wherever appropriate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Time for question period has expired. Sorry, item 8 on the Order Paper, 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 93-16(5):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES PLAN -
A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Aboriginal Languages Plan - A Shared Responsibility, October 2010. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 94-16(5):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MEETING
AND CONFERENCE PLANNER 2011

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Meeting and Conference Planner 2011. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 95-16(5):
A CLEAR PATH FORWARD,
MACA STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2015

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled A Clear Path Forward, Municipal and Community Affairs Strategic Plan 2010-2015. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 96-16(5):
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION
TRUST FUND ANNUAL REPORT
2008-2009 AND 2009-2010

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund, Annual Report 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 97-16(5):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIQUOR
COMMISSION AND LIQUOR LICENSING BOARD
2009-2010 56TH ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 98-16(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2009-2010

TABLED DOCUMENT 99-16(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 5, 2009-2010

TABLED DOCUMENT 100-16(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 2, 2010-2011

TABLED DOCUMENT 101-16(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2010-2011

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following five documents entitled 2009-2010 56th Annual Report – Northwest Territories Liquor Commission and Liquor Licensing Board; Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2009-2010;

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2009-2010; Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2010-2011; and Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2010-2011. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 15, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 19-16(5): REDUCTION OF NWT HOUSING CORPORATION MAXIMUM RENTAL RATE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Friday, October 29, 2010, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that this Legislative Assembly recommends that the NWT Housing Corporation reduce the rent scale so the maximum rental rate is 25 percent of the assessed gross income. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION 20-16(5): RETENTION OF LONG-FORM CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Friday, October 29, 2010, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that this Legislative Assembly urges the Government of Canada to reverse its decision to eliminate the mandatory "long-form" census questionnaire. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. 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 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project; Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits; Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits – What We Heard; Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy; Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012; Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future;" Tabled Document 98-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2009-

2010; Tabled Document 99-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2009-2010; Tabled Document 100-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2010-2011; Tabled Document 101-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2010-2011; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act; and Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I call the Committee of the Whole to order. We have tabled documents 4, 30, 38, 62, 66, 75, 98 to 101, Bill 4, Committee Report 3-16(5) and Minister's Statement 65-16(5). What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee today would like to deal with Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act. We would like to proceed with general comments today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we will take a short break and begin with Committee Report 3-16(5).

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break we agreed that we would begin with Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act. Are there general comments on the bill? Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just my opening comments with respect to this report. Early in the life of this Assembly, I had constituents start to come to me and talk about concerns that they had with the Child and Family Services Act. Quite frankly, in the beginning I couldn't tell whether it was problems that we actually had with the act or whether it was problems that we had with the implementation. There were issues that certainly through the review become clear that there are a few gaps in the act. There are some things in the act that do need to be looked at and a few things that do need to be changed in the act.

Overall, it is my opinion that this is a pretty good act. It has a lot of positive aspects. The one thing

that I feel is quite positive is the requirement for community committees. I think that is a mechanism whereby communities can be empowered to take on some responsibility with respect to the apprehension of children within the communities. Unfortunately, as we all know now, the act really wasn't implemented in several ways. Going out to the communities and listening to what the people had to say was incredibly valuable for me. I feel like I learned an awful lot about some of the difficulties that individuals are having in these communities, particularly with respect to the apprehension of the children.

As a committee, we came up with a number of recommendations. I support those recommendations. I am not going to talk about the specific recommendations. We will do that later when we are out of general comments and we are more on the detailed aspect of things and we are talking about those recommendations. I do want to talk about some of the key areas that I heard and my colleagues heard.

One of the key areas that I think came up in every community we came to is prevention. Prevention is key. We need, as a government, to take more proactive steps to help families; to help families that are in poverty, to help families that are in crisis. There are a number of things that this government is doing that are good. The Healthy Families Program is a very good program. Everywhere we went where this program is delivered, we heard positive statements. People like this program. In those communities it is adding value. Unfortunately, we are only delivering this program in four communities. We need to expand this program. We need to take other steps in prevention.

Earlier last month I attended an anti-poverty workshop. This was a good workshop. We had an opportunity to talk about some of the things that are leading families down difficult paths. Poverty is one thing that is obviously leading people to situations where their children are being apprehended for things like neglect. We need to work on an Anti-Poverty Strategy as the Government of the Northwest Territories. We make reference to that in this report.

One of the other areas that we heard about is how this system is perceived as adversarial, how this system seems to be combative rather than collaborative. We have made a lot of recommendations about changing our mindset around child and family services, about becoming more collaborative, and becoming more cooperative, and working with our families, and working with the parents and working with the communities. This is something that I think we need to do in order to find reasonable solutions to the challenges that we are facing with respect to child

apprehension. We must help families. We must work with them. Fighting them is not the solution.

I have mentioned already the child and family service committees in every community. So far we have had one or, rather, we attempted to have one in Fort McPherson and the first round did not work out very well. To my understanding, they are now establishing a second committee in the community, but there is a lot more involvement from the Department of Health and Social Services. From what I understand, it looks like it is going to be a success. I think we should be very proud of that. We should be proud of the work that the community has done but also of the work that Health and Social Services has done to work with that community to actually get this thing up and running. It's a step. It's just a step. We need to have community committees in every community that we have.

One of the things that we heard over and over again is that when a social worker is called in due to concerns about a child in a home, the child may be taken out on a temporary basis at which point the social worker and the parents have to develop a plan of care where they work together -- I wonder if anybody's listening -- where they work together to come up with a solution on what the parents and the family need to do in order to get their child back into the home. Unfortunately, a lot of the time one of the things that comes up is mental health and addictions. And the social worker and the family agree that one of the steps that need to be taken is mental health and addictions counselling of which there is none in the community that these people live.

Right off the top we are setting these families up for failure. We are not helping them; we are hurting them. Children need to be with their families where appropriate, which is most of the time.

We need, if we want to be successful, to be more proactive on mental health and addictions counselling; which, for the record, is also something we should be doing with respect to an Anti-Poverty Strategy. Two things we could be doing at the same time. The Department of Health and Social Services needs to be a little bit more proactive on providing front-line, in-the-community alcohol and drug counselling for those individuals in crisis.

Another thing we heard is the frustration that people have in the fact that they don't even understand the act and what is happening to them as people and families. The act, although for the most part it is a good act, is confusing. It is very, very confusing. It is very complex. We did not hear one person who has gone through the system indicate that they had any understanding of the system at all. We need to be a little bit proactive there as a department. We need to get in there and we need to do some plain language work on this act. We need to make sure

that people understand it. We need to do more communications. We need to educate our people so that they understand the act. We've made recommendations to that effect as well.

We've also talked about placements. A lot of the time, maybe not as much now, but often a child will be taken out of a family and placed in a foster home with a loving foster home who cares and wants to work with these children and do well, but that foster home may not be of the same cultural background as the child that has been taken out. This is unfortunate. We need to do a better job of working with families, grandparents, uncles, aunts, individuals who can take these children with a little support from the government. Right now if a grandparent takes a child, they get no financial assistance, yet they still have to pay the bills, they still have to buy the food. We're not helping, we're hurting. We need to make sure that we take those steps and find ways to allow and support families who take these children on short-term and longer-term placements if necessary.

We heard from the social workers as well. Social workers have an incredibly important job. I don't envy them. I wouldn't want to be an individual that has to go into a home and remove a child. I can't imagine how difficult that is for the social worker and I can't imagine how difficult that is for the family. Sometimes it needs to be done. Thank goodness our social workers are professionals. I'd like to applaud the social workers for all the hard work that they do. We know it's a difficult job. They expressed concerns. They have concerns about the policy manuals. They have concerns about the regulations. They have concerns about the act themselves. They have asked for plain language documents. They have asked for more training. The department needs to do this. The department needs to do this so that the social workers can be more collaborative and less confrontational. Not that they are, but the system is. They want to help. They don't want to hurt. Right now, often we're hurting.

We've thought about these recommendations long and we've considered them. I stand behind them as a member of this committee and I think if we move forward with these recommendations, we can make a difference to these young people and these families. Yes, it's going to cost some money. But the long-term benefits of this, if you tie this in with an Anti-Poverty Strategy, are significant and will save us money in many, many areas down the road. These recommendations talk to the Housing Corporation. These recommendations talk to Education, Culture and Employment. These recommendations talk to Justice. We all need to work together as partners to solve these problems. This isn't just a health problem. This is a GNWT problem. This is a people problem. We all need to work together to find these solutions.

I encourage all the Members to read this report, think about the recommendations, and let's all work together to help the families of the Northwest Territories.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start by really acknowledging the superior level of support we had in putting this report together. I'd like to start with our research staff. We had Regina Pfeifer, Robin Stewart and Lee Selleck, all of whom put their stamp into this work and went beyond the call. The Clerk's office contributed hugely and I'd like to recognize the committee clerk, Gail Bennett, who is very professional and thorough in her support with a keen eye for the detail that's required to do a good job here. My colleague, MLA for Great Slave, Glen Abernethy put the motion on the floor and was instrumental in getting this review underway. I want to recognize that huge contribution. I also appreciate our chair, Mr. Tom Beaulieu, and other fellow Members on the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Ms. Wendy Bisaro and Mr. David Krutko, chair. Also we had three consultants who had significant contributions: Cindy Blackstock, Bruce MacLaurin and Sharon Sutherland. Thanks to them. The Minister and her staff and many others contributed in many ways helping with arrangements and advice and so on. And to all those who contributed with the arrangements and mechanics of our consultation, travel, meetings, report generation and printing were all much appreciated.

I have to say that the highest regard goes out to those constituents and family members throughout the Northwest Territories who contributed the real material we needed to hear and learn about in putting this report together. Some of them we heard before the idea of this review and it was on their contributions from constituents that we recognized the need here. The residents of the Northwest Territories, family people throughout our jurisdictions certainly affirmed the decision of the standing committee to conduct this review. A huge thank you to those people who participated and sometimes having to speak through considerable emotion and pain but importantly sharing their vital experience.

The four key points come to me just in terms of needing to be highlighted in general comments here. I guess the most fundamental issue, one that is not a surprise, is that the health of our children, families and communities are the crux of everything we do. They're what this review was about. They're what so much of what we do is about. That's the fundamental issue.

As my colleague has mentioned, the huge opportunities for prevention are out there waiting to be taken advantage of. Right now they're hardly

being recognized in terms of the dollars and programs that we have in place.

Other things that became apparent very quickly and repeatedly are that the issues involved are intertwined with many other of our basic and serious challenges, including poverty, addictions, loss of culture and issues of literacy. Again, those are very specific things that will require cross-departmental response, government-wide response.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the ultimate answers are to be found at home, in our families, in our homes, in our communities and in our cultures. Government, indeed, has a crucial role in engaging all of these entities and providing them with the appropriate types and amounts of support to implement the solutions they know are required.

The cost of children in care is high and rising. If we are to do an effective and good job at addressing that and reversing that trend, there are opportunities for savings. As has been noted, this report calls for additional resources towards Child and Family Services Act implementation and revision. I just want to say, frankly, for the record, that I will be standing in support of these initiatives as we go forward with budgets. I'll leave it there. Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Next on the list I have the chair of the standing committee, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, felt it was quite an experience to review the act because of the nature of the work that we did as a committee to go through and review the act and talk to the communities about how the act has impacted on the lives of some of the community members that came out and spoke at our meetings. I agree with the comments made by the two previous committee members and the people that supported us in our review.

Also, in addition to what they said, I'd like to thank the people that we worked with in Alberta. It was a good way to start to see what works down there. With the government down there, it seems like they had the masses in order and the money to be able to do a lot of things that we in the NWT probably couldn't afford to do, but it was something that maybe we could look at scaling down some of what they do while capturing some of their ideas and making them work for the Territories.

Throughout all our meetings, we met with a lot of foster parents. I thought that there were many, many good foster parents who had all kinds of stories and were very hardworking and dedicated people supporting some of the foster children that they were supporting. I thought that was important.

I thought that one of the key things was in our review, was to try to find a way to make the social

workers do social work rather than just child protection work. Social workers were so busy in the child protection area, apprehensions, court and so on, that they were not able to do the social work that is required of them to go into the homes and work on prevention. They're so busy trying to deal with the issues at hand that it was hard for them to free themselves up to do social work, working with the families and so on, and do prevention.

I guess growing up in the Territories I have a lot of friends that were foster children and I know a lot of people in the Territories that were taken away from their homes at a very young age, and it's not a high percentage of their people that turned their lives completely around to live in society today and function and so on; whereas, a lot of these foster kids have been jumping from foster home to foster home to residential school back to foster home and stuff. I mean, many of the kids were in residential school and at the end of the year had nowhere to go. When the school year ended they didn't have a home to go back to for a couple of months until the next school year started and so on. We don't want to see that type of thing prevail; some of the stuff I talked about earlier in Alberta where they had supported the kids that went to school throughout the summer and so on.

Another thing that I found that was a bit of a dilemma, I think, for families up here was a little bit of what Mr. Abernethy touched on, and that was there's a fine line between the grandparents being paid weekend babysitters and foster care. Somehow throughout this act, we had to try to find a way where if the children are in jeopardy in any way whatsoever, that the social worker is in there working with the family, with the grandparents and so on and placing those kids in those homes and being supported by the department and by the whole foster parent program.

They have issues where if the foster kids are taken by the social worker and placed, then there's compensation paid to the placement area where the kids are put or the foster parents. Yet the grandparents don't want to take that risk, or families don't want to take that risk so they intervene before the social worker intervenes and they end up protecting the child from apprehension, but the end result is that they don't receive any financial support. That is one of the key items I'm hoping that can be resolved through this review, that when the grandparents are taking the kids and it is a legitimate issue where it's not just because the parents are having an issue for the weekend or having an issue for a week or so, that the kids end up in the grandparents' home -- you know, it's legitimate and it's necessary -- and that's where I feel that the social worker can go in and work with the families to support those family members.

I thought that was something that would free up a lot of time for the social workers to do other work, going back to that family and doing some social work and dealing with some of the issues and so on.

I guess to kind of close the loop on this, I thought that some of the access to treatment was a bit of an issue. I think that only one treatment facility is available in the Territories and that most of the communities we talked to felt that treatment right there in their hometown on the land, in cultural camps and so on was the way to go; by treating the whole family. Just sending one member to a treatment facility somewhere in the South or in Hay River, one member at a time, to try to deal with any addiction issues that may be causing issues with child care was not working. I think that this government should support the addictions counselling and addictions treatment closer to home.

That is some of what we've made recommendations on and some of the stuff that I felt was the big key items in our report that would improve the situation for our children and families in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to provide some comments on the work that the Social Programs committee did with regard to reviewing the Child and Family Services Act. The most significant for me was that they came over to the community of Fort Liard as well as Fort Simpson. The residents were really pleased to see committee in their communities and they did share many of their concerns. Once we got the debate and the discussion going and the reason why committee was there, people began to understand and identify some of the core issues that they had every time they experienced apprehensions and the authority that the act provides over children in our smaller communities, and a lot of them are certainly aboriginal, Mr. Chairman.

What a lot of people were saying was that aboriginal culture and language has to be taken into consideration if and when we're going to make changes to the act. The act certainly recognizes custom adoption, but when it comes to the opposite end like apprehensions or grandparents wanting to get involved, they can, they're able to take care of their grandchildren, but legally that's like an apprehension and there's no authority for them to do it. But all they want to do is to take the child away from a violent situation. Well, it doesn't even have to be violent, just basically drinking in the house, and they want to care for that child for the weekend, but the law just doesn't provide for that. I think some of the people in Fort Simpson and Fort Liard raised that issue and I certainly support that.

As well, the review, and I'm sure committee heard, it's actually in the report too just talking about the residential school system. Recently it opened up that whole debate about the residential school system and the act kind of brings back the direct experiences that ourselves had experienced at our age and our parents and the parents before them, because the residential school system has been in the North almost two or three generations, Mr. Chairman.

I think the key thing is that we are very happy that the act is being reviewed and very happy that committee came out to communities and wanted input. And they got input, especially in my riding to say, okay, you know we actually have a chance here to make some positive changes that reflect our cultural identity, that reflect some of the realities of our needs.

I think a few Members already commended the front-line workers and I would certainly like to do the same, because they are there day in and day out. I think the recommendations speak about providing more support and more training, and I certainly support that as well. Having knowledgeable front-line workers in the organization certainly helps with smooth transitions, especially because there are cases where constituents have come to me and they're saying the law is overbearing, you know, I really feel that my rights have been violated.

However, the literal translation of the act does say that apprehensions have to happen and it's kind of like a judgment call. At the same time there are alternatives out there in working with the community, knowing that we've got caring grandparents out there that you can call and mediate, and having people in our justice system because of the act when something could have been mitigated or else finding alternative solutions I think would help our system. But we've just got to work with the act and try and write these into the act at the time we're going to make changes, Mr. Chair. So just a few comments.

Once again, seeing the amount of work that committee put into it, pleased to see the healthy communities. Once again, a pat on the back to our front-line workers who are out there doing this every day. I certainly, as an MLA and along with the other committee members, commend them for the work that they're doing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really pleased to be able to make some remarks with regard to the Child and Family Services Act Review committee report. It was very exciting to me to be part of this process and I think that the end result is a very valid one and I think it's an excellent, excellent result.

It was a year, pretty much, from start to finish for the motion to get through the House until we submitted the report. It was almost exactly a year and it was an exhaustive process, it was a very comprehensive process and I think the end result shows that it was well worth the efforts on behalf of everybody involved.

I echo the comments that have already been made by committee members to thank the people who had a hand in assisting us with the report, making all our travel arrangements, making our room and our meeting arrangements, helping us within the communities, setting up meetings for us within the communities. The staff certainly did a huge amount of work relative to the report. Last, but not least, the people who did come to all of our meetings, all of our focus groups who provided us with their input. It was extremely valuable.

My belief, and I think it was pretty much confirmed by the people that we met with, is that the act itself is pretty good. There are not a lot of major changes required to the act, but there are a fair number of changes that are required in the implementation of the act and that, from what we heard from the people that we met with, is basically the problem. The implementation of the act needs fixing.

In particular what struck me, and I have to say it's interesting that I can listen to other members of the committee and their comments on the report and we all have a different approach, each one of us, to how we are commenting on this report and it's wonderful that we all heard the same thing. We went to the same places, we worked on the same project, but we obviously are coming at it from different perspectives and that's a very good thing. What struck me particularly from I would say every one of our meetings and with stakeholders and with individuals in communities, and also in our discussions in committee, what struck me probably the most is the need that was expressed to keep children at home either with their parents or with an extended family member. Removing the kids from the community was seen as an absolute huge difficulty and it was one thing which I would say, if anything comes out of this report, we need to make huge efforts to keep kids within the community. The recommendations from the report reflect the need to keep children within their family, within their home, within their community.

The thing that is necessary, though, if we do that, if we keep the children in the community, we have to then provide adequate supports to either the parents, the child and family services committee within the communities, to extended family members if they're caring for the kids. There is a lack of supports within the communities that does not allow for adequate implementation of the act and it creates a lot of problems. If we remove a child from the parents and require the parents to

undergo some sort of counselling, is that counselling available within that community? In most cases no. That's the sort of thing that we have to do. If we're going to provide supports, we need to make sure if we're going to keep kids at home and in the community we then have to provide supports to the parents and the families in the community.

We also heard a great deal about a very large hole in the act, and that's the lack of services for children between ages 16 and 18. That gap was identified a number of times. I think it's one that was evident before we ever started this review, but it's one that absolutely must be filled. We have any number of children who are left without any kind of services because they happen to be between the ages of 16 and 18.

The report has many recommendations which are directed towards the administration of the act, basically what's being done at the department level and by the GNWT personnel. Like my colleagues, in terms of front-line staff, I absolutely wish to commend the work that they do. It is a very difficult job, it's certainly not one that I could do and I'm grateful that there are people out there that can do jobs that I don't feel I can do, and this is one of them. They do a great job, but they don't necessarily have the services and the policies that allow them to do the job that the communities want them to do. So, many of the recommendations relative to administration of the act are geared to try and make the job of a social worker easier, more efficient and that then makes less apprehensions and makes it less difficult on families.

It's been mentioned already, but I want to also say that the recommendations emphasize that there's changes needed in the kinds of measures that we use to deliver social services, and particularly in light of child apprehensions. We tend to, at the moment, work against families, and the underlying principle has to be to work with families, not against them. So the recommendations talk about advocacy, they talk about collaborative processes and it's a different way of thinking. There's not a lot of basic structural change required, but it's a different way of thinking and instead of being adversarial -- I think that word was mentioned already -- if we don't start from an adversarial position, we start from a collaborative position. If we can do that, it's going to solve the problem before it gets to be a bigger problem or before it gets to court.

We certainly heard a great deal about child and family services committees, mostly that people didn't know that they had the opportunity to establish them. When we mentioned them, I would say, to a community, they believed that that was the right way to go. In my mind, establishing those committees is going to be key to putting into place the recommendations that we have made in the

report. I firmly believe that we need to give power to the communities, to the people in the communities. They know best what works for their people in the community and for their community as a whole. At the moment we're not doing that. We say that we're listening to them, but I don't believe we really are. If we can give that sort of power and interaction with people and families to members of a community, I think it's certainly going to improve, it's going to reduce the number of child apprehensions, I believe that absolutely, and it will solve problems before they become a problem, which, again, is going to reduce apprehensions. The other thing that these committees can do is they can require, they can advocate, they can get the supports that are so necessary in the community to help families.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it could be said that this report was a labour of love on behalf of the committee members. We were all extremely, I would think, I shouldn't speak for my other committee members, but I believe that we certainly were committed to this work and we felt it was very important. I think we also believe that it was well worth the effort and that the product that resulted was certainly a good one.

I have heard from committee members today and Mr. Menicoche, I appreciate his comments, but I really look forward to hearing from other Members of the House on their comments, from other Members outside of the committee, their view of this report and its recommendations. There's a number of recommendations that were made not just to the Department of Health and Social Services but a number of other government departments and we spent a lot of time discussing whether or not we should put those in and felt very strongly that the recommendations affected other departments but it, therefore, needed to be included because they have an impact on child and family services.

It is a great report. I encourage other Members to give comments, I encourage the public to give us comments on this report. I think we would like to hear whatever comments are out there, good, better or indifferent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin I would like to thank my colleagues on the Social Programs committee, the research staff of the Legislative Assembly, the individual professional members we had travelling with us, the members from the Department of Health and Social Services who did travel along with us, and last of all a big thank you to those people who did come forward to make their presentations.

At times it was tough for the individuals, but even tough for ourselves, having to sit there and listen to some of the experiences these individuals had with

the area of child apprehension or child custody issues and the effects it has had on especially the mothers and the loss of their children and, more importantly, the loss of the culture and values because of some of their experiences.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is something that, one of the things that as a Member who served here for some four terms, probably one of the higher achievements that I was able to take part of knowing that when this legislation first came forward in the 13th Assembly, the intention back then was to deal with exactly what we have been confronted with today and the whole notion at that time was because we were one Territory, we had some 58 communities that we represented, more importantly, that we had basically a majority of aboriginal Members in this House which basically were sold on the idea of community involvement and responsibilities by way of establishing a child and family services committee in all of our communities and allow the community input into the process and be able to resolve those issues at the community level, more importantly, find community solutions to these social and challenges that we face in a lot of our communities, more importantly, the economic and social conditions that most communities have to struggle with, regardless if it's employment, high unemployment, and more importantly, the lack of programs and services. I think that we do have to take a close look at how these recommendations were formatted, but more importantly, for the Department of Health and Social Services to assist them in ensuring that when they implement these recommendations that they are doable, that they are basically achievable.

There is going to be some financial expenditures to implementing this, but what is the cost of not doing it, realizing we already spend in the range of \$12 million and we have some 600 children in care in our system in one way or the other. I think we have to be able to realize what effect this has had on the children that find themselves in the system by way of having to be put in the foster care programs, regardless of their placement, regardless of where they are placed.

I think it is important to realize that this legislation, since it came into effect in 1995, that a review has taken place and that the numbers have drastically increased over the period of this program and the number of children that are receiving services in this care is well over a thousand. One of the gaps that we definitely identified is those children between the age of 16 to 18 finding themselves in a grey area of who really has responsibility for those children and exactly how do we work with those children and assist those children that may not find themselves back with their parents and might find themselves in a different community or also ensuring that they do have the means that they can take care of themselves or be able to have access

to services that will assist them and be able to take care of themselves. Again, that is something that I feel we have touched on. I think that we have to show the rest of Canada that we are open to suggestions, recommendations, and realize that we are not alone in this problem. It is a national problem.

There are more children in foster care in Canada today than there were children in care in the residential schools. That is the scary phenomena that we face as Canadians, but more importantly, here in the Northwest Territories. One thing people don't realize is there is a direct correlation between foster care, residential school and exactly the history that a lot of these children are talking about. You are talking families that go back decades in regards to being put in a type of care. In the region I represent, in the community of Fort McPherson, the first Indian residential school was opened in 1898. That is over 110 years ago. Also, in other communities, in regards to Fort Providence it was 1867, and yet we hear stories from our parents, our grandparents and now we are going to hear it from our children and our grandchildren of this phenomena that we talk about in regards to the best interests of the child. At the experience we face today in regards to the residential school phenomena, that effect does not go away simply from one generation to the next, to the next. Again, the only way we will break that cycle is we have to do things differently than we have done in the past, find solutions to work with the people, the families, the children, the communities to find workable solutions to our problems.

I would also like to correlate one of the things that doesn't really spell out in the agreement, and I know a couple of my colleagues touched on it, is the area of poverty. A lot of these families are living well below the poverty line in Canada or, for that matter, looking at it as a third world country. Statistics have shown us that the majority of aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories have an income well below \$18,000 per year and yet the majority of the other population, the non-aboriginal population, is \$54,000. Even that in regards to our communities, we have large pockets of individuals that I have mentioned in regards to statistics that show that almost 45 percent of our people in the communities that I represent of Aklavik and in Fort McPherson, which is basically 43 percent make less than \$30,000 a year. That is over half of our households in our communities. If the people are struggling just to make ends meet and struggling to provide for their children, their family and try to keep a roof over their head with that type of income, we have to do a better job of supporting the systems that we have and making sure they are really assisting those families, children and, more importantly, the communities to find ways of improving the quality of life for those children in our

communities, the family members who are basically struggling, more importantly, find community solutions to our problems.

Again, in the area of child and family services, one of the areas I know a lot of my colleagues touched on is the area of child and family services committees in communities. Fort McPherson is one of the areas that I have been pushing for the last number of years to take advantage of that section of the legislation, but again it was a struggle to where we are today to realizing that there is a cost associated with putting these committees, yes, but what is the cost of not allowing or involving our communities and community members to assist us in making those tough decisions, finding solutions at the community level and ensuring that the community is finding solutions to their problems and not to leave that decision to someone else in a faraway office or in a different setting outside the home communities. Let's not continue to repeat the cycle of knowing what's best, but find solutions to ensuring that our children are protected and their best interest are met.

In closing I'd like to offer up that I think it is important that all Members of this House speak on this issue, regardless whether it's Cabinet Ministers or Regular Members. I think this issue is essential to the well-being of the North as a whole.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. General comments. Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs and congratulate them on the undertaking of this very important task.

The review of the Child and Family Services Act was timely and has offered an opportunity for the Department of Health and Social Services to hear feedback from the most important source of information: the families and communities directly affected by the legislation.

The department will undertake a detailed review of the report and recommendations and develop a comprehensive response. Many recommendations will require the input and engagement of other departments and I will work closely with my colleagues to ensure a coordinated response across the department.

I have also instructed my deputy minister to work with other departments affected by these recommendations to develop interdepartmental responses as some recommendations are cross-government. I will commit to providing an overall response within 120 days.

From a preliminary review, some of the recommendations will require an investment. Many recommendations were policy related and can be addressed without going back to alter the act. A few

recommendations will require a legal review. Some recommendations will commit future governments.

I can say that the department is very excited by the prospect of improving services for children and families and is prepared to make the most of this opportunity.

I'd like to conclude by thanking all of the numerous people who shared their stories and experiences and were involved with this review. Although there is much work ahead of us, the momentum is in place to make significant and valuable changes to the way we deliver child and family services across the Territory.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Lee. General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a few comments I'd like to make on the report. First off I'd like to thank yourself, Mr. Abernethy, and Mr. Beaulieu and the rest of the Social Programs committee for embarking on this ambitious piece of work. It took you over a year and I know many mornings you'd be here and on weekends as well, and I know the committee put a lot of time and effort and understanding into the issues surrounding the review of the Child and Family Services Act. It's because of that work and commitment that I think we have a report before us that is one that speaks to a variety of issues.

The big one for me, and I've heard this from constituents, is that gap. We have to try to address the gap for youth between the ages of 16 and 19. I think that's a big part of it. They're too old for foster care, too young to receive income support. That's a gap I think we need to address. Hopefully this leads us down that road.

I was listening to some of my colleagues speak earlier. The impact, the sheer volume and impact that alcohol, drugs and the abuse of those substances have on our communities, on our families, is devastating. I think we really need to, as a government, get to the root cause of family breakup and what's causing things to go astray. I know we're working towards that. We're spending a lot of money in that area. The social indicators aren't getting any better and I think we need to do a rethink on how we're approaching things, especially on the prevention side.

I again appreciate all the time and effort that's gone into the report. Hopefully we can find a way forward.

The other thing too, while I've got the floor, that I wanted to mention, was when families break up and the impact that has, it's a very tumultuous time in a family's life when the families do break up, the impact on the children who are involved in that breakup have. I've always been a big supporter of equal shared parenting in a way that both parents can fit into the lives of children. That's something

that I fully support too. The more we can get in and mediate circumstances like that, the better as well. Keep family issues and family law out of the court system as much as possible. That's a good thing. We would be doing families a valuable service if we could do that; also benefitting the children that are involved in those family breakups as well.

With that, I do hope this is a tool that can be used effectively as we move forward. Once again, thank you and thanks to the Social Programs committee and to the Minister and her staff, and everybody else who was involved in the foundation of getting this report before us today.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move to report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act, and would like to report progress. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 8:

SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION ACT

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 8 has had third reading.

---Carried

The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

BILL 9:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE TOURISM ACT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 9 has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure committee at adjournment today.

Orders of the day for Thursday, October 28, 2010, 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
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project
 - Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits
 - Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits - What We Heard

- Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northern Voices, Northern Waters: NWT Water Stewardship Strategy
- Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012
- Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future"
- Tabled Document 98-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2009-2010
- Tabled Document 99-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2009-2010
- Tabled Document 100-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2010-2011
- Tabled Document 101-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2010-2011
- Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act
- Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act
- Minister's Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 28, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:07 p.m.