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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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(Great Slave)

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Persons with Disabilities

Minister responsible for Seniors

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(Tu Nedhe)

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Mr. Michael Nadli

(Deh Cho)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 20, 2014****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 30-17(5):
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW AGREEMENTS
WITH EMPLOYMENT AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA**

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development, and I signed a Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. Under this agreement, the Government of Canada will provide up to \$1.25 million in federal funding each year for four years to the Government of the Northwest Territories to improve employment prospects for Canadians with disabilities and better meet the needs of Canadian businesses. The Government of the Northwest Territories presently contributes over \$2.7 million, part of which will be used to cost match the federal government's contribution to deliver employment-related programming for persons with disabilities.

This is the first time that the Government of the Northwest Territories has entered into a Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. Funding through the agreement may be used for education and training, to promote employment participation and opportunities, to connect employers to persons with disabilities and to build knowledge of the policies and programs that can best support persons with disabilities in the workplace. We look forward to working with stakeholders that support persons with disabilities to maximize the benefit of this agreement for Northerners.

This agreement will help us to improve the employment prospects of Northerners with disabilities and at the same time support the needs of the Northwest Territories labour market.

Minister Kenney and I also announced a new project under the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers that the Tlicho Government in Behchoko is currently preparing to deliver. It will be a 12-week older worker upgrading program to train on-the-land instructors. This project will be delivered in partnership with the Tlicho Government, the NWT Literacy Council and Aurora College.

Together, the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories are investing over \$285,000 in this project. It will provide participants with skills upgrading, hands-on experience, and safety training and certification. Graduates are expected to get jobs, such as instructors and guides, in the tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, the economy of the Northwest Territories is growing, and we expect new jobs and opportunities in the coming years. Both of these initiatives will allow our government to focus our efforts to ensure Northerners have access and training opportunities in our territory's workforce. They allow us to provide targeted supports for seniors and persons with disabilities, both of whom are key groups within our population. They will help our government to work with our many partners to build on our existing programs and services to achieve our goal of ensuring that NWT residents have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to participate fully as productive citizens in the northern economy.

I'd like to thank the Government of Canada and in particular Minister Kenney and Employment and Social Development Canada for their special efforts to ensure both the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities and the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers meet the needs of our territory. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 31-17(5):
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY**

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The development of the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy was an important step in setting the stage for the pending devolution of responsibilities for lands and resources to the GNWT. It is through its implementation, in part, that

the benefits of our new authorities can be realized in the form of jobs and business opportunities.

Putting the recommendations set forth in the strategy is key to its success. I am happy to advise Members today that the partnership established to develop and author the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy will continue to serve as its governance committee in order to oversee its timely and effective implementation. The partners include the NWT Chamber of Commerce, the NWT Association of Communities, the Northern Aboriginal Business Association, Canada's Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor), and the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

The committee's extended role includes identifying and facilitating opportunities to promote or advance the implementation of the NWT EOS as well as any tracking and monitoring initiatives undertaken by partners to implement the strategy. Collectively they will champion the implementation of the EOS within their respective memberships, and maintain an on-line and social media presence to support ongoing public awareness of the strategy and its implementation.

Our work continues to diversify our economy away from a dependence on non-renewable resources. The department is proposing \$1.2 million in new funding to initiatives supporting the Economic Opportunities Strategy. Each of the proposed initiatives provides the GNWT with the opportunity to make immediate investments in areas that directly impact NWT residents, businesses and communities.

Mr. Speaker, this includes a considerable investment in tourism initiatives that will attract new markets, develop new tourism products and engage more NWT residents in the tourism sector. It also includes an initiative to establish a convention bureau for the NWT. Together, this will build a more viable regional tourism industry throughout the territory.

The NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy also highlighted the impressive potential that exists for commercial fishing, especially on Great Slave Lake. In the coming year we will work to identify and leverage new capital. When combined with the Northern Food Development Program, this will lend support to attracting new entrants, provide capital investment and facilitate options for marketing and distribution to both the domestic and export commercial markets.

The Economic Opportunities Strategy highlighted the importance of regional economic planning, and in the coming year we will engage residents in the Inuvik and Deh Cho regions in this important economic planning process. We have also earmarked a program to support regional

entrepreneurs and small businesses to draw professional business personnel and service providers to our smaller communities where these specialized services are so desperately in demand.

Mr. Speaker, the Economic Opportunities Strategy will support this Assembly's long-standing priority to increase economic diversification in our vibrant grassroots sectors. We will develop an agriculture strategy and associated policy instruments aimed at realizing recommended actions to formalize our territory's rapidly evolving agricultural sector. As recommended, we will provide additional support for the NWT film industry in the form of a pilot program aimed at addressing some of the competitive disadvantages we face when compared to adjoining and competing jurisdictions.

Almost 70 percent of the recommended actions identified in the Economic Opportunities Strategy will fall to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to lead. We are committed to working with our partners to put these recommendations in place that will strengthen and diversify the economy across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we have an extraordinary long-term opportunity in devolution to steer and direct our economic future, but that is only half of the challenge.

We must also connect the opportunities that result from our decision-making to our businesses, our communities and our people, which is the main focus of the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 32-17(5):
IMPACT OF FUNDING REALLOCATION
FOR JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN
ON THE PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Junior kindergarten for four-year-olds is recognized across the country as one of the best ways to provide quality, free and optional care for our children. Junior kindergarten is especially beneficial for parents and caregivers in 10 of our smallest communities where no licenced child care exists. Junior kindergarten will provide young children with a hands-on play-based program offered in our schools to support their development and learning.

Since junior kindergarten was announced at the start of this session, some questions have been raised about how junior kindergarten will be funded. Mr. Speaker, as with all government programs, we must be fiscally responsible in how we make investments in important and necessary programs such as junior kindergarten. As previously stated,

the department will be re-profiling existing K to 12 school contribution funding in order to implement junior kindergarten. This re-profiled funding will come from readjusting the current K to 12 pupil-teacher ratio, or PTR, for communities that have more than 120 full-time students.

We chose this approach to ensure that our smallest communities do not experience a reduction in their overall funding for teacher staffing because of junior kindergarten. This is important because small communities already experience unique challenges that are not as common in our larger communities, like having one teacher teaching multiple grades in one classroom.

Mr. Speaker, the legislated territorial PTR is 16 to 1. Over the past several years, the K to 12 education system has been funded above this level by approximately \$11 million annually. This represents a territorial PTR of approximately 13 to 1. This means there is already flexibility that will allow education authorities to redirect funding to implement junior kindergarten without significantly affecting the K to 12 education program. We project that once junior kindergarten is fully implemented across the territory in 2016-2017, the territorial average PTR will remain under the legislated 16 to 1 and will be closer to 14.5 to 1.

As is to be expected in a territory with widely varying community sizes, the proposed changes will not impact all education authorities the same way. The two Yellowknife education authorities – Yellowknife Education District No. 1 and Yellowknife Catholic Schools – were projected to have their respective funding reduced in a way that would mean they, individually, would exceed the territorial average PTR level of 16 to 1. It is important to note that the Education Act speaks to PTR at a territorial level, not at an education authority level. But it is true that Yellowknife schools would have a greater challenge than other schools in implementing junior kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, in an effort to make the implementation of junior kindergarten a success in all of our communities, this government will commit to ensuring that the funding provided to each respective education authority meets or exceeds the territorial PTR level of 16 to 1. Anything above and beyond the 16 to 1 PTR level will be subsidized by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. This will ensure that the introduction of junior kindergarten does not threaten the success of our K to 12 education program. We will continue to work with our education partners to make the implementation of junior kindergarten a success in all our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to doing what is right for the children of this territory, and junior kindergarten is clearly the right thing to do. We all agree on that. This government is also committed

to operating in a fiscally responsible manner, because even doing the right thing costs money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON BUDGET PROCESS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are three weeks into what is our traditional annual six-week budget session. It's not one of my favourite activities, I must say. Our Finance Minister goes out there, he stands up in this House, he makes a budget address. We all go out in the Great Hall; we have a media scrum. They say, what do you think of the budget? What, like as if we didn't know, what was in the budget?

The way consensus government should work is that way before the budget address is given, we, as committee members, who oversee different departments of this government, have an input into the budget through business planning, through a review of those business plans and those main estimates before it ever gets to the floor of this House. However, on a \$1.6 billion budget, there are things that we would like to highlight, profile and give some enhancement to, which represents a very, very small fraction of the budget. I won't state the exact amount, but it's less than 1 percent of the whole budget.

To achieve that end, we are prepared to defer, hold up, stall this process so that we can make our point. My point is we have so many other ways to do that. I would seriously rather stand up here and devote an extra hour of question period on every department in the government and let the Minister stay there and answer the question to the benefit of the public so the public can know what the issues are.

What we do in Committee of the Whole, as you know, is we spend hours and hours and hours... I mean, even the media goes home. They don't even stay in the media booth when we go into Committee of the Whole. I mean, let's be honest.

I don't know; I'm a get 'er done kind of person. Not to take away from the hard work of some of my colleagues on this side of the House, but you know we can't add to the budget, and even if we could, we're not in a fiscal position to add to the budget right now. We know that, we all know that. Let's be real.

So if you have something to say, stand up and say it. If you've got a question to ask, ask the question, but this haggling over half of a percent of the total

\$1.6 billion operating budget, I just think we could be doing something better with our time.

If I had my way and it wouldn't offend the Members on this side of the House, I'd stand up and move a motion to accept the full budget as it stands. Let's get on with it. Let's talk about some things that are important to the people of the Northwest Territories, but this ain't happening in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
IMPROVING THE STUDENT
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How do you follow that Member's statement?

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, in support of this government's aggressive plan to increase our population base over the next couple of years, one must start to gaze into our future, and this future begins with our children, but more importantly those about to embark on their post-secondary education journey.

For years the Government of the Northwest Territories has praised its Student Financial Assistance Program as the key in supporting northern students' return to the NWT upon the completion of their post-secondary education.

So one must ask, if these various grants and competitive interest rate loans are so compelling, why then do so many of our students choose not to return to the Northwest Territories? The answer is relatively simple. We are no longer competitive as we once were and the rest of the world has become more aggressive at building what I call better mousetraps. Let me explain.

If we look at the basic grant of \$5,400 to \$8,600 a year a student receives, which is referred to as a non-repayable benefit to assist with the cost of tuition, books and travel, this would barely cover 60 percent of the post-secondary schools in today's dollars.

Now don't get me wrong, we are still talking about a large sum of money here, but when it truly costs most students from \$12,000 to \$35,000 a year to go to school, the premise of \$5,400 to \$8,600 falls into perspective rather quickly.

I know that repayable loans are available at rates of 1 percent below the Bank of Canada prime business rate, but keep in mind that our very own students, many who are in hard to find positions in our territory, are being wined and dined by private industry and other very creative jurisdictions around the world.

Many private industries and creative jurisdictions offer full repayment of student loans, offer one-time bonus situations, cars, home down payments, spousal hiring guarantee, free daycare, vacation travel allowances and bonus weeks of vacation, just to name a few.

Let me use one example to illustrate my point. So ask yourself, you're a student who goes to school for four years and gets a degree, you rack up a non-repayable benefit of \$21,600 and a repayable loan of \$20,000. Then you sit on the sideline waiting for a full-time position to open in the GNWT for six months, all the while picking up casual work not even remotely related to your field of study. You get a call that this full-time job is in a remote community with no housing and you have to get yourself there.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. DOLYNNY: Or this same student, headhunted for their marks and skill proficiency, is offered a hot market employment agreement and a signing bonus during their third year of school from a private company. This hot market agreement means they agree to go anywhere this company places them. Upon graduation, they are guaranteed a full-time job at comparable earnings of what they would have received in the Northwest Territories, is offered a clean slate for their outstanding NWT loans for a return of work service agreement of two years, is given a signing bonus of \$10,000 and two flights out a year anywhere in Canada and is placed in a province where the cost of living is 25 percent lower than that of NWT. Oh, and by the way, they are guaranteeing a job for your soon-to-be spouse as well.

The question is: What option would you choose?

These are the realities we face as a territory. Yes, at one time our non-repayable benefits were very attractive incentive for our students, but today we are facing pressures to stay competitive and a work that has lapped us many times over.

Clearly our HR department has work to do to keep our current academic students here in the Northwest Territories and it starts with what I consider a revamp of our SFA program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
POSITIONS FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dolynny did a great speech.

I believe, as well, that we need to increase our population with our students, the students who are out at post-secondary education.

In 1993 I returned back to the Northwest Territories after finishing my degree and I had a guaranteed job to come back to in the Northwest Territories. I have stayed here since then, but colleagues I went to school with had an opportunity to stay in the South and some of them have never come back.

We need to find jobs for our students who are coming back from post-secondary education. We need to find and set up interim positions for them, knowing when they are going into their last year of education that they will have a job coming back. That will draw them to come back to the Northwest Territories, find spouses and start to increase the population of the Northwest Territories.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, we need to support these students. We need to find them jobs. As we know, a lot of the vacant positions we've talked about over the last two weeks need skilled individuals like these students that we have. These students need our assistance.

As my colleague talked about, other jurisdictions are doing this. They are supporting them financially. We know that financially we are getting somewhere around \$25,000 per person, that comes to the Northwest Territories and stays here, through our federal funding agreement. So we need our students to come back and stay in the NWT. It's easy to draw them because they know how great it is here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard, and good luck.

---Laughter

The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DEHCHO LAND USE PLAN

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wanted to rise and talk about the population of the Deh Cho First Nations. I wanted to talk about the commitment of the federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories to work with the Dehcho First Nations to develop a regional land use plan.

People might be aware the Dehcho has been working towards advancing work towards the completion of a land use plan for some time, since 2001. The committee is a tripartite committee and it's trying to balance the efforts towards setting the stage for development and then balancing it out with conservation mechanisms to ensure that we have a legacy at the end of the day for future generations.

Also what's important is the region or tribal alliance comprises about 10 communities. There's a common language that links all those communities at the same time. There is a cultural affinity of people working with each other, intermarriages, families, just a kinship and culture that profiles the region such as the Deh Cho.

In 2001 the Government of Canada and the GNWT signed an interim measures agreement that set forth to establish a tripartite process. Prominent was the traditional land use and occupancy map that was laid out as the foundation by the elders of the day.

Elders such as Joaa Boots, Paul White, Gabe and Mary Cazon and Leo Norwegian, to name a few, worked on that land use plan. They believed in the work they were doing to ensure that the past was never forgotten. The elders passionately laid their imprints of traditional knowledge which is encapsulated now into the Deh Gah Got'ie language as Nahe Nahodhe gondie.

Through the work of all parties, including this government, a draft land use plan was developed in 2006. That plan was rejected by both governments because there wasn't a balance. Consequently, the federal government pushed to eliminate the Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee altogether. However, a last minute effort to restore the work was put together through a terms of reference, which now guides the process to revise the regional land use plan.

My purpose in highlighting this is to point out all parties agreed to work together to ensure that work continues. I hope that that work will continue and the good relationship will also at least guide the process. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT FINANCIAL SHARED SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, in the wisdom of this government, they developed a unit called shared services for financial transactions and procurement in the wake of implementing the new financial system.

When the government announced this initiative, they said it would be a positive benefit that would flow from this model such as the department being able to focus on core business and people will be able to receive high quality and timely services. They also said employees will benefit from a shared service organization by clearly having the career progression path developed for them and they can enjoy special new skills. Employees' contributions are critical to the success of the services, and the

employees will be trained to match these needs for the future.

But instead, I'm hearing from places like Yellowknife and certainly Fort Simpson where several dozen of these real employee-shared services are being affected and the latest reorganization out the door. Many of them are only being given a few hours to sometimes make life-altering decisions on where they will go by this government. Certainly their being affected really hurts them very deeply.

Approximately half of these, who have a quarter century of dedicated service in this government, were notified in writing three weeks before Christmas. I'd like to know who that Grinch was and talk to them. They were told that this government, even though you have a quarter century of dedication to the government, will only search for possibilities for you for eight weeks. Boy, is that disheartening. After 10, 20 or 25 years of dedication, it's all boiled down to an eight-week search to try to find a placement for you.

A few weeks ago we heard the words from the mouth of the Finance Minister that this government is looking for 571 positions. They're actively searching. Well, my goodness, here they are. Look no further. However, most of these people were given grim, if not pathetic, choices or options and they're scrambling to decide how to put their life together and save some dignity. Some have been given all this on short notice, then others were told that they have short-term training, but of course, there's no promise of a job.

The truth is this is a terrible way of treating people who have many decades of service to this government and to the territory as a whole. Many employees would describe it as they now have carpet burns because it was pulled out from under them so quickly.

I want to finish by pointing out some of the words highlighted to me in a particular constituent's own voice. They said it feels like they've been tossed out of a plane without a parachute, but told to flap their arms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POPULATION GROWTH INITIATIVES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, like some of my colleagues, I want to address something mentioned in the Finance Minister's budget address, and that's the government's plan to attract and retain 2,000 new residents to and in the NWT over the next five years.

Youth are a very important segment of our NWT society. I hear that said all the time in this Assembly. When we're looking for skilled workers

for the GNWT, who better to serve our residents than those who have grown up here and know the issues and the culture?

The GNWT has had varying degrees of success in attracting and retaining our youth to the public service. There are some wonderful successes and I'm looking at many of them here in the House. Over half of the Members of this Assembly are homegrown. But there have also been significant losses as our bright and talented youth are denied in the North, take up positions in the South and then are lost to the NWT.

The government has to review the practices we've used over the years, look back to see what particular strategies have been successful in the past and that we no longer use. In years past the GNWT had liaison workers on several university campuses, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan, to mention two. Those people were there to specifically look after NWT students. It helped keep them in school, keep them in touch with family and, yes, keep them in touch with jobs at home while they were away from home.

One of the biggest reasons our young people return to live and work in the NWT is because family is here. We need to ensure that the connection to family is maintained while they're away at school.

We have considerable data about students available to us through Education, Culture and Employment through the SFA system. SFA currently tracks students in terms of loans, when they're due, when they're in arrears and so on. Surely we can also track them for employment purposes. We can know their field of study, when they will be finished their schooling, and match them to job vacancies in the GNWT public service at graduation.

Creating mentoring relationships has proven to be another effective strategy for supporting new young staff in a variety of workplace settings. It currently exists in both nursing and teaching and it allows us to hire our smart, knowledgeable but inexperienced young people and mentor them into a position that called for experience when it was vacant.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: I've mentioned but a few of the tactics that we should be putting in place if we're serious about keeping Northerners in the North.

The Finance Minister has said that the government is working on some things already to accomplish the 2,000 in five years goal. The Minister has today been given a number of suggestions by me and others which can be incorporated into whatever plan the government has. Members need to hear just what that plan is and we need to hear it sooner

rather than later. I look forward to critiquing that plan, hopefully in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INVESTING IN NORTHERN RESIDENTS

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the budget address the Minister of Finance states that the most effective way we can grow our revenues is to grow our economy and our population. He also states that over the next five years he wants to grow the NWT population by 2,000 people.

I also agree that our economy does need to grow and develop, but I also have a suggestion here that maybe over the next five years we invest that into the people of the Northwest Territories by investing in their education and training in the small communities and the regions where a lot of the economic things are happening. Right now we're not meeting the economic agreements with our northern workforce in some of the diamond industry as well as the oil and gas, and this is an opportunity for the next five years to train our northern residents so that they become taxpayers and we get some of those tax revenues back. Also, there's an opportunity that some of these guys will have to go off social assistance, so we will be saving some money there that can go into other areas to the people who do really need it. It will also reduce poverty because, obviously, healthy people, educated people who are trained and in the workforce will become taxpayers, and it will also boost the economy of the people in their communities and in the North.

It all leads to a goal of a self-sustaining Northwest Territories where we have everybody in the NWT working, being a taxpayer and being a member of society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LESSONS FROM A DECREASING POPULATION

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT is a fantastic place to live. People that were born here love it and visitors who come for a few days end up spending a lifetime. Yes, some people are leaving, but my sense is that many are leaving reluctantly.

But an increase in population should not be a goal on its own. We should not look at every resident as a cash machine or as part of a funding formula. Rather, a decreasing population is an indicator. It shows we are failing to meet our people's needs.

First of all, spending to build our numbers by 2,000 over five years is a waste of resources. Most provinces, especially our neighbours, as we've heard today, are desperate for workers and they offer a much lower cost of living, job and travel opportunities, proximity to family, and the option to base there and work here.

In recent years this government has invested big money in large and costly infrastructure, gambling that mines and power lines will be attractive to provide more jobs and sustain our economy. Clearly, it is not working. Will we learn something here?

The current mines cannot meet their northern hiring targets. Every qualified Northerner who wants to work in a mine already is. Most remaining people are either not qualified or they don't want to work on a two-in/two-out rotation, and mines do not attract people to live here. Increasingly, workers fly in and out again.

Syphoning off key program dollars to mega-infrastructure projects does not serve. In contrast, my colleagues today have made many practical suggestions to address real needs with real solutions that will encourage people to stay in the North. If daycare was affordable, people would stay and work and pay taxes. If power and heating bills were affordable, people would stay, invest, raise families. If our social safety net actually helped people get out of poverty, they would thrive. If we invested in educating versus just training them for entry-level mining positions, people would be engaged. With jobs and business opportunities in their home communities, they would choose to stay.

Let's get real and start by getting our house in order first. Let's build on our strengths, our vibrant communities, our progressive diverse cultures and beautiful northern land, and let's restore our quality of life. Let's invest in a society that treats every resident with respect, reduces our dependence on expensive imported food and energy and is a responsible caretaker of the northern land that is our home.

Mr. Speaker, the population issue will look after itself. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERNERS AS A PRIORITY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have also been thinking about the question in the budget statement where the Minister wanted to look at how we increase our population. Actually, the number was 2,000 in five years. When you look at it from an economic standpoint, the less amount of population we have in the North we get a decrease in our revenue. So, to increase our revenue, we need to

have more people coming into the Northwest Territories.

I thought about that and I said to my colleagues here, first things first. Let's get our northern people, who are trained and educated in the Northwest Territories, up to a level where we know that once they finish Aurora College or some education institution in the Northwest Territories they are actually guaranteed to go into a path of their career choosing. Let's put them into schooling where they know they're supported.

We still have nine communities without full-time nurses. We have to focus on them. You know, what makes them go to school. Actually, this week is Aurora College Week. Those students are going to school under some pretty tough challenges, as we already heard from the past meetings with Aurora College just at the Yellowknife Campus.

When you look at this whole situation, you learn a lot from animals. You know, what attracts the animals to a place where they can eat, live and continue on around that area. It's the environment. What type of environment do we have in the Northwest Territories that would attract people to the Northwest Territories? For example, in Quebec they have a \$7 a day subsidy for families with child care. We should be seriously looking at something like that, and coming together to a think-tank and putting out some suggestions and asking the people in the Northwest Territories what we can do to attract people, attract Northerners to come back. Is it...(inaudible)...our fishing, our trapping, the oil and gas? Whatever it is, we need to know how to attract these people.

I'd like to say, let's get our house in order by first tracking our own people to come back north and stay here and raise their families.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POPULATION GROWTH INITIATIVES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also join my colleagues on this theme day today on population growth initiatives.

As I mentioned earlier this week, we do have to do a lot of things different to try to get our people to stay here in the North. One of the things that we really need to do is find a way to keep our cost of living down in the territory. As any Northerner knows, the cost of living here in the North is very great, and I believe that's why a lot of people from the South just come up here to work and fly back every two weeks.

Over the last week I believe some of the mining companies have made some positive changes as they work with the government to find ways to encourage people to stay here in the North, to work

here and live here in the North as they work in the diamond mines.

We also have other opportunities that this government could partake of, and that's filling a lot of the positions that need to be filled here in the Northwest Territories. We have a lot of people that are going to university and college down south. We have to encourage those people to come back, work in the summers, make sure they're very familiar with the positions they want to take on once they graduate, and ensure that they know that those positions are available to them once they do graduate university or college.

As I mentioned earlier this week, we also have to increase our infrastructure in a lot of the communities. Yes, most of the regional centres do have facilities for recreation, yet in the small communities it's very challenging. I know we do have the infrastructure funding available to communities, but I believe that over the next couple of years we have to increase those funds to ensure that communities can build what they need in the communities to attract Northerners and the people to come and work in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Bouchard.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Wally Schumann, a good friend of mine and president of the Hay River Metis Association. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Bob Wilson, a long-standing member of the Weledeh riding. Welcome to the House. I'd also like to recognize a couple of hardworking Pages, Linnea Stephenson and Harvey Fells, and thanks to all of the Pages that are serving us here today.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge Mr. Wally Schumann, who is also the owner of Poison Painting. It's good to see him. As well, I wish to acknowledge Mr. Bob Wilson who is a good friend and certainly a dedicated Yellowknifer and an amazing photographer as well. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, would like to take this opportunity to thank the Pages and recognize two

from my constituency, Mr. Ryan Dumkee and young Mr. Ian Gauthier, who are here and their dad is also here with them as their chaperone. Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize a Page from Yellowknife South, Carson Asmundson. He's been here a few times before, and I also want to recognize all the Pages that are here today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Welcome everybody here in the public gallery today.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 146-17(5): ENHANCING PRIVATE SECTOR HIRING

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. We're having somewhat of a theme day today on how we're going to grow our population, retain and grow our population here in the Northwest Territories. I've been kind of talking about that pretty much since the beginning of session on a day-by-day basis. I didn't have a Member's statement on that today, but I do have some questions.

When we talk about raising the population and we talk about what this government can do, we've been very focused on how we can get NWT residents into the public service, but not everybody can work for the Government of the Northwest Territories, not everyone can work for the government. We also need to think about people who have skills and interests that would lead them into working either for small business or for big industry, or working in the private sector in general.

I'd like to ask the Minister of ITI what initiatives that he's aware of have been undertaken by the GNWT to work with the private sector to enhance their hiring capacity of Northerners. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories has the Come Make Your Mark Campaign and I know the Member spoke of working in partnership with industry and businesses across the Northwest Territories and that's integral, and thus attracting 2,000 people here over the next five years is something that we have to continue to do. Through

the Come Make Your Mark Campaign, we had partnered with over 60 businesses and organizations around the Northwest Territories in our efforts to promote the Northwest Territories as a place to live and work and we will continue to focus our efforts on that partnership model. Again, it's very important that that happens. We also have been in steady contact with the operating diamond mines here in the Northwest Territories. Work continues to focus our efforts on how to attract people to live here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That's very interesting to hear. I personally was not aware that the Come Make Your Mark program had worked with 60 businesses. On an ongoing basis, I'd like to ask the Minister what is the vehicle for continuing that liaison with the private sector when it comes to recruiting and retaining people in the North. Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: It would be through that campaign, and we do need to focus our efforts on that campaign, again, working with the operating mines here in the Northwest Territories and the fact that we are going to require a workforce if we are going to open seven to nine new mines in the next decade, we are going to need more of a workforce here. So it's important that we continue to work with the mining industry on efforts to get people to live here in the Northwest Territories through the Cabinet committee of Employment and Economic Development chaired by Minister Miltenberger. We are begging, again, a dialogue in earnest with the mining companies to see what we can do to attract people to live and work in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: It's also been mentioned in this House, suggestions to the government of where we can hire summer students from university who can then get some experience in the area that they're studying in, but I'd like to ask, and again, that works really well in the public service, but I'd like to ask the Minister what is in place right now for the government to partner with the private sector so that the private sector could also have the ability to identify the post-secondary students and so on who could come to work in their businesses. There used to be a program, and I'm not sure of what the status of that is now, where the government would actually cost share part of the wages for summer students. I'd like to ask what the status of that program is. Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Workforce development falls under the mandate of Education, Culture and Employment, and certainly the Member is right. I think going forward it's incumbent upon the government to work together, all the departments, all the Ministers and this government to come up with a game plan. I've heard many Members talk

about our young folks that are out at school and trying to get them back here to the Northwest Territories and not lose them to opportunities in the South. That's something that's very important to me and I know it's important to the government. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, I understand that any such a program would not fall under the Minister's mandate. That would actually fall under Education, Culture and Employment, but I'd like to just ask the Minister is he aware that there still is an ongoing summer program where the GNWT partners with the private sector to create employment for students? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you. Last summer the Government of the Northwest Territories hired over 300, I believe, summer students. We have had programs in the past and I believe they were partially funded through programs through the federal government, but I could get that level of detail for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

QUESTION 147-17(5):
STUDENT FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today many have spoken about creating some real solutions here on making the NWT a more attractive place to stay, and especially for our own future, and that future is our own students. Our NWT students are clearly not returning to the North, as we've heard, for a variety of reasons and I think it's an important thing to bring forward here.

There are many questions as to why and where we should start to look at this issue. So for today we will start and I'd like to start with the Student Financial Assistance Program. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

We have seen small increases and minor changes over the years for our post-secondary students to access the basic grant or what is referred to as a non-repayable benefit of our SFA program.

Can the Minister indicate if his department recognizes our current shortfall of competitiveness and is willing to consider a full review of the SFA program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that there are challenges

within our Northwest Territories, along with other jurisdictions, as well, but as the Member indicated in his Member's statement, we have one of the best SFA programs throughout the country. We improve our programming every now and then, changing our existing policies and enhancing through the review. We just conducted a review of SFA and part of the recommendations brought to our attention was some of the challenges that we're faced with. So those are the discussions that we need to have as we move forward.

As indicated earlier, I believe it was yesterday, that within our income support at that time, but SFA reviews are always undertaken and if we need to further re-evaluate our situation, we need to do that. I'm working closely with the Department of Health, other departments and re-profiling all the data that's available on the students so we can have that compiled information and attract those students back to the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: Can the Minister indicate how his department and the Department of HR work together to try to find new ways of enhancing our student financial program, especially within the recruitment framework of the Department of HR? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We recently had a meeting with a newly established committee in the employment development area and that's my portfolio as well. So I have to work closely with HR where once we identify these students – obviously we can't mention names because of confidentiality – we can, based on the area of the studies and the year that they're in, working closely with the Human Resources department, what kind of jobs are available for a fourth year student or if they're completing their diploma programming, if we can slide those individuals – there was a discussion here about direct appointments, enhancing the direct appointments. Those are the discussions that we are currently having with all of the departments that are here today. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. I appreciate the Minister's comments on that. The basic grant or the non-repayable benefit of the SFA has a wide range of thresholds. In some cases this threshold creates a disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who qualify for SFA funding.

Is this Minister committed in seeing that the disparity of thresholds are minimized for a more fair and transparent process? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Part of the process of why it was established as different and diverse programming that we have, the threshold in various regions in communities is to attract those individuals into small, isolated communities. Most students that are graduating are university, post-secondary, college. So we can attract those

individuals to the remote communities where they are very challenged because of a lack of job opportunities.

There are a variety of ways of dealing with the remissible loan in other venues that we have, but that's the very reason why we want to attract those individuals into the small, isolated communities.

Again, there needs to be a review of that through these departments that we've been talking about just recently, but that's the discussions that we're going to be having. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister offering his comments and thoughts on that. Earlier today the Minister indicated, and just now, that they are working on a review within a framework of a number other departments.

Can the Minister indicate to the House here when Members on this side of the House might be able to see the findings of this review. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Like I said, we had one particular meeting with the newly established committee and it's very preliminary at this point. My department is compiling all of the information on those particular students, over 1,400 students that are out in the post-secondary and their fields of interest and the year they're in and compiling that with the HR. They have their own data. It is quite a large amount that we need to work with. So, once all that information is compiled between the departments, we will be presenting to the standing committee in due time. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 148-17(5):
PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. I'd like to continue on with students, but I guess I'm a little annoyed with his statements today in the House about the junior kindergarten being funded by the pupil-teacher ratio. I guess my first question is where this 16 to 1 pupil-teacher ratio came from, because that's not what I'm hearing in the community. The community wants more teachers, more assistants. Where does this number come from?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This ratio 16 to 1 has always been there. It's part of our legislation. We've been working with that with

the school boards throughout the years. At the same time, we've been providing an additional \$11 million so it can be based at 13 to 1 on the average throughout the Northwest Territories. It is through the legislation that was passed through this House, so that's what we continuously work with throughout the years.

MR. BOUCHARD: It's not that I don't support junior kindergarten, it's the fact that how many times can this government use pupil-teacher ratios as an excuse to download more things to the DEAs.

When will there be additional funds added to the DEAs so that they can implement these programs that they keep downloading to them?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: As I stated in this House earlier, through our engagement with the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative, early childhood development, the discussions that we've had, engagement with the general public, and education renewal and innovation, we've been hearing from the general public, the parents, the grandparents, the educators that we have to think innovatively within our department. We have to think strategically how we can deliver the most effective programming in the community schools. That's one area that we felt the PTRs, which under legislation are 16 to 1, so we figured we can access that through the work with the education authorities. This is an area that we are currently accessing to provide the quality junior kindergarten programming into our school system. It will benefit those 10 communities that do not have licenced child care programming. Those are just some of the areas that we've been told by parents to pursue it, and we are pursuing it.

MR. BOUCHARD: Again, I am not against junior kindergarten. I am just wondering that this money and the fact that we have these hardworking teachers and people in our public education system that are trying to do the work but they keep getting downloaded that more and more things have to be done with less money, but they're strung out already.

When are we actually going to increase the budgets and figure out the formulas to these DEAs?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Through the education renewal innovation we are going to look at the overall formula funding for our educational partners as well. We've been discussing this at the early stages back in 2007 until today, how we fund the school boards, how we fund the school programming, and based on the needs of the communities. This is an area that we've been told that we need to seriously look at formula funding to our school system. Currently it's based on enrolment, and now we've been told why couldn't it be based on base plus and go from there. Those are some of the areas we are contemplating with our education partners. Once we develop an action

plan over the summer on education renewal, those are some of the highlights that will be addressed through the business planning process.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Yes, I guess, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to get some of the questions answered, I guess. I just don't understand how pupil-teacher ratios can keep being the excuse for more programs being added to these schools and district educations without any additional money. I'm just wondering when the department will actually get some more money into that area.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We have to deal with the overall GNWT funding that's been allocated to the school boards. With that, obviously, there is a surplus of over \$8 million. Somehow we need to think outside the box and strategically how to best invest into our educational system. It is GNWT funding overall, and as we go through the business planning process, this means that as we go through, we've identified several areas of interest investment such as we did with the wage top-up. Over \$511 million that we're going to move forward with the new money once the budget's approved here. Every year we go through this, and I, as the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, will continue to push what's best for the children of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 149-17(5):
DEHCHO LAND USE PLAN

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I kind of broke rank with my colleagues, but I wanted to ask the question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in terms of explaining the role of the Government of the Northwest Territories in working on the Dehcho Land Use Plan. The reason why I ask that is I think this government has a public interest to ensure that things are progressing at the same time milestones are achieved but, at the same time, explain to the public in terms of the involvement of the GNWT.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for the question. As a government we are very supportive of land use plans. We have land use plans with the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, the Tlicho, and we've been working with the Dehcho on the Dehcho Land Use Plan. We've signed a bilateral terms of reference with the grand chief where we have been working together without prejudice to find ways to resolve some very complex land issues, and we're very supportive of the Dehcho Land Use Plan going forward. As I said before, every time I meet with Minister Valcourt I

press the need for appointing a Minister's special representative for the Dehcho, and also a federal representative for the Land Use Planning Advisory Commission that's working on the plan. We fully participate, so we're looking forward to having a Dehcho Land Use Plan very soon.

MR. NADLI: Part of the ongoing process of negotiations was the concept of the Dehcho resource management authority where a regional structure will be established involving all people within the Deh Cho. On that basis, I know it would be a critical piece in terms of how it is that the land use plan could stand and at the same time be implemented and become operational. I wanted to ask the Minister if that indeed is the case that all parties are striving towards.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I don't want to be talking out of school here because we're still going through different processes. The Dehcho are going through their process; we're going through our process. But I think we just have to be careful here. We are talking about such an authority, but I think we have to make sure that the understandings and definitions of what that authority will be are consistent. I can say that we are discussing that.

MR. NADLI: In the past this government has been very supportive of regional councils that involve municipal governments and First Nations governments, and I know that the Northwest Territories has regional district administrative centres throughout the NWT, including the Dehcho.

Can the Premier explain how it is that perhaps that could be very consistent and almost a parallel process with First Nations' aspirations towards self-government?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As part and parcel of self-government negotiations, I think wherever we are negotiating, governance is a discussion that we have in any negotiations that we have, and I think the leaders in the Northwest Territories have been very creative, and I think that as we see more and more self-government agreements are negotiated I think we are going to see much more of that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: My last question is: Would the Minister agree that regional administrative centres could become regional self-government models?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: There are three negotiating parties at the table, and we have to have some consistency across the Northwest Territories, but we do have a regional administrative system already in the Northwest Territories, so I expect that that's something that could be negotiated, I would think.

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

QUESTION 150-17(5):
AFFECTED EMPLOYEE POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I raised the issue yesterday about direct appointments, and my view is it's very important to create them in a transparent manner. At no time, of course, did I say I was against direct appointments, but it's simply based on the transparency of them. In my Member's statement I certainly spoke about two dozen shared services employees that have been shown the door by this government in its reorg. Now is an opportunity for the Premier to start using his direct appointment authority in an open, transparent, and maybe even a reasonable way.

I would ask the Premier, would he be willing to take all the names of the two dozen shared services employees who've been shown the door by this government, and use his authority at the Cabinet table to appoint these folks through direct appointments so their jobs aren't lost after they've dedicated themselves in some cases 10, 20 and 30 years to this public service and are feeling as if they got the cold shoulder.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have various processes in this government, some of which we've negotiated through a collective bargaining process, and whenever there's a change in organization or a change in approach, there's a process that we have to follow in terms of filling positions. We also have an Affected Employee Policy whereby affected employees have priority on existing positions. I'd be very surprised if there was as much of a problem as the Member is suggesting, so I'd be willing to hear where he sees the problem is happening.

MR. HAWKINS: Many of these employees have 10, 20 and 25 years of experience. They don't meet their numbers, so in other words, they're too young to retire, they don't have enough years in the public service to qualify, so even if they wanted to take early retirement, they don't qualify. Some are being offered these eight-month training programs and told good luck after that. There have been a few who have been able to hit their numbers and said the only option for them is to retire, obviously.

I'm asking the Premier, would he be willing to use his authority at the Cabinet table to direct appoint these employees that aren't just Yellowknife employees, there are Fort Simpson employees, they are territorial employees and they're certainly family people who pay taxes. Here's an opportunity when we have 571 jobs that the government is actively looking at – 24 people only really represent 4 percent of that workforce – here's an opportunity for the Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The Member is correct; 24 people were affected by shared services, 20 of them have jobs. There are four that have still not been placed, one in the Deh Cho and three in Yellowknife. I fully expect that they will all find suitable, reasonable employment consistent with what they are doing now.

MR. HAWKINS: Would the Premier be willing to ensure that these people are guaranteed a job somewhere in the government if, after their training experience, there is no job opening up for them?

I can tell you some of these folks have been doing jobs like they've been doing today for 20 or 25 years, and their jobs have been reclassified and they have been told to go reapply for them. By the way, they don't qualify for interviews anymore. That's part of the problem here, so I'm asking what guarantees will this Premier provide this sector and what message is he sending by just letting the process roll out by itself with no protection. It sends the wrong message to our territory and certainly the public service. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As a government, we look after all our employees. Our employees are our most valuable asset, so I think it's very misleading to suggest that we are throwing these employees under the bus. As a matter of fact, we do have an Affected Employee Policy. We will be placing these employees. We have told all of them that they will find jobs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier saying in this House – and I'd like him to be crystal clear about this – after the affected employees are sent off for re-programming, retraining or reclassification, whatever you want to call it, will he guarantee them positions after this? They are told they are out on their own after they have been retrained and good luck. That's the message they are being told. The Premier is trying to tell me something different in this House. I want him to be very clear. Will these employees be offered employment after their training program has been done? Thank you very much.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Our government is not recognized as one of the 100 best employees in Canada because we aren't looking after employees. If the Member has a list of employees affected that aren't being offered jobs and are being shown the door, give it to us and we'll fix the problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 151-17(5):
2014-2015 TAX REVENUE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask some questions of the Minister of Finance today. I'd like to try to make some sense of the budget numbers that we've been given. I'd like to try to make some sense of the answers the Minister gave me and Mr. Dolynny yesterday. I'm hearing mixed messages. I'm trying desperately to understand what the Minister is telling me.

I would like to refer the Minister again to page 5-9 of the budget, the revenue summary under the Department of Finance specifically to the personal income and the corporate income tax numbers. It's about \$158 million estimated for the 2014-15 budget year. The 2013-14 budget estimates slightly more in revenues; it's about \$165 million.

The Minister, yesterday, stated personal income tax and corporate income tax revenues will be about \$30 million short, and he said that in the budget address. So my first question to the Minister is to ask the Minister to please tell me in dollars, how much personal income tax and corporate income tax revenues are expected for the 2014-15 budget, and please include the anticipated loss of \$30 million. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That sounds like a written question to me, so I'll take it as notice. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 152-17(5):
AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions today following questions I had earlier this week for the Minister of... Actually, I'll ask questions of the Minister of Health and Social Services.

I have a question with regard to next week and the report we will be getting from the Auditor General. I just want to get an update from the Minister of Health and Social Services where we are with that update. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I haven't seen that audit and I won't see that audit until pretty much the same time Members do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, I was a little confused there with my first question. With the government response that was tabled in this House in 2011, there were some immediate actions that could have been taken. Has the report itself been updated since 2011? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I was one of the Members who actually participated in the review of the child and family services delivered by the Government of the Northwest Territories in the last Assembly and I am aware of all those recommendations. Since I've become the Minister, I have had an opportunity to follow up with the department to see where we are on a number of those recommendations. There has been a lot of work in the background being done, but there is a lot of work that still needs to be done and, obviously, we still need to continue to make improvements. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: I would like to ask the Minister, moving forward and looking at what's going to come out of the Auditor General's report, I assume it will be a lot of the same things as the recommendations the committee brought forth and some of the actions needed.

Has the Minister, in preparation for this audit report that's coming out next month, put aside any fiscal dollars to address some of those issues specifically in our small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I think we actually need to see the audit to report first and see what it says and what the recommendations are. I will certainly work with committee to find out or put in place regional responses to those so we can actually improve and continue to provide high quality services to our residents in the area of child and family services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 153-17(5):
FOREST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. I would like to start by noting yesterday we saw the GNWT sign the MOU on industry development with representatives from Fort Resolution. This appears to be a very positive development.

Could the Minister outline what he sees as the next steps in creating sustainable forestry in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's question. I do

appreciate him sending me a note and giving me a chance to open up my binder to double check my briefing notes.

I agree with him that the signing yesterday is a good news story. That signing yesterday was a political agreement. By the end of this month, we will work out with Fort Resolution the time to sign the actual formal detailed forest management agreement that lays out the 25-year agreement, the details pertaining to the areas and the harvesting and all the species to be harvested and such.

With that document and hopefully one to come from Fort Providence in the very near future, then we will have the basis for both the business interests as represented by Aurora Wood Pellets and then the three or four Aboriginal governments, the Metis, the Deninu K'ue Band in Fort Resolution and the First Nations Dehcho and Metis in Fort Providence to be able to start putting their business plans together, their harvest plans. With assistance from ourselves, the federal government and other supports, we are going to work with the communities to help them set up their business.

Aurora Wood Pellets anticipates trying to break down by June. The intent is to hopefully be harvesting trees by next winter. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. That sounds like a very interesting project. I'd love to hear another announcement before the end of this session as we had yesterday with the Fort Providence people.

Some people are wondering how a pellet mill will compete with pellet mills in BC and Alberta that seem to have cheaper power, cheaper labour and practically free access to sawdust from onsite lumber mills. So, basically if we're going to export wood pellets – and that's basically what I've been hearing – what is our competitive advantage here? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: In fact, down south, from my understanding, at one point the use of wood waste was considered to be a benefit to the wood pellet producers. It was seen to help the lumber mills manage all their excess and waste, but now the recognition has come that this biomass has value and so the issue of free sawdust and free slabs and waste for pellet mills is now a thing of the past. In fact, there is a fairly high rate of attrition.

We will look at stumpage fees. Aurora Wood Pellets will negotiate their arrangement with their respective Aboriginal governments or business interests representing Aboriginal governments in terms of the wood product. The owner of Aurora Wood Pellets is convinced – and he's doing his own business case – that he is going to be investing many, many millions of his own dollars that he can provide a product in the Northwest Territories with Northwest Territories trees at a 20 to 30 percent

lower rate than we're currently paying for products being shipped in from the South. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for the details, Mr. Minister, that sounds really positive. Stumpage fees might have been the key there. I appreciate that competitive advantage is working out on paper and hopefully it does in practice.

A wood pellet plant on the South Slave grid would take advantage of our local green hydro power and presumably use local biomass energy for drying the wood before it is pelletized to the extent that it needs to be done.

Has the Minister considered that this would make NWT produced pellets even greener than the pellets we currently import from Alberta and BC?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, I've had numerous discussions with the owner of the wood pellet project as well as the Ministerial Energy Coordinating Committee, ENR and NTPC looking at, as the Member has indicated, using some of their own product and the waste heat to both possibly generate power as well as capture the heat so they can dry all the pellets and put that heat to use.

As well, with our net metering policy that is now being put into place, we would now have the capacity to potentially put back power into the line. If it's located in Enterprise, then it will become a hub close to the railhead right on the main highway. We also see a very significant future potential with biodiesels and biofuels where wood is converted not just to wood pellets but to different fuels. That would be a whole additional market for this plant. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again to the Minister. It sounds more and more positive. We know that our forestry officials are highly qualified, so I assume we will be applying best practices as we develop our forest management plans.

The logical next question is Forest Stewardship Council certification is now the best known standard for sustainable forest products.

Will our wood pellets be able to take advantage of the FSC certification as we market them both here in the NWT and abroad? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The proponent is a very astute businessman. He has, throughout, immersed himself in this industry. He's had his contacts with export markets as well as in the North. As well, we will be looking to support him and encouraging him as a government, as we have, in terms of building his product and making sure that all the required classifications are there that

would make this an absolutely premium product. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 154-17(5):
POPULATION GROWTH INITIATIVES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I want to ask Mr. Ramsay about the goal of attracting workers to at least 2,000 over the next five years, according to the budget address by the Minister of Finance. As Minister of ITI, what plans does he have in place, with regard to working with other department officials, to attract workers into the Northwest Territories?

Yesterday we watched a short video of the people up in Yellowknife, Norman Wells. Shotogotine people and life on the land. We also saw a clip in 1957 where there was oil being worked on in Norman Wells. Any kind of economic development attracted workers to come to the Northwest Territories. Do they come for the economic reasons, the cultural reasons or the social reasons? What types of plans are in place to attract workers to stay in the Northwest Territories?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Similar to my response to Mrs. Groenewegen earlier, the government has the Come Make Your Mark Campaign. We work with over 60 organizations and businesses around the Northwest Territories in an effort to attract people to live and work in the Northwest Territories.

I mentioned this previously, and I'll mention it again, we are only going to get somewhere if we continue to partner with industry, to partner with communities, to see to it that we put our best effort to attract folks to live and work in the Northwest Territories. We believe we are on the verge of some very exciting economic prospects here in the Northwest Territories. We certainly want to put in our best effort in trying to attract people to live and work in the NWT. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Is there some type of think-tank that his department is considering to attract or bring in people and keep people in the North here? I want to ask, is there any type of think-tank that will look at all kind of options, how we keep people and attract people back who have left?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We have the Employment and Economic Development Subcommittee of Cabinet. Certainly, the discussion has started here. We have reached out to the mining companies who do work here in the Northwest Territories, to engage them preliminarily. We will have a working

group as we go forward. We also want to hear from Regular Members. You will hear us talk, as a government, much more as an initiative to get these 2,000 people here over the next five years. We will reach out to Regular Members over the coming months to try to engage them and get their feedback on how they think we can deliver on that effort to get 2,000 people to come to the Northwest Territories over the next five years. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: In my hands here, I have the stats from the students who are going to Aurora College from the Sahtu. The numbers shown here are 81 people who have taken some sort of post-secondary education. How do we track these 81 people? Some of them have left the North and there are reasons why they left the North. I have a young man in Vancouver who is a classical cartoonist who has a hard time finding work in the Northwest Territories. The only places he will find work is California, Montreal. There is no way that our government will attract that career, so he has to be in Vancouver. That's where the hot market is.

I want to ask Mr. Ramsay, is he and his department, subcommittee, going into Aurora College and asking them what do we need to do to keep you here rather than going down south to finish your education and work down there and not come back? What type of attractions do we need to have to keep you here in the North?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We have to get folks back here to the Northwest Territories. Certainly in travels even to a place like Vancouver where we launched Aurora Capital of the World campaign months ago, I ran into a couple of young people who had left the Northwest Territories and were working in Vancouver. We need to try to get these young folks back to the Northwest Territories. I think all Members can help in that effort. If you know of young people in the South and try to connect them to opportunities here in the Northwest Territories, that's something all of us should be doing.

Also, work continues on getting these statistics together through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. We understand the Member is concerned. We share his concern and certainly we have to help connect the opportunities for our students we have at post-secondary in the South to opportunities here in the North. We fully intend to do that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has his department or any of his colleagues done a survey as to why people are leaving the Northwest Territories? Is it the high cost of living? Is it the infrastructure? Is it programs and services? Once you get that survey looked at, then you can see the problems and solutions. If it is the high cost of

living, then you know we have to do some work. Is it child care? Is it training? Whatever it is, then we can unravel the issue.

Has the department done some type of survey on why people are exiting out of the Northwest Territories?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Over the past several years, there have been surveys through industry. I know some of the mining companies have done surveys of mine employees. Some of that work has been done, but it's a variety of different reasons. Not each reason is the same for each individual's circumstances. We could try to get some of that information collected on survey results that have happened. I can't speak for the Minister of Human Resources, but perhaps there has been some work done through Human Resources, I'm not sure. We'll have to look at compiling some of that information for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

QUESTION 155-17(5):
VACANT GNWT POSITIONS
IN MACKENZIE DELTA

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, we, as a government, need to do a better job filling the positions we have available at the moment. I would like to ask the Minister of Human Resources for an update. It's been brought to my attention since October 31st, we have a number of positions to be filled in my riding. I would like an update on these positions as of today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have determined where all the vacancies are by all departments, but at this time I don't have the community-by-community breakdown of the status. I know that we have moved to fill quite a few of the positions, both positions where we are trying to staff and positions filled by casuals, but at this time I don't have specifics as to what has occurred in each community. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I know it can be a challenge in the small communities to deal with housing.

Has the Minister and the department been working with the communities to ensure we fill those positions in my riding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, the department is working through the departments. We are doing the Workforce Planning Strategy. We are looking at the Regional Recruitment Strategy that is targeted directly at positions outside of Yellowknife.

We're also looking at a public service strategy that identifies any barriers faced by priority groups that may want to be coming into the GNWT. We're trying to develop a methodology to recruit what we refer to in the business as "hard to recruit" positions. Those are some of the things that we're doing. In addition, I have more detail on the Student and Youth Strategy that also came up in the House today through the department. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I am beginning the planning stages for a community tour with Ministers up in my riding. I would like to ask the Minister if he would be available in April to attend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I have recently attended the Beaufort-Delta but we didn't finish our tour. I am prepared to finish our tour that we started. There was an unfortunate death in one of the larger communities over there, so we were unable to finish the tour. I would be willing to finish the tour. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 156-17(5):
TRANSITIONAL RENT
SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment with regard to Section 3.3 of the Rent Supplement Program, accommodations, rent or mortgage. In one of the sections, it explains that a client and his or her dependents can receive assistance for accommodation. Accommodation includes rent, mortgage, tax or fire insurance.

I'd like to ask the Minister, in some cases and possibly when a person is in foreclosure or not able to pay up their bills for the month because either something happened that they got less income coming in, would they be able to apply under this rental Section 3.3, this Rent Supplement Program to cover off their mortgage costs?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: When issues like this arise, my department, more specifically through client service officers, work with those clientele. We've been working with our clientele since the beginning of the month on a constant basis, trying to assist them in various ways either through a medical note and so forth. We provide funding to their needs according to the policies that have been highlighted, so it's based on that, these individuals who qualify for eligibility for the standard rate for their community. Those are just some of the

subsidies that we provide to those individuals that are in need of our subsidy program.

MR. MOSES: More specifically to mortgage for anybody that might have gotten into trouble with keeping up to date on their payments for their mortgage for their houses, a lot of people probably don't even know this program exists. There's one here specifically for mortgage under Section 5.1, and I just want to confirm that if somebody went into arrears for a month or two but didn't know how to pay off their mortgage and they went to ECE, that they can access this program to get their mortgage paid for. I'm not asking for anybody in particular, I'm just asking in general for anybody out in the public.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Section 5.1 that the Member is alluding to does cover the rent or mortgage and others that are necessary, and now to cover the cost of their rent may be provided on behalf of a single client. For a single disabled client, up to a maximum of \$900 is available to those individuals. Again, clients with dependents are eligible for a maximum of... There's another cost factor to that too. These are just some of the subsidies that are available through Section 5.1 that the Member is referring to, and it does cover the rent, the mortgage that has been highlighted in circumstances as what we are referring to today.

MR. MOSES: Still within Section 3.3, it talks about officers must consider the needs of a client and his or her dependents when considering the size and type of the housing need, so is it solely on the officers when they make a recommendation for an individual and type of dwelling that they'll be receiving and the type of housing need that they'll have, based on what the officer sees and whether or not there might be some other issues such as some of our seniors, such as disabilities, such as other issues that might affect the client.

Is there another way that these clients can be assessed when they're going through the process?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Various times when a client approaches our department through client service officers, the directors often get involved as well. It can be decided on a case-by-case basis where assistance is needed and required. Obviously, pertaining to that would be receiving the rent and how long the assistance will be provided. Those are just on an as-needed basis and particularly when a situation that we're faced with today that these directors, the client service officers have been engaged with the client and will continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: There's another section in this Section 3.3, and it deals with clients with dependents are eligible for up to, or they're just

eligible for rent or mortgage or whatever it's going to be called, but I just want to know if there is a definition for dependents, whether it's a person's parent, a person's grandparent, a child, it could be an uncle or an aunt that needs some assistance because they might be elderly as well. Can I get an understanding of dependents and whether or not when we're applying the clients, that our couples are classified as just one client?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: There are times when we say client whether it be a couple, but I can get that information for the Member on the more specific if it's dependents what that pertains to. I don't have the exact information here before me, but I can provide that detailed breakdown for the Member on the definition of dependents and others that he questioned earlier.

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

QUESTION 157-17(5):
CULTURAL OFFICE AT AURORA COLLEGE

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I noted in my Member's statement that this week is Aurora College Week, and we had some discussions with the students. I want to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about one of the suggestions to have elders or cultural activities in the Aurora College campuses or learning centres.

Is there any plan within the department to have elderly cultural office positions staffed in our campuses in Yellowknife or any other campus in the North?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for meeting with the students, because as soon as I met with elected officials, they were really anxious and provided suggestions and ideas. There is one area, the cultural programming that the Member is referring to through the college, it won't be through my department, but I can definitely work with the college, because there will be a college campus. The college will be going through their strategic planning, as well, and this will be related to them as well. The meetings with the students have been circulated, as well, the minutes, and then part of that will be highlighted as part of the culture programming at the main campus. I will be sharing that with the Aurora College Board of Governors.

MR. YAKELEYA: I appreciate the compliments from the Minister. Actually, it was Mr. Moses that headed up this meeting with some of the Members here, and we actually had a good discussion.

I want to talk about the attraction. We talked about how do we attract people. Aurora College can be a very unique campus that would bring students or people from outside into the Northwest Territories saying, yes, this is a worthwhile place. I want to ask the Minister because he controls the budget. We control the budget. The Minister makes presentations to us through this form of session. Is this something that he would look into presenting at maybe in the future Assemblies, our positions for elders in the campuses of the Aurora College?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: This Legislative Assembly controls the budget, and once it's passed we start implementing per departmental initiatives. I understand where the Member is coming from. This particular subject will be brought to the attention of the board of governors so they can add it to their strategic planning within their college campuses, whether it be one campus, two campuses or all three campuses.

Two, I agree with the Member that we need to attract those students to our three campuses throughout the Northwest Territories. That is our overall goal, and I promise the Member that this will be addressed with the board of governors so at least that will be part of the discussion as they move forward with their budget preplanning process.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The time for question period has expired. Item 9, written questions. Ms. Bisaro.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 10-17(5): TAX REVENUES IN THE 2014-2015 MAIN ESTIMATES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. The revenue summary in the 2014-15 Main Estimates, Department of Finance, page 5-9, lists personal income tax at \$104.8 million and corporate income tax at \$53.1 million. The 2014-15 budget address stated these revenues will be about \$30 million lower than forecasted.

1. Please advise, in dollars, how much personal income tax and corporate income tax revenues are expected in fiscal year 2014-15, including the anticipated loss of \$30 million.
2. Please advise the total expected revenues, in dollars, for the fiscal year 2014-15.
3. Please advise how our expenditures will be adjusted to account for the anticipated \$30 million loss of revenues.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to

opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Mr. Bromley.

Motions

MOTION 11-17(5): CREATION OF REGIONAL LAND AND WATER OFFICES, DEFEATED

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS the Government of Canada has introduced Bill C-15, An Act to replace the Northwest Territories Act, to implement certain provisions of the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement and to repeal or make amendments to the Territorial Lands Act, the Northwest Territories Waters Act, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, other acts and certain orders and regulations to parliament;

AND WHEREAS Bill C-15 will eliminate the regional land and water boards to form a single Yellowknife-based land and water board with only one representative from each region;

AND WHEREAS our Aboriginal government partners and many NWT residents oppose this amalgamation;

AND WHEREAS the intent of land claim settlements in the settled regions was to establish and maintain regional land and water boards as they currently exist, so that decisions were made by people most familiar with regional issues;

AND WHEREAS the regional land and water boards have excellent track records and evaluations that demonstrate they are effective and efficient at responding to and administering land and water board applications;

AND WHEREAS the amalgamation of regional land and water boards does not address the core process issues of unsettled land claims, delayed ministerial decisions, and federal failures to confirm nominees or designate nominees to the boards and other findings of the 2005 and 2010 NWT Environmental Audits;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories will achieve substantial new delegated and actual authorities to manage land and water in the Northwest Territories on territorial lands effective April 1, 2014;

AND WHEREAS a guiding principle of the draft NWT Land Use and Sustainability Framework is that "communities and regions have the opportunity for meaningful engagement and input into land-use decisions;"

AND WHEREAS staffed regional offices would help maintain regional capacity and enable the accustomed regional input into the land, water and resource management, monitoring and enforcement process;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that the Government of the Northwest Territories to work with our regional Aboriginal government partners to determine the desirability and feasibility of establishing and staffing regional offices as a basis for ensuring meaningful input into land and water management structures;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to seek support and resources towards this initiative;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories make a public commitment to work with future federal governments to delay the elimination of or reinstitute the regional land and water boards;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories report to the House on the results of such collaborative discussions with our Aboriginal partners, and provide the results of feasibility studies to implement actions resulting from this process within 120 days

Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by noting that, of course, this motion is in response to the crystal clear and unanimous voices of our Aboriginal partners, who between them constitute the greater part of the residents in the Northwest Territories. It's in response to the many residents who have similarly spoken clearly through groups like Alternatives North, the unions and Ecology North and as individual citizens. It is in response to the Chamber of Mines who have nervously, though perhaps belatedly, acknowledged that the regional boards are indeed working well.

We could put forward a motion simply objecting to the closure of the regional boards, and of course we would be ignored. This has happened at the federal level. But we have a situation where we need to try and do something to make the best of a bad situation, keeping the regional capacity in places that allow the boards to keep a finger on the pulse of each region and allow for direct engagement with people in each region.

But really this motion, rather than be overly specific here, urges Cabinet to sit down with our Aboriginal partners and discuss with them what mitigation can be taken, what specific actions can be put in place

and structures to address the gap that this will be leaving.

I guess the Cabinet might say that the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board will remain largely unchanged. Well, that's a given and that's the whole point here. In fact, the point is that all of the regional boards will disappear and the structure that already exists for the rest of the unsettled areas will remain, clearly a major change to what's happening.

Cabinet might say that the Mackenzie Valley board will include at least one member appointed from an Aboriginal government, but the problem is for a regional project it doesn't have to be the representative from that region. Representation similar in proportion, but the problem is again that the people doing the representing will not be as familiar. How can a large board be familiar with one region as to the same degree as it might be with the regional boards? That, of course, was the whole intent of these structures, was to provide that regional focus and the power, which I believe this government professes to, in the hands of the people to control the pace and scale of development within their own area.

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is a similar institution. It functions without regional clans. There are considerable concerns about not having regional nominations confirmed by the Minister, which is currently the case over and over again. In fact, that's happening as we speak, and the basic fact is that a representative from the region will be more knowledgeable and better at representing the best interests of the public when they are based in the region. That holds for the boards as well.

The Cabinet might say, well, who supports this? I think I've already covered that and it was clear, if you were at the hearings on this subject, that many boards, many groups, many citizens and even the Chamber of Mines were speaking out in ways that showed there was little support for this.

Cabinet might claim that these regional land boards were not meant to be there in perpetuity. Well, that may be, but they were meant to be there for a good while and to, again, enable the ability of the local and regional people to control the pace and scale of development in their regions. That's what they did and they did it very well. With the number of evaluations that were done, clearly they were doing it very well.

Again, Cabinet might say the chair can appoint people to small panels of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to bring a regional emphasis, well, they can indeed, but this is not required and therein is the rub, because the federal government provides policy direction to the structure of this new super-board. Cabinet might question the efficiency and effectiveness, but again,

studies have been clear on that. They might say that there's no reason to believe that a single larger board would not be as effective and efficient as a series of smaller boards, but I submit that this is highly debatable. Many think the new approach, in fact, will lead to an adversarial approach, lack of confidence, delayed processes because they're not based in the regions, and I think that's where the nervousness of our...(inaudible)...mines is coming from and the reason why they're sort of shaking in their boots. Again, a highly debatable point that we need to raise.

Again, I know that Cabinet, at our urging, has raised a number of issues in the past that were highlighted in the environmental audits. Unfortunately, they've raised those ineffectively. Even after these amendments to the MVRMA those issues largely still remain.

The Surface Rights Board Act that is being put in place through these amendments, of course, *comme ci, comme ça*. I mean, there have been no issues, almost zero issues in the settled land claims on surface rights issues. All of them have to do in the unsettled land claim areas and where is the settlement on those claims? That's what we need, not these sorts of things that take power away from the people.

Cabinet might say the creation of a single board is not intended to deal with every issue that exists but to focus on the efficiency of board operations already. I've already addressed this, so we'll move on.

Again, the reference to the Land Use and Sustainability Framework that communities and regions have the opportunity for meaningful engagement and input into the land use decision, a draft policy of this Cabinet, this motion is totally in line with that. So I don't think there's any question to be raised there.

The opportunity for meaningful engagement, again, will be reduced. As a result of this, Cabinet will likely claim that, oh, there's still the opportunity in the Big Apple. I'm sure they'll go out every once in a while and have coffee, you know. But in fact, clearly when you remove regional land and water boards, that opportunity is reduced substantially, that's what we're on about here.

The GNWT has continued, I am sure, to press Canada to retain a regional administrative capacity in each region and so on. This motion is meant to very much support them in that work.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are saying let's work with our regional governments, regional Aboriginal governments. Let's sit down with them, find out what structure they have in mind. We're offering some suggestions on what Cabinet could take to the table. But let's sit down with them and have those discussions and have them in a transparent

way, publicly, so that everybody can contribute to the discussion if they so wish, and let's capture those and put them in place.

Cabinet might say that the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board is not responsible for conducting assessments for the Legislative Assembly. One might ask where does that come from, what would they be thinking. We work with federal counterparts all the time and I would submit that with devolution and with these sorts of amendments that are not supported by the people, we're going to have to do that more and more.

I'm happy to say, in wrap-up, that basically, as stated in the recent hearings on Bill C-15 with respect to amendments to the MVRMA, the vast majority of problems the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board has are associated with areas where the unsettled land claims are, not with the regional boards which have been proven effective and efficient.

The bottom line is we have a system that isn't broken but the federal government is insisting on fixing it anyway, and against the will of our Aboriginal government partners and many residents. Our Aboriginal partners feel so strongly about this that they are thinking about taking the federal government to court. I know there's a lot of work going on in that area. I don't see how our Premier could ignore that factor or not speak up for their interests. Again, this is a majority of people we're talking about here.

This motion recognizes this situation and proposes some mitigation measures to provide support to our regional partners to address the needs and gaps that would be left by C-15 amendments to the MVRMA, and it helps our land and management regime to continue its regional success with a strong regional role. In fact, I don't doubt, as the Premier has said, there are a number of initiatives underway, so I would expect that the Cabinet should take this as support for those initiatives. But I hope they would also take it as making sure that those are very transparent and reported publicly to the people of the Northwest Territories and this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know my seconder, Mr. Nadli, and I both very much appreciate the support of our colleagues here and very much look forward to debate on this motion put forward today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I'll allow the seconder of the motion, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of this motion because of the fact that on one hand devolution can be a good thing; however, on the flip side of this, unfortunately, we're doing away with structures that happened and were long, battled-out boardroom discussions especially for claimant groups. I don't prefer to speak on their

behalf, but every inch that has been gained has been a long, hard battle, I believe, for regional land claim groups, and more so for unsettled regions that don't have. In particular are the Dehcho First Nations and the Akaitcho Territory, and other groups more than likely down the line will want to negotiate a settlement at some point. This limits their opportunities to have a voice in terms of aspiring to become autonomous in terms of a region and working together collectively as a tribal alliance. This basically doesn't really support their efforts.

I wanted to just highlight that in another time I had an opportunity to work in a forum where we were trying to move a negotiations process, and there are some very fundamental beliefs you have to try to get beyond. In this instance, there was a meeting that I personally attended, and we talked for about three days and they were talking about how, between First Nations and the federal government, they should be strictly bilateral, that it's based on a treaty and it's based on the principle that First Nations have brokered an arrangement through their treaties basically on the idea that it was a peace and friendship treaty, so, in that spirit, any kind of arrangement should continue to be bilateral. It took a long time to come to the realization that for us to move forward, we have to move beyond our fears, move beyond the concepts that had been embellished in our mind for a long time and had become part of the passionate beliefs that we had. After three days of meetings, it came to be that we had to expand our forum and allow ideas of a tripartite body of ensuring that First Nations, the Government of Canada and the GNWT would sit down at the same table and talk about issues that are affecting First Nations, but with a public interest at the end of the day that everyone's interest and well-being of the NWT be considered.

That's basically the philosophy I became familiar with. It's helped me in terms of walking a path of ensuring that we listen to all the voices. One very strong lesson that I've learned through elders – and this House is founded on the idea of consensus – is we might disagree and we might agree to disagree, but at the same time we have to listen to each other to ensure we have respect. We are trying to understand what the other person is thinking in terms of their grievances, their perspective, and trying to not to become so entrenched in your position that at the end of the day you disregard the common interest that you are trying to build a relationship on.

Those principles have been the guide of how structures have been set up in the regions. Unfortunately, as well intended as this devolution process might be, it's got some consequences. One of the ultimate and very clear consequences is it's going to eliminate regional water boards.

Earlier I pointed out in the regional administrative structures within which the GNWT works, you have the Inuvik district centre, the Sahtu or Norman Wells district, the Fort Simpson district office and the Yellowknife district office. Then you have, perhaps, Deh Cho district offices, then Fort Smith, Hay River district offices. So you have regional structural organizations that could work well, yet we're not building up on that. We're pulling at the very foundation of ensuring that we work collaboratively together and respectfully within regions.

There was a time that this government was very strong in abdicating the idea of regional councils. Now they're absent. Now what we have is tribal alliances. It's most tribal First Nations that basically work to ensure the best interest of the regions. There was a time when this government funded regional councils so that municipal leaders and First Nations would come together and come to at least a common agenda of ensuring the regional interest was put first.

In that same experience, a prominent, very strong leader that I looked up to at the time explained to me how it is that we could certainly bridge the gap between what First Nations were thinking and the GNWT and its public aspirations to represent all the people of the NWT. This leader explained to me, regions are trying to set up self-government structures. Perhaps you think the path that you've taken is so far apart from what we think, but look at the regional district structures that the GNWT has in place. It's so close to how, at some point, it can converge the GNWT and First Nations and they can work very closely together and pull their wills together to ensure we have a very good structure that works for all the regions but at the same time the people of the NWT.

I think we have structures and precedents in place that easily could be re-adapted, revitalized to ensure that regional voices do continue. I think this motion is constructive. The hard fact of reality is devolution is going forward. Unfortunately, in that same swipe, we're doing away with regional boards. We have to show some leadership to the people out there that have perhaps lost sight of working together, becoming disenfranchised and at the same time being very fractured. Things are kind of in disarray, and I think this motion is a gesture of ensuring that there is another body that we stand for and that includes regional voices. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion, Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the mover, Mr. Bromley, and the seconder, Mr. Nadli, for bringing this motion forward as it is deserving of a spirited and fair debate in the House today.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to applaud all groups and residents who have commented on federal Bill C-15 leading up to today's debate.

First of all, is this bill a perfect bill? I think many would say anything that provokes any type of change or provides a different vision is never truly perfect in design, as we are finding out. I know from other polls or speaking to many residents of Range Lake or Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, I found most are in favour of devolution and moving forward as we mature with province-like powers.

I don't want to go into the detail of the bill or regurgitate the pillars behind the new federal legislation, as this is not my duty as an elected official of this House. Instead, I want to offer some general collective thoughts that I have received from many of my residents in preparation for today.

Many agree that we have much to learn and a lot more work ahead of us as we face the many challenges of resource potential. As a Northerner concerned about ensuring the future of our territory, I respect and understand the positions of Aboriginal governments and their current land claim agreements.

That said, there are still a number of incorrect or misleading ideologies that are surfacing that suggest our environmental process will be left in the hands of potentially unfamiliar people with some of these proposed changes. I believe we have seen improved processes with our land and water boards, as a general rule, and I believe we are striving for a territory for greater efficiency putting us, in my humble opinion, at the same level playing field as other jurisdictions such as our sister territory of the Yukon.

I also believe we still have a number of issues that need to be ironed out to make our mining and oil and gas sector a lot more effective. I don't believe all our hopes and dreams are within the creation of a single board of the Mackenzie Valley as I believe this would be a tall order.

However, I believe this new concept should allow us to focus on more efficiency and, all the while, hopeful that we are able to concentrate and further develop our land use plans and have strong, continued negotiations for our unsettled land claims.

I firmly believe that all 33 communities and the regions of the NWT will continue to have the same, if not more, opportunities for effective management and dialogue in a post-devolution environment when home rule of our resources is managed right here in our backyard.

I wish to leave the Members of the House with a small excerpt from a presentation to the House of Commons' standing committee on Bill C-15 from our very own NWT Chamber of Commerce as I

believe it summarizes my final thought quite eloquently.

"In our view, Bill C-15 is the next logical and biggest single step forward in the devolution of powers of our territorial government in history. We are a resource-based economy. Managing our resources effectively and creating a healthy investment climate will support a strong local and national economy and provide significant benefits to all communities and to all residents. Bill C-15 is a new beginning for the Northwest Territories."

Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, given the complex and very direct narrative within the context of this motion that is being asked of the GNWT to undertake, I will not be supporting this motion today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion brought before the House today is one of concern of some Members and also some Aboriginal groups throughout the Northwest Territories. The concern, obviously, is the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act was included in Bill C-15 when it was brought into the House of Commons.

I was very lucky to attend the one here in the Northwest Territories at the Explorer Hotel. I listened to all types of individuals, leaders, past leaders, and new and future leaders speak about these bills and these provisions. I listened very carefully to all sides of the story and to the governments talk about how these provisions were in the land claims agreements when those were all signed. Now they are just bringing those out to address this issue.

Also, if you look at the reports that come out on the low grade the GNWT gets on the red tape system to get projects moving forward, which I also agree with. Obviously we did miss out on a big project in the Northwest Territories, the Mackenzie Gas Project.

Those all lead up to something else that is great, our traditional land, pristine waters, environments. I was lucky enough to attend an event, I believe it was last night, where they showed the way people used to live off the land. It was really great to see that and also see the traditions carried on today in this day and age.

The MVRMA also talks about revisiting this in five years. I just want to bring forward that I've heard a lot of good things and some of our strong leaders were mentioning why fix something that's not broken. They wanted to have their voice and concerns moved into this.

There was also some very good points brought up from the legal staff of these Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal leaders that pinpointed sections and

clauses in the act that they didn't agree with that needed to be addressed and they made sure that committee, at the time, was listening.

The motion itself just encourages something that this government is already doing, and that's engaging our Aboriginal partners and Aboriginal leaders and continuing to discuss things going forward. I believe the motion is asking that our government continue those discussions and maybe encourage the dialogue to see the importance of these and whether or not amendments need to be made in five years to get this changed.

So I do thank Mr. Bromley and the seconder for bringing this to the table today and addressing the issues. For the fact of everything I heard during the hearing, I will support this to increase the dialogue and discussions and am looking forward to seeing if there is some resolve on this in the next five years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the motion. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments I would like to make. I'd like to, first of all, thank Mr. Bromley and Mr. Nadli for bringing this motion forward and bringing this issue into the public and for us to debate it.

I was also able to attend the hearings in front of the federal standing committee when they were here and it was a fascinating day. We heard from all sides and I was particularly impressed with the Aboriginal governments, who were extremely passionate about their position and about the impact the loss of the regional boards would have on them.

I think that one of the things that struck me the most, and it wasn't from the Aboriginal governments but was from one of the later presenters, was the point that was made that closing off the regional boards will also close off the regional offices, which have the technical capacity to support the boards. I think that's going to be a very large loss.

The Land and Water Board staff assist with the Land Use Planning Board staff. The Land Use Planning Board staff assist the Land and Water Board staff. To close one of those offices, the Land and Water Board office, means the technical capacity of that office is lost to the other one.

This motion, as Mr. Moses just said, asks the territorial government to do something that they are already doing and something we have done extremely well, and I have to commend this government for the work they've done with Aboriginal governments. We have excellent relationships, I think, with most of the Aboriginal governments within this territory now and that's because of a great deal of hard work.

This motion asks the Government of the Northwest Territories to work with our regional government partners. If you're doing it already, why should we not continue on and work with them on something which they think is so terribly important? I do believe that the regional voice will be lost if we lose our regional boards and I think if we have regional offices that will certainly provide both the technical capacity and the opportunity for a regional voice to be heard. Without the regional office, yes, the board will assign three people to act as a board for a hearing, there's no guarantee that there will be any regional representation on that board.

A board, yes, is supposed to represent all residents of the NWT, but we know full well that that doesn't always happen. There are issues that are particular to a region that the board members may not be aware of if they're not part of that particular region.

Those are the most important things for me. I am in support of this motion and I think that it asks GNWT to do work which will only be for the benefit of residents. I think we will have a new Lands department come April 1st, and I think that there's an opportunity for the asks in this motion to be combined with the lands offices that are going to be set up, but there needs to be a melding of the two jobs. We can't just have the Lands department without also considering the work that the regional offices and the regional boards do right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I'd rise and make a couple comments quickly. My colleagues all had good points and I thank the mover and seconder for this motion.

At this time I feel it's difficult in the fact that we are making a motion to talk about C-15, a federal motion, which, I mean, we have no jurisdiction on. The other thing is that, as Members have indicated, our government, the McLeod government, has been working with Aboriginal groups strongly. Devolution has been moving forward. Devolution is one of those things that's going to give us control over the things in the Northwest Territories in the future, so this will allow us to do that, this type of stuff. I have full confidence in the government to work with the Aboriginal governments in the future when we have full control over these items.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first rise and begin with something that I keep hearing about. I hear about all these southerners, and certainly I'm going to say this westerner, and when I say westerner, I'm actually referring to the Member of Parliament for the Yukon, and these southerners I sometimes refer to as these Albertans, and all I ever hear about is how much

they want to make us like the Yukon. I have to tell you, I like the Yukon. I enjoy visiting there. I like the people there. I like the feel of the Yukon, but I don't want to be the Yukon, and I wish people from Alberta and the Yukon would say you'd be better if you were like the Yukon. We're Northerners. Yes. We share that. We're brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, all those good things, but let them do business their way, no different than why we want Bill C-15 for the devolution portion. We want to do business our way, you know. No different.

People in Ottawa, if you're listening – and I know you are – stop trying to make me and the rest of the Northwest Territories like the Yukon. I'm kind of getting tired of hearing that, because I think they have every right to be like themselves and I think we deserve every right to be like ourselves, so I wish they would stop that comparison about saying we've lost our way and things would be better if we were the Yukon. Well, please, nothing irritates me more.

When we first started off talking about devolution when I came in 2003, it was this distant dream. In 2007 it was off the table, then it was on the table, and now in this Assembly it's not only on the table, we're almost there. But when we talked about devolution, and certainly before this House, we talked about it in the context of assuming powers and responsibilities, but I don't recall us ever having the chance to sit down, roll up our sleeves and say if you agree with the devolution portion, you're now being served this, which is the reorg of these boards. Now, I understand why the Inuvialuit support it, because they get to keep their board. They get to do business their way. I can tell you I understand why the Gwich'in don't want it, and I can understand why the Tlicho don't want it, and I can understand why the Dehcho are concerned about it, and I can go on. They don't want it. Many Aboriginal groups have fought very hard for their land claims, and I certainly respect that, and not just because it's constitutionally protected, because it's right, and that's the difference is because it's right. Is it because it's protected? That just reaffirms why it's important.

Now, signing this Devolution Agreement, yes, it makes sense. We have to follow the ability to do home rule, as I've called it many times, and I'm glad other people are calling it now, because that's what it is. But by allowing this we're forgetting why there were issues with the review board. What were they? Well, they were all linked to the federal government. Appointments weren't made. Appointments weren't made in a timely manner. They weren't resourced. Decisions weren't signed off. This is why this motion is here before us, is because the board itself could be working, could have been working and functioning very well, but yet, at the same time, it was being denied its ability

to do the work it could have been doing. It was doing good work.

I ask this House and I challenge anyone to show me an application for development that they ever refused. There wasn't any. They all found a way to work with industry. They have good, honest people with good intentions to provide opportunities for Northerners to work in partnership with industry to find a way so we can all achieve the same thing. Prosperity for everyone. Those are good things. But yet the federal government has decided, through its wisdom, that everything was going awry. The problems they're trying to fix are the ones they created by not resourcing the board, by not making the appointments in a timely way, by not doing what they were obligated to do.

It frustrates me, as a resident of the Northwest Territories that this second half of the C-15 bill was served up with the first half. Although I don't normally agree with our parliamentarian Mr. Bevington, I do agree with his concept about splitting the bill. Many people share that perspective. It's a very frustrating one to see. It's two issues.

When I was in Inuvik in January, I had Senator Patterson lecture me about, oh, don't worry, in 10 years you'll be phoning me, he said, and saying you're sorry, you were right, we should have done things this way. He told me. I think he's wrong. I think in 10 years he's going to be phoning me and telling me we were wrong and we should have listened to you, and the reason we should have listened to you is pointed out by people like Member Bisaro, and certainly highlighted passionately by folks like Member Nadli is the fact that people have these boards, they're connected to them, they're the regional boards. People are taking care of their land. What better way of doing this by ensuring that these regions are in touch with the modern issues that are affecting them at that day. I know no one more connected to the region than the people who govern, who belong there, where their ancestry pulled them towards those regions.

I don't think we're serving territorial citizens better. I think we're serving the platform of the particular government in Ottawa better by only doing it this way, because they perceive there's a problem with the system. There is no...

MR. SPEAKER: [Microphone turned off] ...C-15. We're talking to the motion. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's why this motion is so important, because we have to reconnect what these things are doing. Rather than following along blindly of what's being served up, we need to support this motion. Don't be afraid, Cabinet. Don't be afraid, Premier McLeod, or as Mr. Bouchard says, don't be afraid, McLeod government, to release the shackles of Cabinet

solidarity and vote with us. It's true, because you want to deep down inside, and I can tell. I can see it right now. Be honest with yourselves. Don't accept what the federal government's had.

Mr. Bromley has presented an option for all residents. If we would give the chance for folks to recognize what's really being fixed, I'm going to say nothing is being fixed by the federal government. Mr. Bromley is presenting an option here before all of us that can continue to do business in a good way. We will be in charge of the system. We can deal with appointments, as I said before. We can worry about the resourcing as we've had problems before. We can work together as dual Ministers, both territorial and federally, we'll sign these things off together. We can do business the NWT way, the northern way about collaboration.

The last thing I'll say is, in some manner or form, in my view, this is a setback by allowing what's happening without a stance from our government. I mean our collective government. Premier McLeod came in and said I'm going to renew relations with Aboriginal governments in a new way. I'm going to bring those ties back. I'm going to strengthen the way we do business in the North, and in some ways he's done that, but where is his voice on this one when the federal government divides us. This motion pulls us back together as a people, and to that I can only imagine, if people don't know yet, I'll be voting for it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is an interesting one, and certainly we heard from the Aboriginal governments at the Bill C-15 federal government public hearing at the Explorer Hotel. I concurred with my leader in the Sahtu, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, when she spoke to the bill. In 1993 the negotiators of the Sahtu Dene/Metis, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories completed their negotiations of a comprehensive land claim agreement, and we signed off and it became law in 1993-94. We were the second Aboriginal regional group to settle a land claim, the Gwich'in being the first in the Mackenzie Delta, but further than that it was the Inuvialuit that settled before any of us did in the southern portion of the North.

When we put our agreements together in the Sahtu, our agreement guarantees that the Sahtu Dene/Metis participation in land use planning, in the management of renewable resources, land and water and the Sahtu heritage resources, this participation will be through the membership on boards and through consultation.

Twenty years ago when we settled our land claim, we understood in the future, once all the other regions had come to a point of settling their own land claims, we would look at a territory-wide board.

That's what we understood. We said okay, but based on our elders' guidance, we sought direction, we wanted decisions to be made as close to our communities as possible on our own lands, by our own members, with representatives from the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government. We had no issue, but we understood that we were going to change this once all the territories had a settled land claim, then we would come together. We've only done it halfway.

I say this because we didn't know in 20 years, from 1993-94, what was going to happen. We only understood and we knew that these boards would not be forever, we knew that, but the way that it was brought down to our land and water boards wasn't the way that we envisioned. We knew that we wanted control of our lands. We know that the government has done a lot of hard work and they totally agree with having a voice and making decisions on our own land and our water in the future. That's a given.

So one of the questions we ask, can the land claim agreement be changed after it becomes law? They said yes, if necessary. Either the Sahtu Dene/Metis or the government can propose a change. If both parties agree in the proposed change, amendment to the agreement is made. Now, there's the catch: if both parties agree in the consultation. The consultation was we were told this is going to happen. Members of the Sahtu Land and Water Board said, why is this happening? We're okay. We're doing okay. Mr. Hawkins raises some concerns and I also heard that from the Sahtu Land and Water Board. It's not us, it's what's happening in Ottawa; it's what's happening down there. They're having a hard time dealing with some of the issues here. We're doing okay. We've got a structure, we have certainty, we have an institution.

So the consultation, to our understanding, was big brother to little brother, this is how you shall do it and we looked at the land claim, but somehow the spirit and intent wasn't upheld. They found a way around it so they don't have to open the land claim agreement. It's constitutional law, they don't have to open it. So we thought, my goodness, when we settled in '93-94, the spirit and intent of law of our land claim, this is a modern day treaty. History repeats itself again. We went in with a strong spirit, strong intent, this is how we want to work together, but we cannot operate with this type of attitude coming out of Ottawa. We agree that we want to work hard with the governments to own our own lands, have a say in our own lands, but we certainly still have an issue with the basics of consultation and them telling us how good our treaty is. That is totally not fair.

So, as our leaders have spoken, we have to deal with the reality. That's the part of the reality that doesn't taste very good in our mouths. It doesn't

smell good, but that's what we have to deal with. If we want to get ownership of our lands and resources, this has to come into play. It's not very good, but that's the reality of it. That's the signal to the people of Canada, people of the Northwest Territories about the attitude of government. They sure fooled me as a former negotiator of the Sahtu Dene/Metis Land Claim that our guaranteed participation, our constitutional rights, can be played within a modern treaty.

So that's something that we need to wrestle otherwise they'll maintain a stranglehold on us, but they use sweet words and tactics to get what they want. I know that through this Bill C-15 we are going to receive some additional powers and responsibilities, but we're still not yet released and totally free as a nation of people in the Northwest Territories, especially with what we negotiated in the Sahtu Dene/Metis. How sacred are our constitutional rights as Aboriginal people? If this is how they can come about making changes by using tactics of, well, you want control, it says in the land claim you're going to have a full board. Well, I was there and I negotiated with David Osborn on this chapter and we had lawyers and that wasn't the spirit and intent or what we were told. We thought we were going to have the real discussion.

So it's quite the discussion we're going to have around the North. Whether it's right or not, but the numbers are there in Ottawa, the numbers are there in the Senate and the thing about this is, this is what we have to deal with. It's going to go through Parliament and we'll have to deal with it.

In closing, this motion is how is our government now, with this new legislation coming forward, going to deal with our Aboriginal governments and partners. Are we going to maintain some of Ottawa's attitudes towards people in the Northwest Territories, or are we going to continue to explore how we can have that government-to-government relationship with our Aboriginal governments? That's what this motion is calling for, I believe.

I'll be supporting the motion, giving some recommendations to our government in the future so that it's on record that we will start making some changes. I'm very encouraged that in five years we'll have a review of our legislation. It just says review, it doesn't say change or approve or make any type of changes to the legislation where we want to have full control back into the regions into the management of our resources and that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand here today and I'll be supporting this motion. I've heard throughout my region about the old way of doing things and the old way of doing things was about not having enough enforcement,

not having monitoring in the regions, in the communities and a lot of those old days decisions were about things were missed. Users of the land, the trappers and the hunters and the chiefs that go out there see how the land has been in disrepair. So that's why they've got such a big liability when it comes to liability issues that the feds recognize. I'm really pleased to see that they will continue to try to clean up those lands that they are responsible for. But the whole point was that there wasn't enough monitoring and enforcement at that time, and we see those effects here today.

Also, Bill C-15 with a super-board is disempowerment for our northern territories, our land claimant groups and those that are negotiating. We want more autonomy over our lands, not less, and this bill does that.

Bill C-15 amalgamates our boards, but I think our government has always said we can do things better, and I'm sure we can. That's all this motion is asking for. Yes, we can improve on it. I know that we're getting it and it speaks about amalgamating the boards into a super-board. In all our regions, yes, we're frustrated with the Bill C-15 hearings, but I think it's about getting our guaranteed involvement back, guaranteed consultation and guaranteed accommodation for meaningful input. That's what this motion calls for, is trying to restore some of that action. While, in fact, it asks us to restore it completely, I don't know if we can go there. I think the key thing is we want enforcement, monitoring, community involvement. Once again, the users of the land feel it's very shameful every time they are left behind for someone to clean up, and it impacts all governments because we're the ones that end up paying.

With that, once again, I will be supporting this motion and it begins just by maintaining our regional offices. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the mover and seconder for bringing this motion forward, although I will not be supporting it on the basis that two of the signatories that signed on to devolution are within my riding. As anybody who is familiar with negotiations, those are binding agreements. This is before the federal government at the moment and it hasn't passed yet, but I realize that this is one of the deal breakers. Anyone who is familiar with negotiations knows that there are deal breakers in any agreement, and this is one of them.

As we move closer to devolution, we have just over 40 days to go, I'm not sure if that is one of the tactics of this motion before this House. There's a good chance that our Devolution Agreement will not go forward if this motion is passed here today.

As I said, two of the signatories to the Devolution Agreement have signed on, and for that reason I will not be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. To the motion. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House contains a number of factual errors that I would like to correct. In the spirit of consensus government, I will, of course, acknowledge where the motion is in fact accurate.

The motion is correct in stating that the Government of Canada has introduced Bill C-15, An Act to replace the Northwest Territories Act, to implement certain provisions of the Northwest Territories Land and Resources Devolution Agreement. This motion does not, however, reference that Bill C-15 has passed third reading in the House of Commons and has been referred to the Senate. Changes to federal legislation are not within the purview of this government.

This Assembly voted 17 to 1 in support of devolution, which will take place on April 1, 2014. However, I welcome the opportunity to correct a number of factual errors in this motion and in other materials currently circulating so that the residents of the Northwest Territories are not left with erroneous and misleading information.

The motion states that Bill C-15 will eliminate our regional land and water boards and form a single Yellowknife-based land and water board with only one representative from each region. Bill C-15 does in fact provide for the amalgamation of current land and water boards.

The motion is correct, if not misleading, in that the administration of the board will be in Yellowknife, but board members will continue to be from across the Northwest Territories. In fact, regional land and water boards don't belong to the Government of the Northwest Territories; whereas, the motion says our water boards. They are institutions of public government, just as the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board is now and will remain. The board will continue to review any applications that impacts more than one region. Their role will expand to encompass the entire Mackenzie Valley.

The current board members of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board have the full confidence of this government. Their decisions are measured, rational and comprehensive.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the board chair and the current and previous board members who have served and continue to serve the people of the Northwest Territories with distinction and integrity.

With respect to representation on the amalgamated board, there is a provision in Bill C-15 to allow three people to be appointed to review the application,

including at least one member appointed from an Aboriginal government. This provides for representation similar in proportion to the current representation on regional boards.

There is also a provision to allow the chairperson to designate additional board members to deal with the application in addition to the three people designated. This provides continued real representation.

I would like to point out that the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, MVEIRB, is a similar institution that functions without regional panels. Concerns have not been expressed that MVEIRB is not representative of the people of the Northwest Territories. It is unclear why this motion implies that an amalgamated board cannot function in the same way.

It is also important to recognize that board members, while nominated by parties, are not there to represent their region or government but are tasked with assessing projects in the best interests of the public. They must, and do, consider the views and concerns in the communities and regions affected along with the territorial interests. This won't change. This framework is the basis of all board appointments.

I would like to point out and emphasize that the establishment of the Intergovernmental Council with our Aboriginal partners will provide a forum for important collaboration. In this way, the views of Aboriginal governments will continue to be articulated and heard by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The second clause of the motion states that our Aboriginal government partners and many Northwest Territories residents oppose this amalgamation. Aboriginal governments have expressed their concerns about the amalgamation. We respect and understand their positions. I do not, however, agree that many Northwest Territories residents oppose this amalgamation. The motion says "many." There is nothing to substantiate that statement.

We can argue about the semantics, but at the end of the day our democracy provides the right of the federal government to make changes to federal legislation as long as it does not contravene other obligations such as land claim agreements. The current land claim agreements do provide for a single board.

The GNWT will continue to work with our Aboriginal government partners through existing processes and through the Intergovernmental Council as we assume the management of lands and resources in the Northwest Territories. This is a commitment in the Devolution Agreement and I look forward to evolving our land and resource management with our partners after devolution.

The motion then goes on to say that the intent of land claim settlements was to establish and maintain regional land and water boards as they currently exist so that decisions were made by people most familiar with regional issues. Mr. Speaker, this is incorrect.

All land claim agreements clearly provide for or contemplate the establishment of a single, larger board for the Mackenzie Valley. It is misleading to suggest that decisions will be made by people unfamiliar with regional issues. The environmental assessment process will continue to provide opportunities for input from residents, organizations and governments and regions. It is also important to note again that the chair can appoint three people to hear the application including a member from the region impacted. Additional members can also be added.

The fourth clause of the agreement states regional land and water boards have an excellent track record and evaluations show that they are effective and efficient. The land and water boards have improved their processes; however, Canada continues to strive for greater efficiency that would put the Northwest Territories on a level playing field with other jurisdictions. There is no reason to believe that a single larger board would not be effective and efficient as a series of smaller boards. It must also be recognized that a larger board is also already functioning.

The fifth clause states that amalgamating regional land and water boards does not address the core issues of unsettled claims, timing of ministerial decisions and findings of previous audits. Mr. Speaker, I can agree that there is always room for improvement. In fact, this government has consistently stated that a range of issues needed to be addressed to make the system effective and efficient. However, this motion seeks to fault board amalgamation for not fixing other concerns with the regulatory process, such as unsettled land claims and past delays in ministerial decisions. Lumping these issues together is a smokescreen for a separate partisan agenda.

It is worth noting that the other issues have been consistently raised by this government and we will work towards resolving them with Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal governments.

It is also important to remember that the whole premise behind devolution is to provide more decision-making authorities to the people of the Northwest Territories. This includes ministerial decision-making for Northwest Territories public lands. Northwest Territories Ministers will be more responsive and ensure timely decision-making.

Clause 6 states that the Government of the Northwest Territories will achieve substantial new designated and actual authorities to manage land

and water on Northwest Territories territorial lands effective April 2, 2014. This is accurate.

I'm pleased to once again advise this House and the people of the Northwest Territories that through devolution the Government of the Northwest Territories will have new and very real legal authorities both delegated and under its own legislation. These authorities will operate within the integrated land and water management system negotiated in comprehensive land claim agreements. It is appropriate that Members recognize these as substantial and meaningful.

These new authorities achieved through devolution will help deal with some of the historical issues that have been problematic, including more timely decision-making by Ministers closer to home and directly accountable to this Legislative Assembly and Northwest Territories citizens.

Clause 7 states that a guiding principle of a draft Northwest Territories Land Use and Sustainability Framework is that communities and regions have the opportunity for meaningful engagement and input into land use decisions. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is correct. The LUSF speaks to how we will deal with the management of public lands in the Northwest Territories setting a standard of doing business consistent with GNWT practices. Whether there is an integrated board or regional boards will not affect the government's commitment to the sustainable management of land. Communities and regions will continue to have the opportunity for meaningful engagement post-devolution through enhanced access to a more local, responsive government.

Clause 8 states that staffed regional offices would help maintain regional capacity and enable the accustomed regional input into the land, water and resource management monitoring and enforcement process. As mentioned previously, communities and regions will continue to have the opportunity for meaningful engagement no matter what form the board takes.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. There's a whole post-devolution system being set up that will ensure meaningful participation in the management of land, water and wildlife on public lands.

On April 1st the GNWT will increase its existing regional presence through its post-devolution organizational design. In addition to 27 AANDC regional positions, 25 new regional positions are being added. These included renewable resource officers, water resource officers, lands officers and land use advisors. We have also taken oil and gas functions currently located in Ottawa and placed them in Inuvik.

The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to press Canada to retain a regional administrative capacity in each region to ensure

local access to board processes including applications for permits and information about processes. There are ongoing discussions with Canada on its implementation of Bill C-15 including the need to maintain regional capacity.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to working with Aboriginal governments through the Intergovernmental Council. We expect the Intergovernmental Council will provide the opportunity for all parties to work together to monitor the implementation of Bill C-15 and to work through issues and concerns around the transition into an integrated Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

As we devolve and then evolve, I for one am looking forward to witnessing the development of land and water authorities and I have full confidence that the people of the Northwest Territories will contribute in meaningful, intelligent and profound ways. I know we are up to the job, Mr. Speaker. We are ready to take on this authority despite what some might insinuate. We are capable and we are ready.

I want to encourage our youth in all communities to consider what devolution will mean for them and their families. They are the voices we will need to hear as our territory evolves. The federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories are on schedule and on track for implementation of devolution on April 1, 2014. The people of the Northwest Territories deserve this authority. Through them, this House is the steward of our land, water, wildlife and natural resources. We have a responsibility to be leaders, leaders who find a way forward on a complex path. Providing accurate, factual information to the people of the Northwest Territories is a role of leadership. This government will continue to do that.

Cabinet will not be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Colleagues, now I'd like to recognize the mover of the motion, Mr. Bromley, to close debate.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, colleagues throughout the House here, for your contributions. I think we had a very good debate today. In fact, probably the most important role is to listen to our public, listen to our people and respond to their desires. That's what we're on about here today. The issue here is not C-15, which has passed third reading and gone to the Senate. This motion has nothing to do with that. It assumes that Bill C-15 will be passed and implemented. This takes place in preparation for that, so you can toss out about half of what the Premier was on about there. It's not about devolution. You can probably toss out the rest there. That's a done deal. This is about responding to the voice of our people who are

concerned at what's happening in this bill that was an omnibus bill, a typical approach that we had, seems less than democratic but is a common instrument these days so let's deal with the impacts. That's what this is. This is about mitigation.

I think a number of good points were raised, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that we have this situation because, as many people said, there's much support for devolution.

We've talked about this. In the spirit of the peace and friendship treaty, there should have been accommodation and discussions between Aboriginal groups and the federal government. We heard that very strongly and we are left in a situation where the public trust, public interest, has been ignored.

So let's build a relationship with Aboriginal governments by working collaboratively with them on this issue. That's a very strong theme that's come out and was repeatedly mentioned.

GNWT has a comprehensive regional approach. That was an interesting point. We certainly do, so there's huge potential for working together. There's a big overlap with these big regional governments and it was mentioned that this motion represents a positive approach.

Again, one Member respected Aboriginal governments and claims but referred to the Yukon. Again, that was a misconception, in my mind, that was well laid out by Mr. Hawkins.

It's less efficient. Again, I think it was well addressed in the remarks we heard today. The efficiency was clear. Again, I think the mining industry and development industry is very nervous because they realize that this new structure is likely to slow things down.

Several Members mentioned listening very closely at the hearings. I believe the Premier missed a good part of that. He made his presentation, the first presentation at the hearings, and then left, which was unfortunate if that was the case. Clearly, our people's voices have not been reaching him and he has not been speaking for our people.

The motion encourages government to confine what they were doing already, to continue what they're doing already and to work collaboratively, again seeking ways to resolve issues that are arising as a result of this new structure being put in place against the will of our people.

The loss of technical capacity is a huge part of what this bill is meant to do. It's meant to recognize all of the positive things that have developed as a result of regional boards and technical capacity in regional offices. Is there a way we can capture those benefits? I appreciate that point. Again,

working with regional partners will strengthen their voices.

There is potential for integrating with new lands offices that are being planned again. This office could be taken by the Premier and is so much in line with so many of the things he is contemplating.

The suggestion that we have no jurisdiction in this because it's federal legislation is simply not relevant here. This motion is not commenting on bills, it's trying to deal with the results of the federal legislation that is about to be passed and implemented a year from now.

One Member had full confidence in the government to deal with the situation and that represents the diversity of opinion in the House.

Again, devolution, yes, but why should we have to pay for the other half of amendments to the MVRMA? That's been repeatedly raised.

The regional boards clearly have a record of success and we want to capture their benefits.

An interesting couple of comments were the elucidation, really, of what the claims perspectives were by Mr. Yakeleya. Guaranteed positions on boards and so on, including territorial boards, but only after all land claims are settled and only then. Of course, this has not been achieved yet. One can't help but wonder if this is going to postpone seriously getting down to work in our land claims in unsettled regions.

Aboriginal governments in claims areas where claims have been successfully put in place expected a strong opportunity for input in discussions with respect to the large board and they were prepared to have those discussions. I know they went to many meetings, but both parties didn't agree, so again the spirit and intent of the agreements were not upheld, and there's recognition that we have to deal, they have to deal with the reality, and I think we, as a government, have a responsibility to listen to them and work with them collaboratively.

It was mentioned that this is going back to the old ways, the colonial ways of doing things, and it represents a disempowerment rather than empowering of people to have a voice over their regions, and also about getting back constitutional rights and focused on successful oversight that regional authority brings.

The suggestion that this is part of devolution and not being able to support it because people have signed on and that's a deal breaker, that again misses the mark here. That's not an issue with this motion. I can assure Members of that. Because this bill before the House, Bill C-15, again, had nothing to do with that. This is a motion that directs us to prepare for when that bill is actually put into place and its consequences.

Again, Premier McLeod mentioned that there are a lot of accuracies and errors in the motion. I would suggest...

MR. SPEAKER: [Microphone turned off.] ...to the motion. Closing remarks. I know you want to speak to the motion, not picking apart what everybody said, but your closing remarks, Mr. Bromley. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, I have to rebut some of his remarks, although I did in my introductory remarks so I won't go into too much detail here. Again, he talked about Bill C-15 and so on. Again, some of his remarks, unfortunately, were not relevant. A number of half-truths; again, they're interpretations, and I think I addressed those in my earlier remarks.

I think, just to get to the chase here, bringing forward the crystal clear voices of our public is what this motion is really all about. The issue is our residents have decried the loss of the regional boards and we are in a position to work with them to help mitigate the impacts. The motion proposes that this government sits down with our Aboriginal partners, and in a transparent way, to see if there are opportunities for collaborative action to capture the benefits that the regional boards have developed. We happen to have a focus on water, a focus on land, a focus on resources and on Aboriginal governments, so the opportunity is huge.

Let's free the shackles and have the Premier consider freeing the shackles on our Cabinet colleagues here and allow them to vote freely. I certainly want to thank my colleagues again for a good debate here, and I would ask for a recorded vote.

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Mr. Bromley, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Moses.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand. All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Mr. Blake, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod – Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. McLeod – Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Dolynny, Mr. Bouchard.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the vote: seven in favour, 11 opposed. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 8:

WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS ACT, 2013-14

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 8, Write-off of Debts Act, 2013-14, be read for the second time.

This bill authorizes the write-off of debts in accordance with the Financial Administration Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried. Bill 8 has had second reading and is referred to the committee.

---Carried

Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 9:

FORGIVENESS OF DEBTS ACT, 2013-14

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2013-14, be read for the second time.

This bill authorizes the forgiveness of debts in accordance with the Financial Administration Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried. Bill 9 has had second reading and is referred to the committee.

----Carried

Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee today? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would like to continue with Tabled Document 22-17(5), the Main Estimates for 2014-15, with the Department of Health and Social Services.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We will resume with that after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): I will call to order Committee of the Whole. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to recognize Ally MacInnis on the official record. She's a Page from Yellowknife Centre and I missed her under recognitions of visitors in the gallery. It's been my understanding she's been here almost two weeks as a Page. This is her second round being a Page. I reminded her there are several Members who were Pages, such as Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Abernethy, Ms. Colette Langlois, who is our Clerk, and certainly ourselves, and we can't forget Mr. Bromley. You never know, she may want to come back someday as an MLA. Thank you very much to Ms. MacInnis for helping us out.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Thank you, Pages, for all the hard work. If committee is agreed, we will go into detail on the Department of Health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): I will ask the Minister if he has witnesses to bring into the House.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses into the Chamber, please.

Mr. Abernethy, I will get you to introduce your witnesses for the record, please.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today on my left is Jeannie Mathison, the director of finance; and on my right, Debbie DeLancey, the deputy minister of Health and Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. My understanding is you had just a few final comments for the general comments.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We ran out of time on the clock last night before I was able to respond to all of the Members' opening comments. A number of the Members mentioned THSSI funding. I would just like to talk a little bit about the THSSI funding before we move on.

As I think everybody knows, THSSI was originally funded for five years in 2005 to 2010 and it was extended for two years for 2010 to 2012 and again for another two years, 2012 to 2014. The original intent and purpose of THSSI was to support health reform activities that addressed one or more of the following three broad goals: to reduce reliance, over time, on the health care system; strengthen community level services; and build self-reliant

capacity to provide services in the Northwest Territories.

In 2013-14 we had about \$7.53 million available through THSSI which we used for some core programs, things such as the physician staff in the amount of \$1.4 million; Stanton Dialysis Program, \$98,000; Physician Resident Support Program, \$160,000; nursing resources in small communities, \$222,000; nurse practitioners, \$750,000. We put some money into shared services and system innovation division for \$849,000; system initiatives for \$854,000; and medical travel, which was a big one, at \$3.2 million. Those are the THSSI-approved dollars in '13-14.

THSSI ends on March 31, 2014. In recognizing that we had used these dollars to do the types of initiatives that I have just listed, the three territories – Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories – put together a business case trying to encourage the federal government to put more money into this particular area. In collaboration with these territories, we pursued a new territorial five-year funding arrangement.

In June 2013 the three territories submitted a business case to the federal government seeking new funding of \$90 million over three years. The business case did not request continued funding for the existing THSSI expenditures other than some direct support for the medical travel costs. The business case outlined three proposed areas of funding to be shared by the three territories.

The first was health system improvements, which we are, as three territories, asking for \$13 million a year. What we are hoping that we could use those dollars for were improved management of mental health and addictions and chronic disease in our northern context, to maximize efficiency and reduce risk, and develop aging in place strategies.

The second category, we were hoping to get \$15 million a year for access to specialized and tertiary care and complex diagnostics, and the three territories are asking basically for \$3 million for improved case management and administration of medical travel and \$12 million per year to contribute to the cost of essential medical travel.

The third category was pan-territorial innovation, which we are asking for \$2 million a year.

According to the federal government's recent budget, the three territories will be allocated \$70 million over three years for a time limited – and this is critical – fund to increase health services in the three territories in priority health areas and to reduce the reliance on outside health care system on medical travel. That's \$20 million short of what the three territories were looking for. I think it's really important to note that the intent behind the \$70 million is not the same intent as THSSI. It is different money.

We have not received any details confirming the federal government's proposed territorial breakdown for the new funding or the specific priorities that will be funded, what we can use the money for. The budget address says \$70 million over three years for new targeted and time limited funds to increase health services in the three territories in priority health areas and to reduce the reliance on outside health care systems and medical travel. We obviously are pleased that the federal government supports ongoing territorial efforts to improve health systems in northern Canada and look forward to hearing these details of the funding and what we will be able to spend it on. One thing we do know is, because it is time limited, they have been very clear that anything we use those dollars for must have an exit strategy. So we cannot put these into permanent programs because we will not have the money on a permanent basis.

As Members know, the 2014-15 Main Estimates that are in front of us today includes proposed funding of \$7 million to allow some of the essential base activities to continue in the absence of THSSI funding, including funding for the Medical Travel Program at Stanton and direct service delivery by health care practitioners. Those dollars, as outlined in the budget for '14-15, are a one-time allotment to the Department of Health and Social Services. This isn't ongoing funding, but we have, in this budget in front of us, \$1.4 million for the physician staffing model, \$116,000 for dialysis at Stanton, \$160,000 for Physician Resident Support Program, \$322,000 for nursing resources in small communities, \$926,000 for nurse practitioners. We also have some money in there for shared services and system innovation division of \$1.08 million. There is \$3.2 million in there for medical travel. Once again, this is one-time funding this year only and it's not in the base. The fiscal framework that we are presented with does not provide this funding beyond 2014-15, based on the assumption that we were going to get THSSI.

We have got a new pot which we may not be able to use in the same ways that we have in the past and I don't believe we are going to be able to use that, so these dollars that we have put in this year, we are going to have to have continued discussions about how we continue to fund these things in the future. Right now future expenditures in this area are not built into the fiscal plan that the Minister of Finance has discussed on a regular basis, so these are additional costs. Should we choose to continue to put money in these areas, which I think is a good idea, it will have to be addressed in some capacity in future years.

So that's THSSI. We know that we have to find \$20 million this year to support the fiscal structure and \$10 million more next year, so we know we have some fiscal challenges which are obviously going to be increased as time goes on.

So, that's just in response to a number of Members who raised THSSI as a point of discussion yesterday.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Does committee agree that we concluded general comments for the Department of Health and Social Services? Should we go to detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): We will go to detail. We will go to page 8-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary... Sorry. Deferred until activity detail or information items are considered. Page 8-8, information item, infrastructure investment summary. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Page 8-9, information item, revenue summary. Any questions? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Minister for the information on the THSSI funding which is about to expire and on the new funding which we are about to get but we don't know what we're going to use it for. I was going to ask what the department intended to use it for, but I can appreciate that without the detail. But I am somewhat confused.

Before I go there, if the Minister could provide committee with the information that he listed off about the numbers and so on that THSSI is used for. I don't know if we have that or not, but it would be helpful if we had that listed, whatever he was reading from.

The Minister stated in his opening comments yesterday, I think I mentioned it in my general comments, as well, that \$3.2 million will address a base deficiency in Stanton Territorial's medical travel budget. I believe I heard the Minister say just now that this is one-time funding. I'd appreciate an explanation of the \$3.2 million. He also said \$5.2 million has been added to the budget to address the increased costs of children and adult placements outside of the NWT. So, on those two items, could I get an indication of whether or not they are both one-time funding? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The \$3.2 million that's in the budget for medical travel this year is the money I was talking about just a couple of minutes ago where we do have money for 2014-15, \$3.2 million, but it's not ongoing. Obviously we need to do some work there.

With respect to the \$5.2 million that I mentioned for southern placement for adults and children, and that's to go to different facilities in the South for

programs and service that are available for our high needs residents here in the Northwest Territories, has been added to the base and it is ongoing funding. Every year we end up coming for significant supps to cover those costs and we'll be coming at some point this fiscal year to cover those costs. We're trying to address that in the future by putting that in the base.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for clarifying that. I am very glad to hear that the money has been added to the base for outside placements. That's something that has been needed for quite a long time.

My last question here on this revenue page is: When the details of the federal funding are known, would the Minister commit to share that information with committee and have a conversation with committee about how the federal money is being used?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We don't have a lot of flexibility on the categories we will be able to spend those federal dollars in, but as we get more clarity around those categories that we can spend dollars and we have some concepts or ideas about where we might be able to utilize those dollars, I will absolutely have discussions with committee.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually have a question on 8-7. We blew by that page pretty fast. I'm thinking I could probably deal with my questions later on, but I just have some general questions. I'm happy to wait for Members to finish on 8-9.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe we are on 8-9. I want to formulate my questions regarding the reciprocal billing. I believe 8-9 is closely linked with 8-37 involving Non-Insured Health Benefits being paid back by the federal government. Now what we see here in terms of main estimates and revised estimates and what was in the past historically, I find it odd that we are seeing the same numbers repeat themselves. This amount we get in revenue, does it truly cover the full amount of Nunavut patients that come here for services and are we actually acquiring the full amount of those services with this revenue money? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an accountant type question, so what I'm going to do is go to Ms. Mathison to respond.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We think that they cover everything for the Nunavut patients, but these are estimates as presented here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Okay. So I guess to continue my questioning on here, there has to be some historical information with respect to the average billing that we're doing on behalf of our Nunavut territory and money is coming in from Non-Insured Health Benefits. So I'll formulate my question another way. Has there been a shortfall historically between what we're actually billing out and what we're receiving in in terms of revenue from the Non-Insured Health Benefits? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Non-Insured Health Benefits doesn't appear on this page. It is on the page that the Member referred to previously. I think it's page 8-37.

With respect to what we're billing back from Nunavut, we do bill on actuals, but we have to project based on past experiences. If you look at the first column, 2012-13 actuals, those are the actuals. The main estimates for 2013-14 were based on estimates. The revised main estimates are showing the same number, but in the next main estimates you will see 2013-14 in this column and you will see the actuals because by then we will actually know what they are. We are building upon those numbers for the 2014-15 calculations based on what we know from past usage.

MR. DOLYUNNY: I believe – and the Minister might want to correct me if I'm wrong – page 8-37 is directly linked to this program line. The billing is going to Non-Insured Health Benefits, as far as I'm aware. I guess the question still stands. Have there been shortfalls? What have those shortfalls been with the billings that we've been doing with Nunavut patients versus what we're getting in as revenue to cover those for those patients from Nunavut? Have there been historical shortfalls and are those shortfalls captured in these estimates? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. The dollars you see on page 8-37 are for NIHB are not revenue. We're not making money on that at all. We're receiving the dollars and providing the service.

MR. DOLYUNNY: So on page 8-9, these are revenues. Where are these revenues coming from for the reciprocal billing for services for Nunavut patients? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We provide services in the Northwest Territories for Nunavut residents and we charge Nunavut back for those services.

Therefore, it is a revenue we are bringing in which is why it appears on this revenue page.

MR. DOLYUNNY: These are First Nations patients. These First Nations patients are entitled to Non-Insured Health Benefits, which is paid out by the Government of Canada through Non-Insured Health Benefits. So, whether or not we're billing the territory of Nunavut, everything funnels back to our federal counterparts for the actual cheque. So, again, my question still stands. Have there been shortfalls and are those shortfalls embedded within the revenue summary on page 8-9? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We provide services to residents from Nunavut here in the Northwest Territories. We charge Nunavut. The relationship between the residents of Nunavut and their government with respect to NIHB is done there. We don't get involved in the discussions between Nunavut and the federal government. We have discussions with our residents who are covered by NIHB with the federal government. So a Nunavut resident comes in, whether they are NIHB or not NIHB, we provide services, we charge Nunavut, Nunavut then figures out their banking with respect to NIHB and the federal government. We're not involved in their negotiations or discussions.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Okay, so let me ask the question another way. Is the Government of Nunavut current for all billings for their patient services here in the Northwest Territories, and has that been accounted for should there have been any historical shortfalls from year to year?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As of November 2013, there is about \$2.54 million owed to the GNWT by Nunavut for health services. These receivables are clearly within acceptable time limits for payments, and accounts are considered up to date. We continue to receive dollars from them on a regular basis.

Per the GNWT public accounts as of March 31, 2012, there was about \$9.7 million owed to the GNWT by Nunavut, so that shows that we do collect on a regular basis, based on the actual costs.

MR. DOLYUNNY: With that one number that the Minister just gave of over \$9 million as arrears, that exceeds the actual full main estimate in relation to some of that billing line, so are we to assume that the numbers we have here for reciprocal billing are lower than what we normally do on a regular rolling average? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Those numbers are provided as money owed from Nunavut to the GNWT for a variety of services, not all health related, to government as a whole.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Alright, so let me ask this question in another way here. Has the difference, the delta, any potential monies that we are billing

out for patients, or basically patients are coming from Nunavut to the Northwest Territories to receive a CT scan, any type of diagnostic and we bill the territory of Nunavut for those services, are we capturing 100 percent at the end of the fiscal year for all of those billable services? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, the actual cost for all procedures is negotiated on an inter-jurisdictional reciprocal agreement. We believe right now that we are collecting all the dollars owed based on the formulas that we have agreed to.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm hearing that we believe, but accounting is about accuracy of dollars and cents. Does the department have and do they table this information? Is it readily available for committee to review? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, we have no indication that we haven't collected all of our dollars, recognizing that the inter-jurisdictional reciprocal agreements are negotiated every year, but we do collect all the dollars based on what we are able to charge based on the agreements we have in place.

MR. DOLYNNY: I believe that's not the answer to the question. The question still stands. Will the Minister and department share this financial information with committee? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Member can correct me if I've misunderstood him. If the Member is asking us to share our inter-jurisdictional reciprocal billing agreements on how things are charged, no problem.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Chair, that's not the answer to the question. I mean, if the Minister wants to share the terms of reference for the agreements, I'm happy to receive that, but the question still is asking about the aggregate accounting that we receive in terms of patient in-service billing and what we bill out for services. Would the Minister and department provide those numbers for review by committee? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Once again the Member can correct me if I'm wrong; it sounds like he's asking us to provide what we've billed and what we've received on a historic basis. I'd be happy to do so.

MR. DOLYNNY: Without sounding like a broken record, I'll ask again. Will the Minister agree to provide committee the full accounting of what is billed and what is received for the Government of Nunavut when it comes to medical billing? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'll say it again, that's pretty much exactly what I just said I was going to provide, what we billed and what we received. No problem. We'll provide that.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the Minister committing to that. If I can get that for the last three fiscal years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That's fine. We can do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thanks, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just have another question that arose on this page, listening to Mr. Dolyunny's back and forth. Where is the revenue from NIHB recorded on this page? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's not revenue, Mr. Chair. It's on page 8-37 because it's a third-party funding agreement.

MS. BISARO: Page 8-37 shows \$11 million going out. I presume we get money from the feds. Where is that recorded? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is the net in and out.

MS. BISARO: So we are spending \$11 million-something-or-other, \$11.9 million over what the federal government funds us for. Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Ms. Bisaro, you're talking about a different page. I'm just wondering if I can keep the detail and questions to the revenue page that we're on. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: I can save them for later, Mr. Chair, but I'm trying to find the revenue and apparently there is none.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Minister Abernethy, do you have any points to clarify that?

---Interjection

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Sorry, Mr. Abernethy. Can I get that on the record?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: No.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Okay. Ms. Bisaro, do you have any further questions?

MS. BISARO: No, I have no more questions on this page, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Alright. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to follow up on that, the hospital care and medical care for status Indians and Inuit, a couple pieces of revenue there. Is that not the Non-Insured Health Benefits revenue contribution?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to go to Ms. Mathison for that, but this is not Non-Insured Health Benefits.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This money is money from the federal government that is in our base revenue. It's a recovery of 95 percent of our expenses for hospital and physician services to Indians and Inuit.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Mathison. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, so it's a different... It's not related to Non-Insured Health Benefits, NIHB.

I know in the past we have been concerned because of transfers, I believe, for these expenses. I believe it's an annual transfer that we receive and this department is up 8 percent this year and that's not atypical, and that's not atypical for hospital and medical care to go up at that rate in the Northwest Territories, yet the federal government only increased their contribution by 2 percent or 2.2 percent per year. This has been, obviously, a bone of contention. That's a significant additional burden for us every year.

What is the status of that? It sounds like now there's perhaps a new formula where we get 95 percent of costs of whatever they are and our liabilities are limited to 5 percent. I'd just like to ask if I understand that correctly. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. NIHB covers things like dental and other extended benefits like medications and whatnot. The provision of care is provided within our facility for what would be considered more of the standard care. This covers that and it's negotiated with the federal government. It was negotiated many years ago and I believe – and if I'm wrong, correct me – we have a 2 percent standard flat rate. So our rate here increases by about 2 percent a year, which is less than the 8, obviously.

MR. BROMLEY: Okay, so just so I'm understanding this, there are other expenses that are covered elsewhere for these two categories. Is that correct and how do we fund them?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. I don't understand the question. Maybe the Member could clarify a little bit, that would be great.

MR. BROMLEY: I believe I heard that this represents 95 percent of the costs, these two figures added together, about \$30 million of some costs and we pay the other 5 percent and perhaps that expense is listed in here somewhere. Maybe the Minister can give me a heads-up on where that shows up in our O and M on the other side of the equation here. But I'm assuming that there are other costs beyond these. How and where are they covered?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. In different jurisdictions in the country things are funded in different ways on reserves and whatnot in southern Canada. By way of example, health services are paid by the NIHB First Nations Inuit Health Branch. In Canada, in the Northwest Territories rather, when we devolve down the responsibility for health care, we agreed to pay all those costs within our system. These dollars that you're seeing here, as far as revenues, were negotiated back then. They grow at, I think, about 2 percent a year. Our costs have far exceeded that. So anything that is not covered by these dollars coming in basically we eat as a health and social services system because we are committed to providing quality care to all residents of the Northwest Territories.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. I think I understand that. Perhaps I could ask the Minister to provide what total additional amount has summed up to over the last decade of additional costs that we are taking on because of the failure of the federal government to transfer payments at the rate that the real world is dictating and we have to suffer.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. We can certainly go back and pull out main estimates for the last 20-some years and show what was budgeted here and what was received here, but as far as what we spent or the cost for providing services to the Aboriginal people only would be darn near impossible to provide back that far.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks. I'm willing to accept an estimate. We certainly know what the department has increased each year; it's reported in these big thick documents. So just apply that and compare that to the 2.2 percent with it. That would be good to know.

It's something obviously we've been talking about for a long time. I know we were actively negotiating pushing in the 16th and I'd love to hear that we're still getting serious with the federal government on this. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Once again, this is based on formula financing and the amount we get as revenues increases 2 percent annually. We will go back and see, we'll be able to pull out from the mains what was there. So we'll get an idea of what we expected to come in. What we actually spent, we'll do our best. I don't believe we'll be able to go back 10 years, but we'll go back as far as we can and some of it still might be projections because it would be really impossible to figure out just for Aboriginal people what the cost of health care was in the Northwest Territories, but we will do our best and we will try to get something to Members.

MR. BROMLEY: Yes, I would very much appreciate that and I realize that that sort of level of estimate would be good. I don't want to make this too onerous. I'd also appreciate learning how long this situation has existed. When did we enter this

agreement that started at the 2.2 percent escalation rate and, also, is this an agreement that expires? Is there an end date to this? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. It started in 1988 and it's a set agreement. There is no end date, there is no opportunity to renegotiate.

MR. BROMLEY: That's all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Next on my list I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dolynny's questions kind of got me wondering and I'm aware of some of the reciprocal billing problems with Nunavut and sometimes there have been many occasions where they just outright refused the bills and refused to pay. Of course, there was a gap in that and I know that had been somewhat sorted out a number of years ago. What year I don't remember exactly, but I am familiar that that had been sorted out. So we had been actually subsidizing the Nunavut citizen and I do have some great concerns about this process, just in general, because does it come at a cost to our citizens. In other words, are we sending experts who are specialists in their areas, be it physicians or other types of skilled professionals to Nunavut, and does it come at a cost to our citizens and how are we covering these costs? Are we actually making money off this under this situation? So I guess that's kind of my first question.

How do we assess the cost? Do we make any money on this and is there any analysis? As we're trying to make money off this situation, are we missing out on opportunities to serve our citizens, which really we should be doing first? Thank you

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I remember during the last Assembly there was a lot of discussion around this because there was a fair amount owing at a particular point in time and there were some issues. I believe those issues, actually I know those issues were resolved before the end of the last government. Right now we have an inter-jurisdictional agreement that's based on cost recovery. We don't make money on this from Nunavut, but at the same time other provinces don't make money off of us when our residents are receiving services out of jurisdiction. We collect the dollars, as I said to Mr. Dolynny, that we bill and we get everything that we bill.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. I'm going to say maybe broadly I don't disagree with the philosophy then that if we don't make money other jurisdictions don't make money that, in essence, we're covering costs, I understand that philosophy and perhaps maybe in the wash it all works out in the bigger picture.

The issue I'm really trying to boil down to here – and I'm going to try to directly put my finger on it – is what type of cost analysis do we look at? For example – I'll use it by way of example – we sent a physiotherapist to, say, Cambridge Bay and I'm hearing that we've covered the costs of the flight to Cambridge Bay, those types of things, we've probably covered the cost of our physiotherapist we've taken out of Stanton to send there, but is there any analysis done on our patients having to wait for services back here, be it in Yellowknife or any other region they should be on we'll call it the physiotherapy circuit? So, is there a cost and impact on our residents, because I can only assume so. I mean, I've heard, albeit not as of late, but I've heard people having trouble getting into these types of specialized services because these services are on circuit serving Nunavut residents, not NWT residents. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Our health facilities, Stanton, by way of example based on the staff, provide services based on demand. So, if there is an increased demand as a result of Nunavut, they have built that into their planning process so that they can ensure that residents receive timely services.

MR. HAWKINS: Is the Minister saying, so I understand, that there is availability at all times and we are not refusing clients or we are not booking them further down the road for treatment or therapy, whatever the particular case may be, because of the availability of staff? Is he saying that there is more than enough staff and capacity built into our Stanton facility to address for those types of anomalies? As I understand it, they will travel for a week or close to a week servicing these things. That said, I just want to make sure that our residents aren't waiting unnecessarily, aren't able to book timely appointments at a cost, in essence, because we are serving other clients that are not residents.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, as I indicated, they staff based on demand, and demand does include Nunavut residents who are coming for services. Granted, those numbers are fairly low. Most of our residents, the vast majority, are obviously from the Northwest Territories. If there were no Nunavut patients, we may be in a position where there would be fewer employees at Stanton because we would have less demand. Stanton bases their employment structure and how many people they staff based on their demand.

I think I'm saying what the Member is saying. It doesn't have an adverse effect on our residents because, if you took Nunavut out of the mix, our staff size would decrease and we would be providing the same level of services to our northern residents.

MR. HAWKINS: Just changing gears, same kind of concept though. I understand we have a team that does an amazing job at fixing that equipment over at Stanton, that tech crew. I'm not sure what the exact name is and I almost feel embarrassed that I don't know the name of it, but the tech crew there that works on all the fancy equipment in Stanton certainly provide regional support and they get out to our regions. In essence, do we bill for other regions on that? Do we bill across authorities on that? Who picks up the cost of that? One of the Stanton folks who is a tech, who is an expert in fixing some of these heart monitor machines, has to go to Inuvik or has to go to Cambridge Bay or has to go to Rankin. How do those costs work? Maybe if they can explain that and the concerns about capacity and ability.

On the last tour we had as MLAs there, to say it bluntly, they looked overwhelmed by the amount of work that they do, and with the amount of work that they do I'm impressed on the amount of quality they punch out. It looks like it's a treadmill shop, that's for sure. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The bio-med team that does the repairs on medical equipment throughout the Northwest Territories are employees of Stanton. They do, through agreements between Stanton and the other authorities, individual agreements, go out and provide services on those authorities' equipment as necessary and it is billed back directly. This is one of the areas that we talk about on a regular basis being part of the back office and the shared services, because we could certainly benefit from economies of scale by having them providing services at a territorial level with not having to bill every time they go to a different authority.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm curious. How do we know the capacity level there is appropriate? I thought we also worked and serviced Nunavut equipment as well. Can the Minister speak to that? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Stanton manages their contract and their employees with respect to the bio-med services, I do believe. They do provide services to Nunavut but it's the same way they provide services to the other authorities. They have contracts with those authorities and they staff based on the contracts that they have for provision of services.

MR. HAWKINS: Maybe just a follow-up on another perspective to Mr. Dolynny's question. I think the Minister had pointed out we bill and we get paid for it. I guess he's going to provide some type of spreadsheet information on what's billed and what's covered. Can he also include what is billed and refused on this stuff? Thank you very much.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, that will come out in the report that we promised.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate the comment there that they will provide that information. Is the Minister in a position to speak about the disallowances in 2008-09? It looked like about \$34,000 in 2009-10, \$52,000 the following year. The following year of 2010-11 is \$610,000 but there is no information or allocation for the years 2010-11 and 2012-13. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm going to have to get that information from the Member because I'm not sure what he's actually talking about.

MR. HAWKINS: It's under Non-Insured Health Benefits five-year summary of expenses by authority and total revenue recoveries and it's my understanding it's actually from the Minister's office. It's an internal document. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Mr. Hawkins, can I just get clarification what page you are referring to?

MR. HAWKINS: I think it all links back to the reciprocal billing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've gone back to 8-37 on this. I think the information he's referring to is some detail we provided after discussions on the mains with committee. We will get more information for the Member on that.

MR. HAWKINS: Obviously we are running out of time this round, but I wouldn't mind some details as to medical travel. I would assume that we would have a revenue, if it's listed here on this page, that points to, for example, third-party insurance coverage. If it isn't on this particular page, I'm curious as to where it would show up and how much it would be.

To give a specific example, in my view the territorial government shouldn't be picking up all the costs. Insurance companies should be the first whistle stop on some of these expenses. As far as that goes, whether it's automobile accidents or, for example, federal employees, they have individual insurance that should be covering some of these things. What it ends up having to be is it's aggregated right down to the territorial taxpayer, which I'm not necessarily sure should be the first stop. It is, of course, the catch-all and that's what it's there for. That will be my last question on this particular one.

Where do I see how much money for a third-party billing when it comes to things like medical travel? I assume we have some revenue stream or line here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Third-party revenues for such things as the Member mentioned, like WSCC and other insurances, show up in the authority revenues

as presented in their individual audited financial statements.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. Next on my list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I have a question on the reciprocal billing. Do we also bill for the oil and gas and mining companies who have employees come into the North and use our facilities?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The agreements are not with the oil companies or businesses providing services in the Northwest Territories. They are with the jurisdiction in which the person lives. So if somebody working at a camp happened to be from Nova Scotia and they were injured and they had to use our facilities, we would charge back Nova Scotia, not the oil company. Our agreements are at a provincial and territorial level.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Committee, we are on page 8-9, information item, revenue summary. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Just one final clarification on 8-9. You have a reference here on program called special allowances for \$1 million. It seems to kind of repeat itself here. Can you describe what that is? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Director Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These special allowances are revenues that we receive, child tax credits for kids in the care of the GNWT.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Committee, page 8-9, information item, revenue summary. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm trying to get a sense, although I see the money is not carried forward into the main estimates. I remember being at the launch of the wait times reduction money, and what type of evaluation or what type of results did we actually see from it? I'm very curious on that. I mean, there must be some type of overall review now that the money has come and gone. I mean, to me, I didn't see any impact or change in, sort of, the system itself, so did the department do an actual review as to what the deliverable money caused, changed, affected, or improved?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Deputy Minister DeLancey.

MS. DELANCEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Being from Hay River, you should get DeLancey right. The Wait Times Reduction Trust was a five-year trust. It was a federal government agreement with all the provinces and territories, and the amount that the NWT received was relatively small. Wait

times are not as big an issue in our jurisdiction because, of course, many of the wait times occur in Alberta Health Services, so we did not see a significant change at our end. Alberta, there was a national evaluation and the senate committee looked at this as part of their review of the Canada health transfers, and I think the national conclusions were it didn't have as much of an impact as had been hoped.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm curious, maybe they could explain, and perhaps they explained it during business plans, but I may not have been there or certainly not there at all during that day when they had done this review, but I am curious why capital transfers keeps dropping significantly. We go from \$9 million a few years ago down to basically \$1.5 through main estimates and then revised just barely over \$1.1 million, and now down to \$300,000. Perhaps I can get some explanation in that area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Director Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The changes here are a direct result of accounting changes as directed by the public sector accounting body, and it relates to the timing of when we can recognize revenue for assets that have been donated to the GNWT.

MR. HAWKINS: I understand what assets are and donated are and timing. I hate to say this, but could you boil this down to an MLA level and a little bit of English, because some of us aren't accountants here. Maybe you can give us an example. One example would be fine – you don't have to give me 25 – and make it an MLA level, I'm sorry to say. Thank you.

MS. MATHISON: An example would be the funding that we receive from Infoway to support the EMR. We can only recognize that revenue per the public sector accounting guidelines when the asset is actually put into service, so we would bring that revenue in when the piece of equipment is put into service.

MR. HAWKINS: Okay. So it's full cost accounting and just because it showed up in the truck and it's parked, until it's plugged in and used and treated as 100 percent asset, ready and available, then it's then accounted for on the books. Got it. MLA accounting. I think I got that now.

The last question, I think, on this particular page – just because I'm noting the clock, we're at 6:00 now – professional fees have maintained the same. I guess my question really is around why is that the case. Do our professional fees not increase? Do they change at all? Is it based on a flat number which is it doesn't matter how we get there, it's \$180,000. Do we, as the GNWT, pay for the professional fees and are we talking about doctor fees or accreditation? I'm just trying to understand

why that's a flat trend and I notice it's under vital stats fees, but I'm noticing a flat trend when I say vital statistics fee, but I'm more targeting licence fees under professionals. Thank you very much.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The professional licence fees are for things like medical licences and things like that. With respect to how it's figured or calculated, I'll go to Director Mathison.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Director Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is again one of those situations where it's just an estimate based on prior actuals. Depending on the profession, there is a different rate for each licence.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Director Mathison. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm missing the first part for my first round, which is do we pay it? For example, do we pay doctors' professional fees? I guess the other thing is, is it affected by vacancies, and if so, what vacancies would this be attributed to? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. By way of example, physicians pay their own licensing fees and whatnot, but through terms and conditions of employment, nurses would pay theirs and maybe social workers would pay theirs, but a lot of them can be reimbursed.

MR. HAWKINS: So, in essence, we would be paying our own fees. Would they just apply back to the Government of the Northwest Territories and through their signed contracts and we would just pick up the costs?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's different for every profession, as was indicated. The doctors would pay the licensing fee and that's part of our revenue, but for professions like nurses, they're paying their licensing fee to a territorial body or through them to a Canadian body. So they'd pay those, but we reimburse some of our nurses in the Northwest Territories that are employees. So the nurses aren't showing up here, just the ones that are coming to us.

MR. HAWKINS: So, in essence, out of this \$180,000, what would the territorial government be reimbursing through its processes then? It just seems odd to me. I understand why we have to count it as revenue. That's fine, that's not the question, but it's based on how much would we actually be paying through people putting their application in because we agreed to cover their

professional fees, which seems a bit of a weird process, but obviously for accounting. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I indicated, for bodies like nurses, their registration fees are not coming to us and we would never be able to account that as revenue. But for people like physicians and social workers that pay their licensing fees to us, that would be, and the Member is right; through terms and conditions of employment we might be offsetting it a little bit for social workers, but we'll do a bit of an analysis on this to indicate or show what we're actually taking out and if we pay anything out of this particular area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thanks, Minister. Recognizing the clock, colleagues, I'm going to rise and report progress. Thank you, Minister and witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Do I have a seconder? Mr. Menicoche.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Programs at the rise of the House today.

Orders of the day for Friday, February 21, 2014, at 10:00 a.m.:

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

10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 10, Northwest Territories Lands Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-17(5), Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2013 Final Report
 - Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 21st, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.