



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

5th Session

Day 90

17th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 7, 2015

Pages 6757 – 6826

The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, October 7, 2015****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

authorities and responsibilities for the management of public lands, water and resources, and the public service was engaged to meet the challenges. We also saw the

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 239-17(5):
NWT PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, throughout the term of the 17th Legislative Assembly and guided by 20/20: A Brilliant North, the NWT Public Service Strategic Plan, this government has made it a priority to ensure that the public service is prepared to meet the needs of Northerners now and in the future.

Residents of the NWT want to share in the benefits of an economically stable, well-governed territory. They want a healthy, educated population able to participate fully in a diversified, sustainable economy. They want an independent North built on partnerships and responsible stewardship that will sustain present and future generations. The GNWT is committed to helping our residents achieve these aspirations for themselves, their families and their communities by providing the right support, programs and services to the public.

Northerners are now exercising devolved authorities and responsibilities for public lands, water and resources. A public service with the capacity to meet our growing role in our own development is more important now than ever before.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the 2014 Public Service Annual Report. This report, the last during the term of the 17th Assembly, provides information on the management, composition and development of the public service and highlights some significant achievements of the 2014 calendar year.

It was an important year in the political development of the NWT. The GNWT underwent considerable reorganization as we assumed new

successful completion of initiatives to standardize GNWT transactional processes improving consistency and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to focus on the recruitment, retention and development of an effective, responsive workforce representative of the people it serves. Human resource management accountability is taking on an increasingly important role as we seek to align personnel management with service outcomes and modern global best practices.

We are developing a home-grown labour force to support our economic development. Through the Regional Recruitment Program, 16 residents have been appointed to trainee positions throughout the NWT in the communities of Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Fort Providence and Fort Smith.

We are also preparing the next generation of employees by supporting northern youth in their transition from school to the workplace and the beginning of their professional careers. The GNWT had another successful Summer Student Employment Program with departments and agencies hiring 341 students in 2015. Of the 341 summer students hired, 55 percent were indigenous Aboriginal and 44 percent were indigenous non-Aboriginal. We have also hired 22 northern graduates as interns.

The continued development and prosperity of the NWT depends on educated youth, and our hopes that they return home to the North when their studies are complete to meet our current and future occupational shortages and to become role models for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, we reaffirm learning and development of our employees as an ongoing priority. We work to ensure occupational health and safety in our workplaces. We promote understanding and awareness of diversity and an appreciation of the rich cultures upon which our territory is founded and which inform our programs and services.

The GNWT's efforts towards an inclusive and representative workplace and our strong support for

youth employment led to our repeat national recognition as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers and Canada's Top Employers for Young People for 2015.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a busy and productive four years. The members of the public service, who work so hard to support the priorities of this House, have constantly impressed me. There is still much work to do but I know that, with a stable, engaged public service dedicated to the people of the NWT, future Assemblies will be just as successful. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 240-17(5):
SKILLS 4 SUCCESS

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, later today I will be tabling the Skills 4 Success 10-Year Strategic Framework. This framework capitalizes on the skills, knowledge and talents of the people of the Northwest Territories, the number one resource behind our economy and sustainable communities.

Over the past year, we engaged with many stakeholders for input and feedback on the development of the framework. We met with business, industry, Aboriginal governments, the federal government, non-governmental organizations, youth, job seekers, communities and education partners. Their collective knowledge helped identify new strategic directions for adult and post-secondary education programs, supports and pathways in the NWT.

In the spring we held the first Skills 4 Success symposium. Nearly 170 labour market, education and training partners attended. We heard a collective call for change and the need to build a strong culture of education and employment. It was extremely productive, with robust discussions, feedback, shared experiences and a commitment to demonstrate leadership for change. A full results report from the symposium is available online.

Mr. Speaker, this government also partnered with the Conference Board of Canada to examine the NWT's forecasted labour demands over the coming years. We have learned that over the next 15 years, approximately 75 percent of job opportunities will require college, apprenticeship or university education. Job opportunities open to people with less than a high school education is forecasted to be less than 10 percent.

This is a challenge for the NWT, as some residents require training and further education to be considered for an available job. The demand for skilled labour will only intensify in the coming years when more people retire from the labour market.

Skill development starts at the earliest ages. The GNWT is making progress with comprehensive early childhood development initiatives and improvements to the K to 12 education system. The Skills 4 Success Framework will build on these efforts and drive change to improve student transitions and pathways to advanced education and careers aligning with labour market demands and opportunities.

The four goals of the framework provide a solid foundation for what we have to do: increase skill levels through relevant education and training; bridge education and employment gaps through targeted supports; grow the NWT workforce through partnerships; and improve decision-making with relevant labour market information. Placing priority on skill development and closing education and employment gaps will help drive positive social and economic outcomes across the North.

Mr. Speaker, making generational change will require strong leadership at all levels. The framework is the first step in a 10-year process. Leading into the 18th Legislative Assembly, we will develop concrete actions on how we plan to achieve our vision, goals and priorities.

We want everyone to have opportunities to succeed in life, whether it is advancing their education, gaining employment, or seizing a business opportunity. Providing these opportunities through partnership, comprehensive information and strategically developed programs is critical to our overall success as a territory, and we are acting on the call to create those opportunities. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 241-17(5):
REPORT ON THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
POWER CORPORATION

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, or NTPC, continues to adapt and manage its resources to meet the needs of the ever-changing environment of power generation in the North.

For the second year in a row, NTPC is addressing low water on the Snare hydro system; however, extremely low water at Bluefish this year has added to the challenge. While NTPC is effectively managing the use of water and diesel to ensure a stable power supply to the North Slave, this government, with the support of the Legislative Assembly, contributed \$20 million to ensure that additional diesel costs were not incurred by the customer.

Mr. Speaker, looking to develop long-term solutions, NTPC is issuing an expression of interest, for both solar and wind installations,

possibly at the Snare Lake hydro facility in the North Slave to determine if there is the possibility of economically adding these alternative energy sources to the generation mix to help offset some of the diesel, should this drought persist.

The 2015 Energy Charrette provided direction, and NTPC continues to make decisions and move forward with initiatives that are aligned with the charrette's outcomes. Specifically, a power purchase agreement has been signed with the community of Lutselk'e to purchase the power from a community-owned solar installation and surplus power generated at the Taltson hydro plant is being used to supply interruptible heat to community-owned buildings. NTPC continues to partner with the newly formed Department of Public Works and Services along with the Arctic Energy Alliance to promote the PowerWise conservation campaign acting in the best interest of the customer by helping them lower their power bills, ultimately lowering the cost of living in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, Colville Lake had phase one of its solar array installed in 2014, which peaked in May 2015 at 54 kilowatts of solar energy. The completion of the second array occurred in June 2015. These two installations, in conjunction with the new Colville Lake power plant, including battery energy storage, will provide the community with a higher level of reliable power and is an innovative project that has drawn considerable attention from power generation experts outside the territory.

Introducing additional alternative renewables into the thermal communities includes the research of two potential wind sites in the Beaufort-Delta region. At this time, research continues to determine which of the two sites – Storm Hills or High Point – has the best business case based on amount of wind recorded and the distance of the site from town; the further away from the community, the more expensive to transmit.

Mr. Speaker, NTPC will also complete the conversion from high pressure sodium, or HPS, to LED streetlights in all thermal communities by the end of this fiscal year. LED streetlights cost, on average, \$40 per month per light, less than HPS, which will result in a significant savings for community governments.

Mr. Speaker, in the first 14 months of the Inuvik liquid natural gas, or LNG, plant operation, \$1.1 million was saved as compared to the diesel-only alternative and the use of LNG displaced 2,300 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in the community. With a showing this strong, NTPC and the Department of Public Works and Services are completing a business case and design feasibility for a new LNG storage and generation facility in the town of Fort Simpson. However, to ensure it is the best solution for that community, the business case

will include a comparison against other alternatives such as biomass combined heat and power solutions.

Mr. Speaker, to assist the GNWT, Natural Resources Canada and Arctic Energy Alliance to track energy consumption of their commercial buildings in Jean Marie River, NTPC is piloting an Advanced Metering System, or AMS, in that community before the end of this fiscal year. All 42 customers will have new AMS meters installed that provide usage at various intervals for tracking purposes. However, there are other beyond-the-meter benefits that can be used in the future to provide customers with two-way meter communications to manage other household appliances and alarms.

Continuing to look for ways to lower the cost of living and the cost of power, NTPC bid on the Town of Hay River's power distribution request for proposals and will continue to work with the community to look at lowering its costs. Hay River is looking for an asset valuation before they make a decision.

Under normal circumstances, I would be tabling the fiscal 2015 annual reports for NT Hydro and NTPC during this session of the Legislative Assembly. However, this year NT Hydro and NTPC are converting to the Public Sector Accounting Standard, and as a result of the additional work required to report under this new standard, the year-end audit is taking longer than previous years. For fiscal 2015 and going forward, NT Hydro will now be consolidated within the GNWT public accounts on a line-by-line basis, increasing the disclosure related to this Crown corporation.

NTPC will continue to operate as efficiently as possible, concentrating on providing safe, affordable and reliable power generation. NTPC will also continue to support the GNWT energy and solar strategy by working together with the Department of Public Works and Services energy division to incorporate more renewables into the Territories' power generation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 242-17(5):
NWT TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, in June 2015 the Department of Transportation tabled our multi-modal Transportation Strategy, entitled "Connecting Us." The strategy defines the challenges and opportunities related to improving road, air, marine and rail services for residents, communities and businesses across the NWT over the next 25 years. I am pleased to report that the department is implementing the updated

Transportation Strategy and making substantial progress under the three key strategic initiatives: strengthening connections, capturing opportunities, and embracing innovation.

The department is strengthening connections by rehabilitating sections of the existing highway system and improving air infrastructure. This work to rehabilitate highway embankments, road surfaces and drainage structures will increase the reliability and safety of our highway system, create employment, training and business opportunities for Northerners, and will reduce long-term maintenance costs. We have also delivered several improvements to our community airport assets, including runway repairs, installation of new runway lighting systems, and improvements to several air terminal buildings and passenger shelters.

Work continues to capture new sustainable economic opportunities for the Territories by advancing planning work and building strong business cases for three potential new all-weather highway corridors: the Mackenzie Valley Highway from Wrigley to Norman Wells; an all-season road into the Tlicho region; and improving road access into the Slave Geological Province.

Should these new corridors advance, they will substantially improve mobility and employment opportunities for Northerners and enable public and Aboriginal governments to capture new revenues associated with sustainable economic development across the NWT. This will be a critical investment when resource activity is predicted to decline. Extension of our all-weather highway system will also increase reliability over our current public winter road system, which is challenged by the effects of climate change.

The department continues to embrace innovation by testing new adaptation strategies for construction and maintenance of our highways and winter roads, improving our online services to residents, and seeking innovative public and private sector partnerships to improve road, air, marine and rail services in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the department has made significant progress since its inception 25 years ago. Despite these successes, we still have substantial work to do to support our residents, businesses and visitors. By measuring our progress, we can set new and greater goals to bring our transportation system to the next level. At the appropriate time today, I will table the 2015 Transportation Report Card. This document is directly linked to Connecting Us and provides up-to-date metrics and performance measures for each mode of transportation in the NWT. This will be followed by a four-year action plan tabled during the first session of each new Legislative Assembly such as the one anticipated to be held in February 2016.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the Department of Transportation over the past 25 years. I especially want to acknowledge the dedicated work of our employees, contractors, our policing partners, federal regulators and transportation service providers who work night and day to ensure transportation services are provided across the NWT.

The next 25 years hold significant opportunity for our territory and for the Department of Transportation to continue connecting Northerners to opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING NEEDS AND AVAILABILITY IN THE NWT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we discussed the NWT Housing Corporation during the capital budget deliberations last week, I expressed concern about the number of public housing units available in the NWT, especially in Yellowknife. Not only do we need public housing but there's a well-documented need for transition housing, seniors housing and disabled persons housing.

Last year the YWCA in Yellowknife, a provider of transition housing in Yellowknife, reported a lengthy waiting list for their units. This year, in spite of an addition of 18 new units at Lynn's Place and 55 places moved from Education, Culture and Employment to the NWT Housing Corporation public housing, there's been little change in those long waiting lists.

As we heard yesterday from Mr. Bromley, the Y's Rockhill Family Housing Facility has 100 families on their waiting list. That's families, Mr. Speaker, not people. Lynn's Place has 50 people on their waiting list and Yellowknife Housing Authority has a list of 152 singles or families looking to get into a public housing unit.

It's not just individuals and families who need housing help. The need for seniors housing in Yellowknife and the NWT is well known and acknowledged by both the Yellowknife NGO Avens and the GNWT Health and Social Services. The government is taking some action to alleviate the need for seniors housing outside of Yellowknife, but as we've heard many times over the last year, it's not enough.

The number of homeless people in Yellowknife is estimated at 150 and I have no idea of the extent of the problem in other communities, but I know that it's there. As we heard yesterday many times, the

housing needs of NWT disabled persons are urgent.

If we want productive, effective, contributing NWT residents, we need to ensure that housing is available, affordable and accessible to all. Increasing the accessibility of housing to all NWT residents is a huge need in our territory. It must be made a priority for the 18th Assembly as it was for the 17th. We have made some progress in this Assembly in meeting housing needs, but not nearly enough. We need a coordinated across-government strategy to deal with housing needs across the continuum of housing. I hope Members here returning in the 18th Assembly will see that that happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF ORDER OF THE NWT
RECIPIENT – MR. BRUCE GREEN

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to recognize a Hay River constituent, Bruce Green. He has been chosen as the recipient of the 2015 Order of the Northwest Territories. It is the highest honour of the Northwest Territories and takes precedence over all the orders, decorations and medals conferred by the government and the Legislative Assembly of the NWT.

A member of the Order is entitled to wear the insignia of the Order as a decoration and to use ONWT after his/her name, and membership is for life.

Bruce Green has devoted his life to teaching. He began teaching in 1967 and took up teaching in Hay River in 1974 with his wife, Marilyn. Bruce has a wealth of knowledge and experience in many fields, but most people know him as a northern science guy. His passion is science. He has shared his expertise in northern biology and archeology, and he was involved in promoting the Northern Tundra Science Camp offered to Grade 11 students from across the NWT.

Bruce has represented the Territorial Farmers' Association and the GNWT at the 5th Circumpolar Conference in Sweden where he did a presentation on cold weather composting. Bruce provided his expertise in providing the Resource Manual of Practical Ideas, developed to include traditional and cultural learning in science curriculum at the primary level.

Through the years, Bruce has been a mentor, coach and active member of several clubs and associations, such as Biathlon Canada, the NWT Biathlon Association, NWT Wrestling, the Hay River Ski Club, the Territorial Farmers' Association and the NWT Literacy Council.

Bruce has twice received the Hilroy Scholarship Award for Innovative Teaching and Programs. He has received Sport North awards for instructing and coaching wrestling and has been recognized as Hay River's Citizen of the Year. Most recently, Bruce was inducted into the NWT Education Hall of Fame for his dedication to teaching in the Northwest Territories.

Bruce remains involved in the community and is instrumental in volunteering and planning programs, such as the Christmas Bird Count, beaver watching, owling, search for fossils, and many other educational, interesting meetings. Bruce also has musical talents and is often seen to be playing the organ in the Catholic Church.

Bruce and his wife, Marilyn, who is also a teacher, have lived in Hay River for over 38 years, raised their six children in a loving, caring and educational home. Bruce is also the proud parent of Olympic athlete, Brendan Green. We are thankful that Bruce and his family have decided to stay in the North, where I'm sure he will continue to contribute to the well-being of our community.

I'm pleased today to congratulate Bruce Green on this honourable recognition. On behalf of Hay River, thank you, Bruce, for all that you do for others and for Hay River and for the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REFLECTION ON TIME AS A MEMBER OF
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NWT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my penultimate day in the House, I note that governments all over the world are facing huge challenges. Some are responding responsibly, others not. I believe this government is failing our people and our land at a critical time when we can ill afford to be led down the wrong path.

Eight years ago, during my first Member's statement, I read from the 2000 Earth Charter that says, "We stand at a critical moment in the Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward, we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms, we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace."

I went on to note that I was excited about the possibilities and the promise that's offered in the solutions to these challenges, but that it would take

new thinking and new ways of doing things. But instead, we are frantically trying to do the same old things in the same old ways and are rather insanely expecting other results.

I noted then that how we do things can be a big part of the solution, benefitting all our residents and our northern and global environments, but where decisive action was required, we've taken only timid steps. While we could do the usual government things in new beneficial ways, we haven't. Is it us? Is it consensus government, under which decisive action is unlikely? Is it our Premier, federally trained and with 30 years as a bureaucrat under his belt, unable to change course when evidence demands it? Possibly. Leadership is important. But under our model of government, every MLA plays a key role in helping us move forward or holding us back.

To me the biggest bottleneck is the lack of evidence-based decision-making, the degree to which an uninformed statement made with supreme confidence can undermine decisions that could and should be based on solid evidence is astounding.

We leave many great challenges for the 18th Assembly to wrestle with. We leave huge costs of living in an economy which favours a few. We remain unprepared for soaring climate change impacts. We leave burgeoning debt and dwindling revenues.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Yet, while some costs are unavoidable, it is possible to address these issues in progressive ways that can benefit our people and our land if we choose. I wish this 18th Assembly the very best for finding the best path forward.

Later today I will speak about opportunities they may wish to consider. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING AND POLICING SERVICES IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last four years, I've brought up growing concerns of the services in Tsiigehtchic, whether it be nursing, or RCMP. At this time of year, the residents feel a little better because we have a nurse on hand in the community, and with the growing number of elders we have in the community and the needs, people feel much safer.

With the RCMP, we had the department committing to having an RCMP overnighting in the community of Tsiigehtchic this summer and in place by this fall. But yet today there is still no action on this.

With all the technology today, whether it be campers, that's all the department needs to have to offer this service in the community. You know, whether they have to pitch the tents, I mean, we have to find some solution here to provide these services in our communities, especially when we have commitments.

I'll be asking the Minister questions later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR CONSENSUS GOVERNMENT IN THE NWT

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've come to the last couple days of this session, I thought I'd make a statement here. I'd like to speak on consensus government.

I support consensus government. As a new MLA here, I was able to get involved in the budget process, involved in committee, involved in everything in the government right from the get-go. I support consensus government. I know we need to improve it, but I've been part of the Transition Committee this summer on ways that we can improve consensus government, the way we can make it better for the public, for the Regular Members and for the Cabinet.

In consensus government I don't have to tow a party line. It's easy. My mandate is Hay River. I represent Hay River on a number of issues. Whenever I have a question, I just need to go home; I'll get my mandate again. I just need to talk to people, have a constituency meeting and put it out to the people as a question. Whether that topic is dredging, fishing industry, northern manufacturing, Mental Health Act changes, whether it's a school swap, that's an example, Mr. Speaker. We had a discussion about school swap. We went home. Both groups told us no, we don't want a school swap. That's an example of consensus government. We're given back our mandate; don't accept that. We didn't accept it. We're dealing with the issue going forward.

We do need to improve consensus government and I think the key to that is communication. We need the government to communicate with Regular Members how things are being done and when things are being done, not just on the minimum amount of time but through the whole process.

Communication is a two-way street. Regular Members here need to be trusted with that information. We're given that information early, so we need to rebuild that trust. We need to rebuild the trust that Regular Members get that information and it's not going to end up on social media; it's not

going to end up on some press release right after it's given.

For some reason, like I said, when I first got here, people talked about how the hallways had mikes in them, because as soon as we had a conversation, everybody seemed to know about it in the building. So, in order to improve consensus government, we need to improve our communication. We need to improve trust.

Consensus works for us in a small jurisdiction. It's easy. If we had party politics, eventually somewhere down the line some community may be left out. If my community isn't represented by the government, then I'm going to be left out in the cold. Consensus government works in the Northwest Territories and is strong and is alive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October 4th to 10th is Mental Illness Awareness Week, and the theme for this year is I am Stigma Free. It's an opportunity to learn about and educate others on mental illness, but more importantly, it's an opportunity to take action on mental health issues.

Taking action is exactly what this government has done. The Standing Committee on Social Programs, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, over the course of the summer and this fall did a very strong review and consultations with people of the Northwest Territories. We travelled to nine communities and had about 17 written submissions. We had consulted with a lot of professional organizations on updating our Mental Health Act, which was outdated for about 30 years.

The families across the Northwest Territories, residents of the Northwest Territories told us how they felt, told us about experiences that they've been dealing with in terms of issues that they've been dealing with and the Mental Health Act, let us know what the gaps in services were and what was needed.

It was a great opportunity, and later today committee will be reading in a report from all those findings. I hope people in the Northwest Territories who gave information, who gave us direction to update this Mental Health Act will be listening in and will be seeing what we have to offer and what we have to bring to the table.

With that said, I just wanted to take this opportunity. We have two days left in the House. The Mental Health Act and additions has been strong on my agenda. I'm really glad to see that the Mental Health Act has had its due course, has had its

respect in this House and is getting updated for the first time in about 30 years.

I just want to thank everybody who contributed to what we are going to be passing here later on today in Committee of the Whole, and also who attended the meetings in the communities. I'd like to thank the Members whose communities we visited for setting up those meetings. We'd like to thank all the front-line staff as well as family and friends who have been affected by mental health illness, coming out and showing us your support, if not giving us information.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. MOSES: I just want to take one final opportunity here to thank all members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, who had a lot of late nights going through the reports, doing the follow-up; the staff who helped us along the way as well as getting up early mornings, putting on all those kilometres to ensure that we listened to as many residents as possible to update this Mental Health Act.

I just want to also let family, friends and people who have been affected know that today we represent all those who have been affected by mental illness, whether it's acute to severe, or tragic or fatal, that it's not going to happen again and that this government is taking the first steps to make sure that, in fact, is true. We're going to start fighting to support, to get the services in your communities, to get the services for the front-line workers and the staff so that we can help people who are affected by mental illness.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ECONOMIC POTENTIAL IN SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our North is rich in resources, and yet we have yet to fully untap the potential of our people, our youth. We have potential in our lands. The trick to any government is to connect that potential with each other. That's the trick of any leadership, any people. How do we untap the potential of our young people, the ones who are going to school, with the opportunities that are rich in our lands? Through imagination, through initiatives.

The Sahtu sits in the midst of amazing wealth and resources, but we have not yet realized how we have access to this wealth and these resources. It's sitting there waiting for us. The closest we have come was in the 1930s and '40s, first with the uranium mine and Great Bear Lake, tapping that resource, and then the Canol pipeline in the '40s. The key part of these two projects were done

without any input or tapping the knowledge from the Aboriginal people, the owners of the land. Today in the Sahtu this is not the case. We have a land claim that was negotiated and settled. It has the highest constitutional protection in Canada. This is the highest law in Canada.

The Sahtu is rich in its economic opportunities. We have a way to realize we have a way to participate with this government in developing the region. We have a labour force that wants to work. It does not want to be dependent on government handouts. We have resources that need to be untapped.

I will ask further questions of the Minister of ITI at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN NAHENDEH REGION

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak about the mental health services in the Nahendeh region. It's often hard to talk about, but there's never any shortage of tragic and painful things going on in our communities.

Addictions-related problems keep surfacing in part because of things that the residential school legacy left behind. Residents need more help if they're going to recover from things like drug and alcohol abuse. People need to heal from the painful things that happened.

I understand that the report on the new Mental Health Act will be tabled today. There's certainly been a lot of talk about it on the this side of the House. One of the things that the standing committee found is how many front-line positions are vacant across the Northwest Territories. That's a concern in my region where residents of Fort Simpson, Fort Providence and Fort Liard have gone for long stretches of time without access to mental health workers. In Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake and Wrigley, help is even thinner on the ground.

Limited funding is a concern. A \$10,000 program for Trout Lake gets 50 percent of it used for air travel alone. This must also be reviewed and addressed.

We're all hoping for a brighter future with a new Mental Health Act. Later, during the session in Committee of the Whole, we will hear about how the updated act will benefit the people of the Northwest Territories, and I look forward to those discussions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MINISTERIAL TRAVEL CLAIMS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Eight weeks ago today I wrote an e-mail to the Minister of Finance because of complaints I received from the public about Minister Ramsay's most recent travel claim to a luxury hotel in Quebec and using a luxury car. In my e-mail I had asked a number of questions about the luxury rental vehicle, luxury hotel, government paying for Ministers going to weddings and many more questions along the lines of Minister's signing off their own travel claims, but one of the concerns I raised was how long has this been going on. So I specifically asked the Minister of Finance to have an independent review of Minister Ramsay's travel claims for the past year. I know this can happen because it does happen regularly. So I asked for an independent review because I think it falls well within the realms of the ability.

I often hear that government bean counters go months after travel claims have been filed and they audit them for clarification and confirmation of expenses. If an error has been processed in good faith, I'm prepared to accept that for what it is. Small administrative errors happen. We're all human. It's easy to tick a box off accidentally and sometimes even unknowingly. However, if an error is habitual, then we do have some problems. An example of that could be claiming dinners repeatedly as your per diems, but the conference or meetings all seem to provide them. That would be wrong.

I know this Minister has flown friends and family around and didn't offer to pay for them at first, until I complained to the Comptroller General, who, once reviewed the situation, found my point correct and the Minister did pay the money back. What I find interesting is I sent the e-mail and it was received by the Finance Minister on Wednesday, August 12th, but it took him two days after my e-mail was sent to reply that Minister Ramsay has called for a review on his own self.

I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but when you look at Friday's newspaper of that week when it hit the streets of Yellowknife and me making a statement saying this needs to be done, coincidence starts to add up. Two days to be able to call the reviewers on their own self starts to make you wonder. The Minister has justified his expenses in Monday's paper, stood by them very strongly, but then all of a sudden, wait a minute, he changes his mind.

The fact remains that the reasonable request is outstanding. If a simple error has been made, I still stand by that point; accidents happen. But if it's habitual, we need to be asking ourselves, how do we correct this?

I brought this point up again to the Minister of Finance when we were out at the Caucus retreat

over a month ago, that he didn't answer all my requests in the e-mail. The point is, this review is still outstanding and it's reasonable to be done. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WORLD HOMELESS DAY, OCTOBER 10TH

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Since 2012 over 100 countries around the world have recognized this coming Saturday, October 10th, as a World Homeless Day. This is to draw attention to homeless people's needs locally and provide opportunities for the community to get involved in responding to homelessness.

In recognition of World Homeless Day, I want to take a moment to voice my concerns about the impact of homelessness in small communities, like those in my Deh Cho riding.

Homelessness is one of the most chronic and damaging social problems in the NWT. Adequate housing provides a foundation for physical and mental health, economic well-being and strong communities. Chronic housing shortages, on the other hand, are linked to family violence, addictions, low graduation rates, suicide and severe respiratory infections and other communicable diseases in children. As we know, the North experiences all of these problems at higher rates than elsewhere in Canada.

Here are some other facts listeners may not be aware of: According to the 2006 Census, homeownership in the NWT is 25 percent lower than in Alberta. For many, social housing is the main if not only option. Many of the homeless are not eligible for public housing. According to Dr. Nick Falvo, director of research at the Calgary Homeless Foundation, social housing in the NWT is prioritized for persons who are physically disabled or over 60. As a result, says Mr. Falvo, "When a vacancy occurs for a bachelor or a one-bedroom unit, a homeless person without dependants, who does not meet one of the above criteria, has never, and will never, access a unit under the current system. Many of these people leave their home communities for Yellowknife and other regional centres. An evaluation of Yellowknife's Day Shelter done in 2011, found out just one-third of the people using it were actually from Yellowknife. Almost half were from other NWT communities.

According to the NWT Housing Corporation's own website, "Homelessness in smaller communities often takes a different form than what it seems in larger communities. These are residents that are unable to access social housing because of past behaviour, arrears or other tenant issues, or residents in situations where the availability of housing has limited their options."

Mr. Speaker, I'm bothered to learn that even though applications were received from every region, not a single community in my riding received funding from the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. NADLI: Not a single community in my riding received funding from the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in 2014-15 under the Small Community Homelessness Fund. Homelessness is a debilitating social problem in every community in the NWT. Given their very limited options for affected residents of small communities, I believe the Northwest Housing Corporation has an obligation to ensure that homelessness funding is fairly shared amongst all regions.

Later today I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY OF
MR. JONAS BEAULIEU
OF FORT RESOLUTION

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

[Translation] ...died in the hospital here today or a few days ago. So, I'm going to talk to him in English.

Over the last weekend, [Translation ends] Jonas Beaulieu passed away at the age of 93, surrounded by his family. Jonas passed peacefully with his family and caregivers all around him for his last days

Jonas was born September 7, 1922, to Louison and Marie Beaulieu. He married Violet on January 12, 1953, in Fort Resolution, where they raised a family of nine, four sons and five daughters.

Jonas attended mission school until he completed Grade 7. He later obtained a certificate in diesel mechanics while in the hospital with tuberculosis. He loved working and creating with his hands. From building many things for his family, like boats, furniture and fixing anything that had a motor, he was given the nickname "Papa Fix" as a result.

Jonas was a proud man who didn't believe in asking for help. Violet and he saved their money and, in 1964, built a large, loving home to raise their family in. His strong faith and a love for playing music led him to play the organ in church and he continued to do so for 29 years. Jonas was a devoted husband, role model and inspiration to all Metis people in Fort Resolution.

Jonas was predeceased by three sons, Stephen, Maurice and Gregory. He is survived by his wife, Violet, and six children, Mildred McQuinn (David), Gladys Morin (Don), Lucille Harrington (Paul Jr.), Brenda McKay (Melvin), Larry Beaulieu, and Myra Beaulieu (Marc). He had 14 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

I personally have known Jonas since I was a small child. I was good friends with his late son, Maurice. When we were children I didn't know how to ride a bike and everybody else who was six rode a bike. I was a slow learner. Jonas made a tricycle with a chain that could keep up to bicycles. It had 20-inch wheels and so on, so I could learn how to ride a bike and also keep up to everybody else. He made that for Morris, and Morris quickly learned how to ride a bike.

He was an inventor of sorts. Many years ago I went to Jonas's house with my dad and he showed us how he converted a hot water heater from electrical to fuel. I think that was the first time I saw a fuel-fired hot water tank. I didn't understand the significance of that. I was just a little boy.

Jonas was truly a lovely man. He is somebody who will be missed by his family, friends and his community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF ORDER OF THE NWT
RECIPIENT – SONNY MACDONALD

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to take a few moments of the House time to acknowledge, recognize and pay tribute to the award recently bestowed on Sonny McDonald, Order of the NWT.

Sonny McDonald was a long-term employee of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. For 17 years he held the fort on the Mackenzie River Basin Board, as we slowly got our thinking clear, and left just before we finally negotiated an agreement with Alberta, an issue that he always brought up to me as something that was undone and needed to get busy on.

He's also very well-known internationally as a carver. As you can see today, he's not in the best of health, but he's still a presence, and the carving to your left, Mr. Speaker, is a Sonny McDonald carving.

I would just like to congratulate him and take that opportunity. Thank you.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to recognize my wife, Melody McLeod, and Auntie Germaine Michel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize students from the Aurora College Social Work and Nursing programs who are visiting the Legislature today. They are accompanied by their instructors, Vanessa Rankin and Jodi Brennan. I am going to attempt to pronounce these names, and if I get any wrong, please don't hold it against me.

Within social work we have Michelle Bourke, Diana Bui, Jessika Claros, Jordon Moffitt, Amanda Pike, Romy Quackenbush, Sade Sada and Alice Thrasher.

The nursing students we have are Laila Nesbitt, Sarah Pope, Constance Afoakwah, Adoma Akua, Beth Thompson, Sasha Stanton, Lisa Balmer, Reigem Sabalboro – I apologize. That isn't even fair. – Kellyann Whitehead-Smith and Kristan Marion.

I'd also like to recognize Great Slave constituent Kieron Testart. Thank you all for being in the gallery today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. I hope they get the spelling right in Hansard. Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I chose today to recognize the two Pages from Fort Resolution. There's Amy Ann Mercredi – her last name is "Wednesday" in English – and also Kayleigh Hunter. She's also been working here for us this week.

I'd also like to recognize my interpreter, Tom Unka. He has been coming into the Legislative Assembly almost every second sitting for the last eight years. Tom Unka does both the translation for anything that needs translation and also the interpreting for myself in the House, so I'd like to recognize him.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Germaine Michel, a Hay River resident; and former resident Lisa Balmer, who's here doing schooling. I'm sure we're going to get her back in Hay River in our new health centre, get her and Ben back in Hay River.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Hay River South constituent Germaine Michel, who is here today with my friend

Melody McLeod. It's hard to believe that they're auntie and niece. They look like sisters.

Also, yes, our former constituent Lisa Buckmaster-Balmer, who is in the Nursing Program here and, yes, wouldn't it be great to have these gals come home?

I thought I heard Sarah Pope as well. I don't know if she's there today or not, but if she is, I'd like to recognize her.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just wanted to take pride in our Page Program that allows us to bring students who are younger and from smaller communities like Fort Simpson. Today I wanted to recognize two Pages from Fort Simpson. First of all, my nephew Allan Menicoche, and Aaron Antoine. They're both here in the gallery. I just want to say that you guys represent well.

Also, thanks to my chaperone, Ms. Jasmine Hardisty, for taking care of them this week.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I'd like to welcome here, too, Ms. Alice Thrasher and Ms. Melody McLeod. Welcome to the House.

I'd like to welcome all visitors here today. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings and all the best in your classes.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Mr. Bromley.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 25-17(5):
MR. GINO PIN – ORDER OF THE NWT

MR. BROMLEY: Today I rise to acknowledge and congratulate my constituent Mr. Gino Pin on his being inducted into the Order of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Pin is an architect of considerable renown, who has been living, designing and building in Canada's North for more than 35 years. In fact, this House is a sterling example of his fine work.

Mr. Pin has received many design awards and was named "Northerner of the Year" by UpHere Magazine in 1992. Mr. Pin has made significant contributions to both the quality of life and the esthetic environment of the Northwest Territories. He is considered by his peers to be the pre-eminent architect north of 60. He has also been an outstanding mentor to upcoming architects and has embarked on a dedicated effort to address the fate of our homeless here in Yellowknife.

He is truly deserving of the highest honour this government can bestow, and I invite all Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Pin for his many

achievements and for his recognition received today. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 26-17(5):
MR. GERALD W. KISOUN – 2015 GOVERNOR
GENERAL'S POLAR MEDAL AWARD

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge Mr. Gerald W. Kisoun, known to most as Gerry, on being recognized as a recipient of the 2015 Governor General's Polar Medal Award. Mr. Kisoun was recognized for his outstanding contribution to promoting Canada's North and its people.

His mother, Bertha Allen, received the Governor General's Northern Medal in 2008 for her support of equality for Aboriginal and northern women, particularly their inclusion as government decision-makers.

Mr. Kisoun is a true role model for his family, his friends, the community of Inuvik and all Northerners.

I would like to congratulate and acknowledge Mr. Kisoun for all of his hard work, commitment and dedication to the people of the North. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 942-17(5):
ECONOMIC POTENTIAL IN SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ITI. I talked about the potential in the Sahtu region with our human resources, our people and with the resources in our lands.

I want to ask the Minister, has he had an opportunity to look at the opportunities of the economic potential in the Sahtu region with our people in our lands? Does he have a quick snapshot picture of what's there?

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've got a great idea of what's in the Member's riding in the Sahtu. Over the past four years, we've spent \$8.5 million in funding in the region. We've got the greatest potential, of course, with oil and gas and the resource assessment that was done in

the central Mackenzie Valley, indicating that there's close to 200 billion barrels of oil and the benefits, and the development of that could mean potential business opportunities and employment opportunities for residents in the Sahtu.

We also had seen a great advance in agriculture in the Member's riding. I know Mr. Whiteman is back at potato farming this year and there's a number of others in communities in the Sahtu who are getting into agriculture.

We've also seen an advancement on the traditional economy. Harvesting furs continues to be a source of income in the Member's riding. I believe in the Sahtu we've got close to 100 trappers in the area and they harvest some of the best fur in the Northwest Territories.

We also have to look at tourism and the opportunities tourism is going to provide. The federal government is going to be moving forward with the cleanup of the Canol Trail. Some of that work has started. As the Member knows, earlier this year we had 18 local residents employed on the cleanup. The \$800,000, or close to \$800,000 flowed through the Department of ITI and we're happy to see that work start. The federal government indicates it's going to take up to five years to clean up the Canol in advance of us fulfilling a commitment in the Sahtu Agreement to turn that into a park, and we fully intend on doing that as soon as that trail is remediated. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. The Minister clearly laid out the amazing potential we have in the Sahtu. I want to ask the Minister, has he and his officials looked at one area that he hadn't mentioned today, which is the Selwyn-Chihong Mine that's at the Yukon/Northwest Territories border? I understand this mine is going to go into production. There's close to \$1 billion worth of work there, potentially with 850 workers during the construction phase and around 450 permanent workers to operate that mine.

Has the Minister looked at how we can match the young potential workers in the Sahtu with this upcoming mine that is close to \$1 billion worth of operation?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: The Selwyn-Chihong Project, which straddles the Yukon-Northwest Territories border, holds great promise and great potential not only for the Sahtu, but for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. It is a world-class lead-zinc deposit, as the Member indicated, with somewhere around 800 to 850 permanent jobs. I know the company has been into a number of communities in the Sahtu. They've been talking to the leadership in the Sahtu about potential IBAs and other opportunities for the Sahtu when it comes to the development of that project. We're very excited. Initial mine plans had the company looking at mining on the Yukon side at first, but it looks as

though the company is going to be mining potentially on both sides of the border, which bodes well for the Northwest Territories and this is a great opportunity for us.

Also in the area of mining, we've had some great results from our NWT Geological Survey that would indicate that there's gold and tungsten in a number of the stream sampling programs that we had conducted last summer. So there's great potential in the Sahtu for mining. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Certainly, that raises our hopes in the region. I want to ask the Minister, has he been working with his other colleagues with regards to bringing in some much needed skill development, trade development, in regards to, for example, the Selwyn-Chihong Mine operations, bringing in some type of trades program with the Mine Training Society to look at how do we tap into these young resources of workers in the Sahtu region to increase our viability to be in the mine and not have situations where we see where we fly in miners to take the jobs from our Sahtu people, our northern people?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Because of the exploration and the little bit of drilling that happened in the Sahtu a couple of years ago, there are folks there that are trained. But the Member's correct. I mean, we have to be ensuring that the young people are ready for the jobs that are coming, whether they're in oil and gas or whether they're in the mining sector. We continue to work closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. I know the Minister had a statement earlier, Skills 4 Success. We've got the Mine Training Society of the Northwest Territories, as well, and we have to do everything we can as a government to ensure that our folks are ready to take these opportunities and run with them. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just ask the Minister about the traditional economy. Now, that's the backbone of our people. It was a way of life until we started to look at the European value of exchange. The economy is still strong. Colville Lake and Fort Good Hope have the best fur harvesters in the Northwest Territories.

I want to ask the Minister, is his department working with the trappers in the region, specifically around Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake, in regards to seeing that this tradition is continued to be passed on to the younger generation? The best furs, I may say humbly, come from the Sahtu region, specifically in the Gahcho area.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We continue to work with ENR on the traditional economy on the area of trapping. As I mentioned to the Member, there are

currently approximately 100 trappers in the Sahtu. We actively support the marketing of the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program. Over the past four years, they've averaged about \$370,000 per year in fur sales and an additional \$84,000 in fur bonus and grubstake payments to trappers. Over the four years, the total for Sahtu trappers is nearly \$2 million, so it's a tremendous opportunity. This money goes directly back into trappers' pockets and back into local economies in the Sahtu.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can I seek unanimous consent of yourself and the Members to return to item 5?

---Unanimous consent granted

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

MR. YAKELEYA: I am honoured to stand here today to congratulate and recognize Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred and Lucy Jackson. Mrs. Lucy Jackson was the recipient of the first Order of the Northwest Territories, and accompanying her is her good, full-time, wonderful husband, Wilfred Jackson. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 7, oral questions, Mr. Blake.

Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 943-17(5): POLICING SERVICES IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement on policing in Tsiigehtchic, we had a strong presence of RCMP in Tsiigehtchic in the early 1900s, yet here we are today, 2015, with a core presence in the community. We're going backwards, Mr. Speaker. We should have a detachment in the community at this time. We had one in the early 1900s, as I mentioned, 1920, in Tsiigehtchic. We had special constables in every community, Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, the list goes on. Yet today there's not one special constable in any of those communities. More needs to be done in this area. You know, it's Aboriginal policing. We need to start encouraging our youth to join the force and have detachments in our communities. So I have questions for the Minister here today.

How many times have the RCMP spent the night or even overnight in Tsiigehtchic over the summer? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister of Justice, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for raising the concern about policing in Tsiigehtchic once again on the floor of the House today. The number of patrols that we saw into the community of Tsiigehtchic between January and July 2015 from the RCMP detachment in Fort McPherson were 37 patrols, and I want to thank the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. We're moving forward with plans to have an increased police presence in the community of Tsiigehtchic. We're going to be sending officers in there to spend two days and one night a week, which means that for up to eight days per month they will be in the community of Tsiigehtchic. Suitable accommodations have been identified, again through the Housing Corporation and we thank them for their help in that. This will begin in December of this year. The community will see this increased level of service by the RCMP. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: That actually answered my second question here, but my third question is: What are we going to do in the meantime? You know, we have freeze-up underway here. We have about three to four inches of snow in Tsiigehtchic at the moment.

What is the detachment going to do during freeze-up? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Operationally it would be as usual. Again, we are looking forward to December when we can increase the level of service to the community of Tsiigehtchic. I should mention, as well, that between January 1, 2015, and up until the end of July 2015, there were 40 calls for service during that period of time in the community of Tsiigehtchic. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I would like to ask the Minister, when will they start encouraging our youth to join the force, whether it be through special constable that was practiced in the early 1900s. It seems they've done away with that here today. This is a great opportunity. I recall even in the mid-1990s many... I believe even you were a special constable, Mr. Speaker, at one point. We need to start encouraging this practice once again. Will the Minister ensure that that happens? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I'm very glad that the Member has brought this up today. We need to be encouraging if you know young people in the community who are interested in a career in policing, they can identify themselves to the detachment or to the RCMP here in the Northwest Territories, to "G" Division. We would certainly like to hear from them.

We've had trouble in the past getting interested persons to take the training. We continue to work with the RCMP in identifying young people who can take the training and become members of the RCMP. I'd encourage all Members, again, if you know young people in your community, it's a great career and I'd encourage them to approach the RCMP. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 944-17(5):
FORT SIMPSON ACCESS ROAD
STREETLIGHTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Minister of Transportation some questions with regard to working with municipalities and street lighting on the highway system.

I would like to ask the Minister: What type of program does the Department of Transportation currently have to assist with the street lighting on our NWT highways and close to municipalities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be generally a maintenance program. Safety is a priority for the department, and there were issues with some corners that were dark and we were able to put up some lights. I know the Member is concerned about a road that runs off the main road that's been maintained by the department that doesn't have adequate street lighting. So we are going to be working with, most likely, the Power Corporation for poles and lighting on that access road the Member had asked me about earlier. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: To be specific, yes I've been asking the Minister about installing some street lighting on the access road that goes from our 6 kilometre, the Wild Rose subdivision, down onto the Four Mile subdivision, and that's been a safety concern raised by the residents, most particularly in the last couple of years, with more and more bears being in the community and it being very dark at night.

I'd just like to ask the Minister, has he been contacted by the Village of Fort Simpson with regard to identifying exactly where street lighting should go? Thank you.

HON. TOME BEAULIEU: I personally have not been in contact with the municipality, but the information was passed on to the department and it's possible the department has initiated some discussion with the municipality on this issue. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: It's probably correct that the Village of Fort Simpson contacted the department officials to identify certain locations and I'm up here in the House today to ensure that we move forward with those. I think there are about three sites there, so if the Minister can confirm that the department is working with the Village of Fort Simpson to install at least three new LED street lightings on that access road. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Certainly the department will not be ignoring the request from the community, so I think it's just a matter of having the department regional staff from DOT get in touch with the community at a time convenient for both of them to be able to work together to resolve the issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the priority areas for this access road have some residential houses, but the longer access towards the Four Mile subdivision, maybe they can look at that as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Certainly the people down by the riverbank at Four Mile have been there for many, many years, so it would be nice to be able to light up the roadway, as well, going down to Four Mile. So we'll have the department look at that area as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 945-17(5):
TRAVEL AND EXPENSE CLAIMS
BY ELECTED OFFICIALS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We only need to listen to the media these days and we hear that there is a great deal of interest in the public in how people in elected office spend the taxpayers' money when it comes to claims for travel and other expenses. We're very fortunate in this Assembly that we have very good staff who take some time and due diligence to ensure that the claims that are being made are correct, and when they are not, as we've heard today, these things are remedied very quickly.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance; today my colleague spoke about the monitoring of expense claims and travel claims on behalf of Ministers, and I think that when the public looks at us they see all of us as one group, as government. I also think that there are probably committee chairs and some Regular MLAs who travel just about as much as Ministers do, so I would just like to know, in fairness to the public and to this effort for transparency, I'd like to ask Minister Miltenberger if it would be the

government's intention to also monitor closely the expenses of Regular Members.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We do have a policy. We quite rigorously police ourselves. As was raised in the House earlier, the issue with Minister Ramsay has been dealt with and the file is closed for a very, very small discrepancy. Things have been tightened up. Yes, we believe that we should have an even hand when we apply overdue travel claims since there are cases where MLAs accompany Ministers on foreign travel. There are some outstanding claims and we are encouraging those outstanding claims to be completed.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'd ask the Minister, then, if the same rigorous and strenuous monitoring and checking of expense claims for the Ministers that Minister Miltenberger has spoken of, if that would also apply to Regular Members, because, as I said, I think the public is very interested in being assured of that and knowing that that is the case.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Our specific involvement comes when MLAs travel with Ministers on trips, usually abroad, and there have been a number of those and there are outstanding claims that we're still waiting for from an MLA that we hope will get cleared off so that we can end this session and the mandate of the 17th Assembly on a clear note.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That raises another interesting question. Why would there be a delay in the filing of expense claims when a Member would travel with a Cabinet Minister or the Premier, whether it be to a federal, provincial, territorial or on foreign travel or as a committee member of a committee designated member or a committee chair? Why would there be a delay in the filing of those expense claims?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: What I can indicate is that we have been pursuing and made repeated requests to in fact have all the necessary travel claims submitted so that we can in fact close the file on the various trips. We have been using the power of persuasion. We don't have a lot of direct authority over MLAs. They have travelled with us and we're trying to make sure that we close the books, and we're going to continue to pursue that and hopefully conclude it.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have watched government for a long time and I know that there have been instances in the quite far past now of Ministers that were travelling with Regular Members and that there became a question after the fact about whether the people who were sponsored with taxpayers' dollars to go to

some of these events actually ever did attend them. Do we have any mechanism in place to ensure that when people do travel on government business that they do indeed attend the functions that they are travelling for?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We tend to travel on the honour system but there is an implicit understanding that MLAs would be reporting back, because they're usually there representing a committee that they would be reporting back to the events that they attended, the meetings they attended, and the important affairs that they dealt with and discussed while on those travels. At this point, that's basically the extent in terms of compliance or reporting back as to exactly what events were attended. The Ministers, of course, have more accountability and are prepared and will disclose all the meetings they've had and all the functions they have attended and have their expense claims, I can assure you, scrupulously reviewed by a whole number of folks to make sure that everything is appropriate.

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

QUESTION 946-17(5):
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was speaking of business and some of the issues that I have had with the GNWT over the last four years. My questions today are for the Minister of ITI. I'm dealing with a client for the Business Incentive Policy and getting them BIP'd, and it's specific to the plow trucks that Transportation continues to buy and we've tried to get King Manufacturing BIP'd for that project.

Can the Minister indicate to me why the application for King Manufacturing for plow trucks was denied this year?

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is in everyone's best interest that we see the benefit accrue to northern businesses when we do look at procuring, whether it's plow trucks or anything else the government buys, that if it can be manufactured here in the Northwest Territories it's purchased by our government. That's why we have a manufactured products list. Of the eight items that King Manufacturing has wished for us to put on that list, we have approved six of those items. There are two other items that I know the Members had denied. They're under review and we want to continue to work with King Manufacturing and the manufacturing community here in the Northwest Territories to ensure that products that can be manufactured here in the Northwest Territories get on that approved list for procurement.

MR. BOUCHARD: I understand that's coming from the Department of ITI. I'm just wondering how the department works with Transportation and Public Works and Services who does the procurement of these assets. I guess I'm having difficulty and with the fact that I'm having to deal with three different departments to deal with one issue on plow trucks.

How can we simplify this process? Can the Minister indicate to me whether Public Works and Services shared services and BIP should be merged together?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Obviously, with a day and a half left of this sitting and a couple weeks left in the life of this government, that is a decision that the 18th Legislative Assembly would have to take into consideration. I can say that we do continuously discuss these types of items with Public Works and Services. We need to all be on the same page when it comes to advancing manufacturing here in the Northwest Territories and ensuring that the government dollars that are used on procuring products are spent here in the Northwest Territories wherever possible.

MR. BOUCHARD: We're not being unreasonable here. We know there are several companies that supply trucks to the Northwest Territories. We have no problem with other companies bidding truck versus truck, but we need that work done in the Northwest Territories. Currently, some of the bids that are going forward are 51 percent over a \$200,000 project; 51 percent is labour, construction, welding in the Northwest Territories, with the one contractor. With the other contractor, that work is being done in Ontario and in Quebec.

Is the Minister committed to making companies required to do the work in the North?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Currently, plow trucks are not included as manufactured products under the northern manufacturing directive. Unlike fuel trucks, there are no major components of plow trucks manufactured in the Northwest Territories. We have gone back to King Manufacturing. We're waiting to get some more information from them. Again, this has not been denied. It is under review and we'll have to see where that review takes us and the discussion about where it all falls out will lie with the 18th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I indicated, it seems like we're trying to find ways to support southern businesses. We need to find, and my question is, how can a company provide 51 percent labour welding services and still not be BIP'd. Why is that BIP being delayed? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you. Under the current rules of BIP, it's being applied fairly by all vendors, and on the current tender, as it hasn't

been awarded yet, I couldn't speak to that. All I can say is that we are ready, willing and able to continue to work with the manufacturing sector here in the Northwest Territories to ensure that products that can be manufactured here in the Northwest Territories are on the approved list of manufactured products. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 947-17(5):
FEASIBILITY STUDY OF UNIVERSAL
AFFORDABLE DAYCARE IN THE NWT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have questions on a report that was tabled in our spring sitting, the feasibility study of the universal affordable daycare in the Northwest Territories. Coincidentally it was tabled on June 4, 2015, which is also the last sitting of our spring session. So, very little debate on it, even though it was something that was highly sought after by committee members as well as residents of the Northwest Territories.

In the report itself there are a lot of recommendations and I'd like to ask the Minister responsible, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, obviously we can't go through all the recommendations and he did mention earlier in the week that this report will be addressed by the 18th Assembly. However, one of the things that stood out to me in terms of program funding, the program contribution grant is the major source of public funding paying a regional base per diem according to attendance. However, the amounts have not changed since 2007.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment whether a review will be done in the life of the rest of this government on this program contribution grant and whether or not it will increase, because since 2007 we have had a lot more private and public daycares in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to ask him, will that be reviewed and will an increase be forthcoming before the 18th Assembly? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The universal affordable daycare feasibility study that's been requested by this House has been undertaken and has been tabled in May-June 2015. The Member is correct on that. There is a lot of information as part of the package. It's a comprehensive review of the analysis of universal child care.

With any changes that are forthcoming, recommendations that have been brought forward, obviously the 18th Assembly government will have

to deal with it. We only have another day of session.

This is an area that has been brought to our attention, the cost factor, the ripple effects across the Northwest Territories, whether it comes to infrastructure or the program accessibility and the contribution agreement that the Member is just alluding to. So those are the discussions that will probably be had with the 18th Assembly government once they're in full force. Mahsi.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. I did have a series of questions here, but in response to the Minister's statement, he mentioned that the issue was raised in the tabled document. However, I know Members on this side of the House, prior to us putting the motion forward, have raised concerns and issues on the amounts for this contribution grant to the regional centres on more than one occasion.

Why is he saying now that we can't do it before this government is done when even before today it's been raised by Members almost every year? Can the Minister, as he's still in his role as Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, now see it in a document and make those changes before the 18th Assembly? He still has that option. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. With any changes that we make to contribution agreements, obviously it increases the cost factor as well. So that needs to be seriously taken into consideration. We've gone through the capital infrastructure just last week and this week and now we're at the final stages of our session. Again, the recommendations fall to our attention. They will be laid out for the 18th Assembly government. They will be a full force government for the next four years. They'll decide what to do if there are going to be any changes to the contribution agreement or moving forward on this affordable universal child care programming. Mahsi.

MR. MOSES: I know we always have discussions in this House about the cost of social programs, our high costs within governments and we go and look into our debt, this is a great investment and by all more places to have child care facilities and more people to access them, it's only going to benefit us. I think the same goes for every dollar invested in child care or early childhood development is a \$7 return. I mean why do we have to wait until the 18th Assembly to recognize that? It's kind of concerning to me.

Another question I had in regard to the report as I'm discussing this is income assistant child care benefit funding. I'd like to ask the Minister whether or not he'll be looking at aligning the child care benefit payments with the actual costs of daycare and if he can look at trying to do that also as his term of Minister, six weeks left, if he would be looking into putting that forward as aligning the child care benefits with the actual cost of daycare. It

would allow more people, especially in social assistance programs, to access daycare so that the single parents can actually go out and possibly find some work. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. I believe in early investment. That's why we've invested tremendously in early childhood development over the years and we'll continue to do so. When it comes to the child care benefits versus the daycare, the subsidy that we currently provide has been working over a number of years. There's always room for improvement as well. These are discussions that obviously we need to have with the child care operators, with the organizations that we work with across the Northwest Territories and also interdepartmental. The Income Support Program obviously provides those subsidies and we've made some drastic changes since 2007, 2011, 2015 as well. So we'll continue to make those improvements. Mahsi.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the feasibility study was made in 2015 and it addressed the child care benefit. So, even though the improvements were made, it's still an issue and needs to be dealt with. In a CBC report that was talked about, the study itself had mentioned that about 250 workers need to be trained and hired to address some of the offsets for this study.

I'd like to ask the Minister what steps is he taking to create an early childhood education certificate program and whether or not that certificate program can be put in one of our three Aurora College campuses. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. The Member alluded to the universal affordable daycare, the feasibility study that we've initiated, and obviously some of the obstacles and the challenges in a way where in order to meet the demands of the NWT we need to double the size of our manpower, the resource people that we have. So we're working with the college to identify those needs in the communities. So the college does provide those opportunities and we'll continue to push that forward.

Again, we have to work with organizations on what their demands are, what their needs are and provide that information. Now we're working with the college to make that happen. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 948-17(5):
GREENHOUSE GAS STRATEGY 2011

MR. BROMLEY: Today I have questions for the Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources. I'd like to ask questions about the Greenhouse Gas

Strategy 2011. Our 2011 Greenhouse Gas Strategy noted the substantial warming temperatures in the NWT compared to globally and the rapid loss and thinning of sea ice and glaciers in the Arctic. The document noted that in 60 years Inuvik might have a climate similar to Peace River, Alberta.

Can the Minister update the House on what the updated trends are for temperature, sea ice extent and thickness, and permafrost melting? Mahsi.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From everything I've read, and I would recommend in this House, I read a book called, "Future Arctic" by Ed Struzik. It was very, very compelling reading. But the trends are still on the rise in terms of temperatures going up and the resulting impacts on permafrost, sea ice, with resulting impacts again on the type of weather, the reaction of the ocean, types of storms, the rising sea levels and those types of things. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: That's in line with the things I'm hearing. Thanks to the Minister for that.

Eight years ago Natural Resources Canada concluded 40 to 75 percent of the Inuvik buildings alone will suffer \$60 million in foundation damage during the building's lifetime from permafrost loss. Shortly after that we wrote off a \$14 million brand new young offenders facility in Inuvik. Today, estimates of costs to public and NWT infrastructure are coming in at billions of dollars over the next 15 years with similar costs expected for private, commercial and institutional infrastructure.

I'm wondering – I'm recognizing that this is already happening more each year – how is the government planning to mitigate this threat to our infrastructure and our economy? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: With this big, pressing issue there are two things we need to do, of course. The mitigation that we've talked about in terms of reducing our greenhouse gases, our carbon footprint, switching to alternative energies, will have some immediate impact in terms of costs and effect of costs of living, but the longer term goal would be do our share, as global citizens, to reduce our carbon emissions and help mitigate the increasing temperatures. In the meantime, we also have to adapt, and as the Member has pointed out, we have had some structural failures. We've had pile replacements. This Highway No. 3 is very intensive, looks like a semi-permanent kind of undertaking to try to keep smoothing out the road. We have challenges across the land.

If I may use the Speaker's community as an example, they're under enormous pressure from the climate, the approaching water and the rising water levels, severe weather that is exacerbating

shore erosion. So, we are trying to do both those at the same time. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: It is a bizarre response that the Minister knows we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions when the strategy he produced in 2011 for a five-year period said we would greatly increase our greenhouse gas. That was our goal, to increase our greenhouse gas production in the Northwest Territories. But I'm glad to hear him say that recognition, even if it's against the policy he's put in place.

The 2011 Greenhouse Gas Strategy recognized the necessity of transforming our economy from one based on fossil fuels to one based on renewable energy. That's almost a quote. With the right policy, industry could play a supportive role, or alternatively, it could continue to drag us down without defining policy in legislation.

Is the Minister finally convinced that we need to establish renewable energy standards and requirements for industrial development in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It's not a question of being finally convinced, it's being in a position to start making those changes. We're now post-devolution. We now have an excellent corporate example of the savings that have been experienced by Diavik Mines, and they deserve, once again, full marks for their efforts of putting in that wind power on time and on budget in the most remotely challenging place, probably, where wind power exists. We know that we can now make the case post-devolution, with our regulations and policies, to have that discussion on all projects going forward. The same as we are converting all our own buildings to biomass. The same as we're putting money into rebate programs for individuals to switch to solar and all these other energy-saving appliances and lower energy costs in all the communities. So, we are on the move to do those types of things. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diavik did a great job there and put them at a competitive advantage, as well, so they're saving money.

In 2011 we adopted the useless strategy of allowing a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions to 2005 levels rather than a decrease to 1990 levels as the science that Minister Miltenberger subscribes to says is required. What a waste of opportunity leading to added costs to our people. The strategy ends by committing to a new strategy in 2015. We certainly won't do it, and the 18th won't meet that deadline.

What has the Minister done to develop a new strategy and how will it actually help us reduce our

greenhouse gas emissions as the science calls for and the Minister recognizes is required?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This is a journey of some duration we started back in 2005. We've made set targets and most of them were inward looking as a government, trying to put our own house in order. We are going to be putting out a new document, a renewal, but it's not a Greenhouse Gas Strategy anymore. It's going to be a Climate Change Strategy. That document is expected to be ready in the next couple weeks.

We are gearing up to be able to go to COP 21 in Paris, which I think, contrary to COP 12 or 15 that I attended in Copenhagen, which was supposed to be a seminal event, this one actually will be with the president of the United States and the president of China there, and all the world leaders where they finally may ink some substantive deal. We have been on that path. We have been investing tens upon tens of millions of dollars in energy savings, in climate change initiatives, in alternate energy that is reducing our carbon footprint. We were one of the leaders in the country on biomass. On a per capita basis, we have some of the most solar installations in the country with more coming.

The Member speaks in very denigrating absolutes when in actual fact I am very pleased and happy that everywhere I go around the country people talk about what we're doing in the Northwest Territories, and we are one of the most carbon intensive parts of the country and we've been slowly pushing ourselves to cut back and bring our carbon footprint down.

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

QUESTION 949-17(5):
COST OF CLEANUP OF CANTUNG MINE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite sure where to address my questions today. I want to follow up on some of the questions I asked on Monday about the North American Tungsten and the Cantung Mine and some of the liabilities and securities. I'm confused whether I should be dealing with the Department of Lands or the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

I talked to the Lands Minister on Monday and I'm going to try and talk to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources today to see if I can get some clarification on who does what with regard to these liabilities.

It would seem, in talking with the Minister of Lands the other day, that we have taken responsibility for the development at the Cantung Mine, that we've taken responsibility for that development without any idea of the liability that we are accepting. In June the securities required, I gather, was up to

\$19 million, but we only hold \$11.6 million, apparently.

My first question would be to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. If we have required the mine to provide securities of \$19 million, how does that compare with what the actual liabilities for cleanup of that mine will be?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is currently there is just a shade over \$11 million, I believe. The revised amount that was being pursued prior to the fiscal issues was to increase that to about \$30 million.

MS. BISARO: If I could presume, and I will ask the Minister to confirm, would we expect that it will cost about \$30 million to reclaim and to clean up that mine?

I'd like to try and understand from the Minister, about a year ago there was an announcement that we were establishing a new division in lands, a liabilities and financial assurances division. That was about a year ago, last November. I'm trying to understand the difference between who does assessments for mines of the liabilities of a mine or any other development, and who actually handles the securities. My understanding is that Lands handles the securities but I think maybe ENR does the assessments. I'd like to get some clarification on that.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This is a shared responsibility under the water licences and environmental assessments. The majority of the money is handled by and flows through ENR through that process. We are looking at, as a government, how do we best structure ourselves to better provide oversight for all these outstanding securities across the land. We recognized very clearly after devolution that the federal government wasn't paying anywhere near the attention they should have to this matter, and we're currently at work internally still sorting out what's the best way to structure ourselves to do that.

MS. BISARO: That kind of helps. With regard to all the developments and the potential liabilities that we have, I know that there is a listing of those, because through devolution there was a listing of everything in the territory, what the GNWT would take over and what would remain with the feds.

I'd like to know, at this point, have we done assessments on the majority of the developments that we are responsible for or that we hold? One of the examples that comes to mind for me is the Ptarmigan Mine out on the Ingraham Trail. It's been sitting there for a very long time and nothing has been done with it. It needs to be cleaned up. Do we have an assessment of what that would cost, for

instance, and do we have an assessment of all the developments in the Northwest Territories?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We do have what we inherited assessments. We have also, like Cantung, we're looking at increasing the amount of securities, and that process is going to require time. There are some discrepancies, as the Member has pointed out, and we are very conscious about making sure that we have the proper securities. In the case with the Cantung Mine, we're in discussion. The federal government is still part of this process and if that mine fails then there will be discussions with the site reverting to a federal site.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. It is gratifying to know that we may be able to offload this, since I don't think it's our responsibility if push comes to shove.

I'm trying to determine for assessments, in general, where we're at in terms of assessments for all the developments for which GNWT is now responsible. Have they been done, and if they are not done, when do we expect that we will have an assessment of the liabilities that we are responsible for?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We have about \$570 million that we hold in securities. That number has gone up from initially it was about \$500 million. As we are getting into this business, there are constant reviews being done and if there are discrepancies then we work through the regulatory process to address those.

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

QUESTION 950-17(5):
CRIME AND BOOTLEGGING
IN NWT COMMUNITIES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations did an extensive review on Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act, and committee submitted additional recommendations during the review and received a response from Minister Miltenberger on September 5, 2014. The GNWT responses were finally granted approval from the department to be tabled in this House on October 2, 2015, and as we heard today, I'd like to address some of these outstanding recommendations with the Minister of Finance. We only have a day and a half.

In some provinces the proceeds of crime are used to pay for policing. It was felt then and now that using proceeds from crime to fund community initiatives such as a community safety strategy would deal with our territory's bootlegging issues. The Minister did not concur.

Has the Minister had any second thoughts in his early response and is he willing to at least consider such an option?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're always prepared to revisit decisions. This is not an issue where there is one clear answer and it's right or wrong. It's the best way to do things. So we're always interested in having that discussion.

MR. DOLYNNY: The reporting of bootlegging in communities is very problematic for many reasons. Sometimes not knowing the number...(inaudible)... elders, sometimes there's little access to phones and computers and, in most cases, just plain fear. Because of the lack of police services in many of our communities, committee suggested a need for better reporting other than Crime Stoppers, suggesting a more local anonymous tip program or a government services officer who can lodge a complaint on behalf of a resident or elder. Again, the Minister did not concur.

Has the Minister reconsidered and improved the better ways to keep safety and anonymity in mind? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The major concern was, of course, if a complaint was raised with a government service officer who would then file, then they would become party to an action that they may not in fact know that much about or may be caught up in an illegal proceedings that would make their job very, very difficult. So, are there ways to better be able to report? I think with new technologies, for example, coming down the valley if we have every community on fibre optic links and there's better communications that people can phone. We had Safer Neighbourhoods legislation two Assemblies ago and there was an enormous debate over these anonymous lines, rat lines they were called and how they would work and how would you respond and how do you get people in and how do you deal with all the related issues tied to that type of approach.

So, is there need for further discussion? Clearly. We haven't bent the curve on bootlegging and alcohol abuse, but we have to consider some of those other factors too. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. Committee heard loud and clear that the single biggest points of access for alcohol in entering the small communities would be non-screening at our northern airports. Committee did not accept the GNWT's response that nothing could be done and strongly encourage our DOT, Finance and Justice to work together with our federal partners to develop such authority for search and seizure of illegal alcohol transported in our communities.

Has the Minister made any progress on this action? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. We continue to work with communities in terms of controlling the alcohol and the alcohol abuse. In some of the larger communities it becomes a very consuming part of the occupation of policing, but we do not have any people that police airports on a regular basis that have that authority to search and seize other than the RCMP if they're there and are doing it through part of their regular business. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee proposed to the Minister to allocate a percentage of government liquor profits from the Liquor Revolving Fund to addictions and awareness treatment. This action was equally supported by the chief coroner. As was put by committee, the perception of people is that the GNWT puts liquor profits ahead of concerns with public welfare.

Again, has the Minister rethought his approach to supporting targeted funding? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. This is a long-standing issue as well. The health budget is the largest budget in the territorial government and it's the fastest growing. We put in millions, tens of millions of dollars a year in dealing with a lot of the damages caused by alcohol and alcohol abuse. So from a political optics point of view, I know the discussion has been there that we should take the money from liquor proceedings, fines and those types of things, to put them towards a special fund. That discussion is going to be ongoing, but at this point the money goes into consolidated general revenue and we continue to spend, as this House will know from the number of supplementary appropriations we do for health, significant amounts of our money on health care, most of it tied or a good chunk of it tied to the issues related to alcohol abuse. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 951-17(5):
HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS
IN THE DEH CHO

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just following up on my Member's statement on homelessness in the NWT communities, my questions are for the Minister of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Shelter is a critical need in the hierarchy of needs of people for them to lead productive lives. At the community level we are confronted with some realities. One of them, of course, is homelessness, and in some communities there are program

initiatives to provide lunch and trying to help out people as best as we can.

So the question I have is: Is there any funding under the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation homelessness support program provided to any communities in the Deh Cho to combat homelessness in 2014-15? What about for the 2015-16? Mahsi.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to confirm if there were any applications received from the Member's constituency and I will do that and I will share those with the Member. Just offhand I do know that we have helped, we have given money to a lot of those that have applied from across the Northwest Territories. As for the specific breakdown, I don't have those with me right now, but I will get those and share them with the Member. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: Recently the community of Fort Providence, the leader had recognized that there needs to be something done with homelessness. So he had proposed to the Minister's office, the department, of seeking assistance in terms of purchasing woodstoves and, at the same time, lumber to establish tent frames and I wanted to see if the Minister could explain to the community why that proposal was rejected. Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. When you talk about homelessness in the community, we have 2,400 public housing units across the Northwest Territories. All we ask people to do is honour the commitment that they've made to pay their rent and they won't be evicted. In some cases we do have people who are evicted and they're looking for other opportunities to try and house themselves.

As far as the Member's specific, I don't recall seeing a request for lumber. I do know that I replied to a letter from the chief of Fort Providence. As far as a request for the lumber goes, I'm not sure if it came from his original correspondence to us, but again, I will follow up on that and see if there was a specific request for lumber and, again, through many of the programs we offered, I'm not sure if there are opportunities there for lumber to be supplied to the community. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: One of the dilemmas that we have is that when it comes to providing housing to homeless people, usually a person that's a bachelor that doesn't have any children is perhaps 60 years old. Another person who likely has children equally gets the priority and in some instances in communities we have people that are basically fending for themselves and couch surfing.

How can the department assist those people in finding housing or shelter, especially those who are falling between the cracks and sometimes are basically left homeless? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Again, we operate a number of public housing units across the Northwest Territories. People get evicted for different reasons and they have to work out an agreement to repay their arrears, if there are any, to get back into public housing, and if they honour that then they would get on the waiting list and possibly back into public housing. However, in some cases where there are folks out in the Territories who don't meet those commitments that they've made, we do have a pilot project that we're starting, called Northern Pathways to Housing, and it's four communities we're piloting the project in right now. We will provide a unit in that particular community or smaller communities across the Northwest Territories. We will work with a local group, local government, local group to watch over the unit for us and we'll enter into an agreement with them. We're early in it. Right now we do have four communities that are getting this program off the ground. Depending on the success of this program, there's a possibility that it could be expanded to include more communities in the Northwest Territories because we are hearing that in many of the communities, those that have been evicted from public housing are having a difficult time finding places to sleep. So this is one of the ways that we are going to try and address that challenge. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Time for oral questions has expired. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 7, oral questions, so I can have an oral question. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent denied

MR. SPEAKER: Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Mr. Bromley.

Replies to Opening Address

MR. BROMLEY'S REPLY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the sessional statement, the Premier asked three questions: Do we have the right vision? Can it be improved? What else can we do to make it a reality?

Those are big questions. I'd like to address at least some material around those. As far as the vision goes, the problem is it's typically generic and can be interpreted in so many ways. Many say that this government lacks vision and though we have a brief vision statement that I don't disagree with at

all, I have to agree that we seem somehow to lack vision.

We talk about the need for inspiration and motivation here. For me, it's something along the lines of I see our vision as healthy families and communities with a fully restored and healthy land with each of our residents supported in their pursuit of meaningful lives and achieving their full potential.

We face many challenges, indeed: poverty, lack of services, accelerating climate change, benefits of resource extraction going only to a few, unemployment and the need for local employment opportunities so people don't have to leave their home communities, social measures, we know about mental health and addictions, diabetes and so on, the chronic diseases, physical activity levels, suicide and criminal activity and so on. The last time I looked, the income gap here in the Northwest Territories was the largest in the country – the poorest 20 percent, the richest 20 percent – and no indication that we are addressing that.

Our housing waiting lists grow longer and longer and our cost of living increases steadily. If not for millions of dollars in subsidies, our energy costs alone for families and homeowners would be even more unaffordable than they are, but ongoing, ever-increasing subsidies are really doing in our fiscal health and ability to efficiently provide services.

Certainly jobs in our small communities are scarce. We need an opportunity for people to find jobs in their home communities. This government continues to build very expensive roads for industry under the auspices of economic development. This is wrong and a misdirection of scarce financial resources. It is done with the hope that it works and is motivated politically through federal influence, rather than based on any real analysis, and again, such an approach is not serving us well.

Our subsidies to multi-nationals through crude infrastructure is wrong-headed and puts us into the hole financially with very little return and often more cost without the means to support them. Large costly infrastructure to support dreams and megaprojects just benefits shareholders far away and does little to the people of the North other than short-term, temporary jobs and part-time work. "Better than nothing" some people say, but is that the approach we want? Are we satisfied with crumbs rather than an intelligent locally appropriate and capacity-building investment in localized economic development that provides for meaningful and long-term jobs for people in their community rather than far away?

The Inuvik-Tuk Highway is a good example. Part-time seasonal jobs for a few years for a piece of infrastructure that industry has expressed no interest in that is hugely expensive, that is posted as economic development, a clear farce and possibly the opposite because it will be a very

expensive piece of infrastructure to maintain, if not impossible in the face of climate change.

In contrast, think of the extraordinary benefits of a similar scale investment in moving the community of Tuk to safe ground, those willing to. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that that is a sad reality for people to face and perhaps it will not be done.

As an example, building wind generation in the Storm Hills for Inuvik, done with largely local resources, or addressing the billions of dollars in infrastructure damage anticipated over the next decade with permafrost thaw.

Continuing to support fossil fuel extraction when the science says it will only contribute to threatening human civilization from climate change is also a misuse of scarce government dollars and capacity. We say we agree with the science. It is leaving stranded assets and exacerbating our fiscal status by again wasting significant dollars, moving around the globe making promises to anybody about free access to these damaging resources. When we have dug ourselves into a deep hole, the first step is always stop digging and then figure out how to get out of it.

Our Greenhouse Gas Strategy recognizes the science and explicitly acknowledges that we must transform our economy so it is no longer dependent on fossil fuels. Along with the decision to act consistent with this requirement comes many opportunities for local economic development in every community. We must start requiring the use and development of renewable energy by territorial industry which, as in the case of Diavik Diamond Mine, as the Minister mentioned in the past, will place them at a competitive advantage.

Education, our Aboriginal graduation rates seem to be stuck mired in the 50 to 55 percent range and this is totally unacceptable to everybody in the House I know. Our kids in small communities are entering school with delayed development issues, again something that is really intolerable. We are doing some good work with a new emphasis on self-regulation, but the single biggest opportunity we have, as I just heard my colleague mention, is early childhood development, the first three years of life when the brain is growing and life-long capacities are being established. Those capacities enable multi-language development, life-long health, life-long avoidance of crime and addictions and they say investment in early childhood development is actually the greatest single economic development investment that we can make.

I'm not saying we have been inactive, Mr. Speaker. We have an Anti-Poverty Action Plan, wellness court in Yellowknife, a minimum wage increase and GNWT energy management. We have worked on education infrastructure and other infrastructure, worked on catching up on our maintenance deficit,

mental health legislation, energy efficiency and government operations and so on. Now, albeit belatedly, we are looking at expressions of interest for 10 megawatts of renewable energy. We are finally starting to get there. There are many others that I'm not able to mention here. Yet there remains a huge opportunity for improvement in almost every area.

As I have probably mentioned before, we need to consider how we do things as much as what we actually do. We can be confident that we have non-renewable resources like minerals and plenty of them and there will always be interest in developing them when global economic conditions are strong. What would be a comprehensive response to our extreme income disparity and poverty, our serious environmental issues, our low population and migrant workers from afar, a high and persistent need for housing support, our multi-generational social issues of addictions, cultural loss and so on?

Here I shift from building into these challenges – we all understand them – and seeing what a new approach could be. The first aspect of that is we need a holistic shift in our thinking and focus. We need to focus on triple bottom line, full-cost accounting, prevention first, dealing with the basics that enables our potential in all of these areas. We need to shift away from the megaprojects and multinational stakeholders and towards serving the local needs and establishing strong local economies as foundations on which to build capacity, self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship, and on which communities can then seek out the non-renewable resource development that they want to see.

This can be done in a practical way by simply serving the immediate needs of Northerners. That is the basic needs: jobs, food, shelter, health, art and entertainment, all of which can be, to some degree, and often largely, derived from local and largely renewable sources. We need to localize our economies to provide the economic foundation on which communities can choose to participate in resource protection and the management of our land.

Our huge subsidy budget, and we're talking hundreds of millions of dollars, used to support people through income assistance and so on, and communities through income support, energy and housing subsidies and so on can be used much more effectively to contribute to this transformation in ways that resolve issues rather than simply maintain people in a depressed economic and social state.

In such an approach, early returns and achievements can be found through emphasizing, first of all:

- Local food production and processing. We still await our agriculture strategy after my modest eight years in politics.
- Local energy production, and there are lots of examples of that. Again, we need the policies that enable that.
- Sourcing local building materials for local projects to the extent doable.
- Breaking down territorial infrastructure projects to allow local contractors to take on certain aspects of the projects, something, again, we've talked about but we don't seem to get on with.
- Local political employment and decision-making.
- Fostering a sense of community cooperation and collaboration amongst residents and communities.

How would we deal with some of the specific issues under this approach? Let's start with housing. We know that's a big one.

Housing units can be very modest in size. They can be small, and they can be in multi-unit buildings, as we are now doing, with common spaces to promote community benefits to residents, and these, I'm thinking of entertainment spaces and even kitchen spaces, communal kitchen spaces, super insulated and energy efficient, locally built, locally built even if time to build them needs to be relaxed from our normal expectations of a fast schedule, a one-season schedule, and initial costs may be a bit higher, but the benefits are improved local skills, local knowledge, and improved local knowledge for efficient and effective maintenance of those same structures, and of course, Housing First needs to be implemented so that people can start with a roof over their head, and again, we need to complement that with community pairings of families and Housing First clients to help provide such supports.

What about the issues of income? What are some alternatives to income assistance? Again, a number of us have made statements on consideration of basic income guarantees. I think it offers some real benefits through reduced administrative costs and complaints and much more reliability in the system. In fact, studies have shown that whenever they've tested these things, the benefits have been dramatic and very long lasting. We need to determine community living wage with known standardized processes, and that's becoming well established now, and promote the living wage programs amongst employers who are able to adopt that policy, and perhaps recognize the need for youth wages for those who are just entering the market. For able-bodied, unemployed housing clients, we need to provide a range of opportunities to work and require some participation having given them a selection of opportunities. It might be 10

hours of work in the community garden, providing a cord of wood a week to the distributed energy facility in the community, perhaps some time doing housing maintenance work or whatever. This, of course, would not only be productive work, it would instill a sense of pride, hone skills and, indeed, likely sponsor a spirit of entrepreneurship when people recognize these skills are important and valued.

Governance. We have some real opportunities in strengthening our community governments and local decision-making. We have a start through some of our MACA program, but again, we need to increase our work to raise capacity but also shift to a collaborative, cooperative, sustainable community theme that involves community members more with obvious returns. At the territorial level, politicians need to listen to people, share decision-making and improve transparency, and perhaps we'll hear more about that.

Education. Again, our single biggest opportunity is significantly enhanced effort on early childhood development needs to be NWT wide and start with small communities. The universal child care is a program that if well-conceived and implemented would be an important opportunity for improvement. It requires well-trained early childhood educators, and we need to bring our Aurora College programs up to standard for that. Understanding of play-based learning and quality spaces for program delivery. Again, this has been recognized as the biggest opportunity to invest in economic development.

The resolution of trauma. Because of our history of residential schools and high crime rates and suicide and so on, our people face many serious realities and experienced trauma that affects them throughout their lives. Along with early childhood development, there are amazing advances happening in the resolution of trauma that people carry often unconsciously but often also very obvious. There is much history to this and it has resulted in debilitation and also multi-generation impacts. The first approach, of course, is to prevent to the extent possible, and I think early childhood development, the extension of our health family programs through communities and so on are going to help with that. But again, the major advancements in treatment and resolution of trauma issues is something this government needs to get on top of and progressively go after. Again, results freeing up our potential, dealing with our issues in a holistic way and always with prevention at the forefront.

We are indeed showing interest in these approaches and we're playing around the edges of them, but we seem to have unbounded tolerance for spending big bucks with little return and we have little will to really commit and shift resources toward

these new approaches so that we can really progress and advance and realize the opportunities that we have. Again, these are real with real potential, and I remain an optimist that our government will get in gear and move on these progressive actions, starting with the 18th Assembly, and recognition that the old ways are not working. We know that our biggest resource, as my colleague from the Sahtu has mentioned here, is our people, and I remain convinced that that's true, but we need to provide the support and enabling structures to make sure that they can realize their full potential and contribute to these holistic solutions.

On that, I will finish.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO'S REPLY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my next to last opportunity to address this House. My almost last chance to say what I want, how I want, with no worries of repercussions. Parliamentarians are so lucky to have the privilege we do in regard to speaking in the House. It seems a bit strange that I will not be back in this Chamber after tomorrow except as a visitor, but you should all know I am quite comfortable with that. I've made no secret that I am looking forward to retirement, and I will definitely not miss the 14-hour session days.

So I want to subject you all to a look back to my perspective on the good, the bad and the ugly from my time as an MLA, well maybe not the ugly. But where to start on my retrospective? There have been many positive moments and events, but I'd be lying if I did not also say that there have been times when this job and all that it entails has had a negative impact on me and on the Assembly.

I find it interesting that four years ago as the 16th Assembly was closing, I said this, "It's been an interesting four years to say the least. I came to start this new job full of optimism and hope. I thoroughly enjoyed the strategic planning session and came away from that feeling positive, ready to tackle all the problems of the NWT and government. There certainly have been ups and downs during this Assembly's life and I may not be so optimistic and positive today, but in general it's been an enjoyable experience." It's very interesting to me that I feel much the same today after eight years.

I'd like to think that I've made a difference in my time here, whether it's been small or large depends on the observer. So, what are the things I would change if I could? What are the negatives that I mentioned? Foremost and top of mind has to be the different understandings of consensus government by the executive and Regular Members. Not long

ago I was frustrated enough to write an e-mail to the Premier, entitled "Are we still a consensus government?" Many decisions by Cabinet are made and publicized without any or adequate opportunity for Regular Members to provide input. Admittedly, we elect Cabinet Members to manage and oversee the work of government, but Regular Members deserve to be consulted enough in advance so that any input will actually have some impact.

An example: a brief comment in committee one day from a Minister that Cabinet would be considering a large subsidy for NTPC due to low water to a press release the next day advising it was a done deal. Not my idea of consensus.

As I wrote to the Premier last month, "Cabinet may not consider these omissions a big deal, but it clearly demonstrates the lack of respect for Regular Members that they feel. It clearly demonstrates the low regard Cabinet has for us as we go about our jobs. It says to me, "don't worry, boys and girls, the government is in good hands, you don't have to worry about a thing, we'll take care of everything for you." That's a bit caustic perhaps. I was a little frustrated at the time, as you can imagine, but it conveys the message that if Cabinet wants to live the true spirit of consensus, they need to work harder at it. Consensus government is only as good as the actions of the people using it. Over the last year and a half, I've come to feel that Cabinet has little interest in real consultation.

Another negative: in regard to legislation, two things: At the start of this and the 16th Assembly, Regular Members were asked to provide our priorities for legislative change and then all input seems to be ignored. I've also been disappointed with the glacial pace of government for amending of old and implementing of new legislation. There have been a couple of major pieces of legislation in government over four years, but in my mind, other than that, most bills that have come forward have been fixes, small bits, when I feel that there is so much real work on legislation that's been left undone.

Talking of pace, the amount of time required to get a response on an inquiry from an MLA to a Minister could definitely be better. True, it's as good as the Minister and his or her staff, but in general it takes far too long to get an answer on an inquiry on a constituent's behalf and it's often when the matter is seen as urgent by the constituent and doesn't seem to be seen that way by the Minister.

Many times, committees and Members have asked the government to review all policies for conflicts between departments. The impacts that the conflicting policies have on our residents are huge, but we have yet to see any real change which will have an impact on the day-to-day lives of NWT residents. It is imperative that the government do

that government-wide analysis on policies and amend policies accordingly.

On a personal note, there have been a number of issues that I have personally pursued or supported during my time here, issues that I did not see finished or accomplished either wholly or in part, and issues, which other Members championed, which I supported, but did not come to fruition. 911. I fully hoped that in the 17th Assembly, now it's going to be the 18th, but I fully hoped in the 17th Assembly that we would see the establishment of 911 in the NWT and it's been rather frustrating for me that we continue to see I guess it's foot dragging or putting up of blocks on the part of the government to the establishment of 911. It should have happened in Yellowknife by now.

Access to information and protection of privacy legislation for municipalities is something else which should have happened by now. It has been called for by the Information and Privacy Commissioner for probably 10 years now, and yet, again, the government does not seem to want to move forward on it. We've done investigations, we've consulted I think probably several times now, and nothing. Again, I have to say that it is something that should have happened over the last eight years and yet it has not.

A standalone campus for Yellowknife for Aurora College. This is something which is desperately needed. It is something which all Yellowknife Members have spoken of in the last eight years and certainly well before that, but it is something which has yet to make its way to the capital budget. It doesn't seem to be an urgent matter for anybody on the Executive because they're the ones who present us with the capital budget and I sincerely regret that we weren't able to get that project into the budget to get it at least on its way.

Homelessness. I pushed homelessness quite a bit for a period of time and I thank Mr. Nadli for speaking about homelessness today because it is an issue and it is increasing in communities outside Yellowknife. It's definitely an issue here in my home community, but it's an issue in other communities, as well, and I don't think that there is enough of a focus from government on dealing with homelessness. It's a housing issue; it's an income support issue; it's a health issue; it basically cuts across all departments because people are homeless for any number of reasons. It is something that needs to be addressed.

An ombudsman. I am sincerely sorry that we did not get an ombudsman act legislation put forward in this 17th Assembly. It is something which I firmly believe is necessary. I know the government says that there are lots of appeal boards, there are lots of opportunities for somebody to appeal, that you can go to court. I've said many times that's not enough. We need to establish legislation for an

ombudsman office and we need to get it established soon. I hope the provision of a draft Ombudsman Act to the Minister of Justice will enable the Minister of Justice in the 18th Assembly to bring forward that legislation as the first piece of legislation in that Assembly.

This is not something that's reared its ugly head too much in the 17th Assembly, but in the 16th Assembly we had a huge, huge fight over supplementary health benefits and in the end not much changed, but we still have no supplementary health benefit coverage for some of our residents. They've been referenced as the working poor, a term that I hate, but we do not have all of our residents eligible for supplementary health benefits.

A hotel tax. That's something else which I thought was fairly simple to establish. It didn't have to be a change to legislation even. It could be something that could be set up or it could be a simple legislation to just apply to municipalities that wanted it. Again, we've investigated that I think to the nth degree and it has yet to come to fruition. It doesn't have to be mandated for all communities, but for those communities that want it. Yellowknife wants to advance their tourism industry. Yellowknife wants to use the funding from a hotel tax to advance their tourism, to advance their conference industry and the opportunity has not been given to them.

A fairer policy on student housing for Aurora College. I think all of us, as Members, have probably heard from somebody at Aurora College, particularly here in Yellowknife, who have had difficulties with student housing. I pushed to get a policy amended. The policy was evaluated by the college and they came back and said that everything was okay, and I really regret that we could not have established a fairer policy for student housing for students in Yellowknife going to Aurora College.

A lack of greater provisions of housing for seniors and residents in transition from homelessness to their own home. We definitely need, in these two areas, as I spoke in my statement today, we need housing in a number of areas and we need housing in general across all of the Territories. Here in Yellowknife, the seniors' housing situation is pretty desperate. Here in Yellowknife the transition housing situation is pretty desperate and I regret that we weren't able to put the infrastructure in place or to put something in place to allow these people to go from homelessness to transition housing to get themselves established and then from transition housing to get into their own home, or seniors who need to go from their own home to supported living or to independent living or perhaps to extended care. It is something which has been talked about a long time but we haven't, unfortunately, seen the advances we should, particularly here in my home community.

I am very regretful that we did not end up with a better formula for funding for inclusive schooling. There was a review, albeit I have to grant the department kudos for holding a review. After all the work that was done, after all the input that they got, they said, "No, we're going to stay with what we have," and it unfortunately does not fund education boards as it should in terms of students that are being inclusive schooled. Particularly the magnet communities, and Yellowknife is a magnet community. We have services here that don't exist in other communities, so people with disabled students or students who are intellectually challenged bring their children here and we have people moving to this city to take advantage of the services here and to take advantage of the schools here and yet the magnet schools and magnet communities are funded to the same level as any school anywhere in the territory and it's unfair. It's something which I'm really regretful we weren't able to change.

The amount of action we've had on renewable energy projects, in my mind, is regrettable. In eight years I expected we would have a major energy project, something like a community biomass heat and electrical system somewhere in one of our communities in the territory. I think it was seven years ago we had a delegation that went over to Europe and came back and said, "These things are all over Europe," and I thought, oh great. Yes, we can do it here. No, it hasn't happened and we are still talking about projects. I admit, yes, there's a little bit of progress, but by now we should have had a major energy project. We all know the cost of our power is pretty horrendous and it has a huge impact on our cost of living.

I need to talk about land claims. There's an absolute need to settle our land claims and I don't imagine anybody in this House would disagree, but it is beginning to impact our economy. It's beginning to impact our governance and it's something which definitely needs to be done sooner rather than later. A tough job, but it needs to be done.

I must also comment on climate change and the lack of action that we've taken on climate change in recognizing that climate change is an issue and recognizing that we need to put money into it and in recognizing it is a policy issue that we have to take everything we do and look at it in the light of climate change. We're not doing that, I don't believe.

So, some of those things are big, some of them are little, and I regret that they didn't get accomplished, but I hope somebody in the 18th Assembly will take up each and every one of those and as, Mr. Speaker, you would say, "get 'er done."

Mr. Speaker, I have deplored the lack of effectiveness of Regular Members of Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning in this 17th Assembly. We can accomplish so much through

cohesiveness and support of each other, but it was not to be in this Assembly. But, being the optimist that I am, I hope that the 18th Assembly Priorities and Planning committee can wield the power that they have in an effective manner and for the betterment of our residents and our territory.

A few words of advice to the next Assembly: please take more time when setting up standing committees. The division of committee work amongst Regular Members was not evenly done in the 17th and some Members felt the strain of that. I know it impacted my work and my attitude of my colleagues.

But enough of the negative; it's not been all bad. There were a number of issues that I pursued and I have a good sense of accomplishment about those. First and foremost for me is the Donation of Food Act. It was a private member's bill that I brought forward in the 16th. I really had no idea what I was doing. I was really new at the game, but with the help of staff and with the help of my colleagues, we established the Donation of Food Act which was pretty much the "let's get going" for the Food Rescue Program which operates here in Yellowknife and it had a huge impact on them. I have no idea now how many hundreds of thousands of tons of food we've saved from the landfill, but it's a lot.

The NEBS legislation was another positive for me. In 2007 when I was campaigning, I stopped at the door of Mr. Dennis Adams and sort of said, you know, the usual, "Well, I'm campaigning and have you got any issues and what can I do for you and I want your vote," and he said, "Yes, there is something you can do for me." He, at that time, was the executive director for NEBS. "You can get legislation for us that's going to take us out of the situation that we're in." I said, "Oh sure, fine. I'll work on that." Well, it took us until – where are we, 2015 – from 2007 to 2015, but it's done, Mr. Speaker, and it is an excellent piece of legislation and I want to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations for the work they did. The same for the committee in Nunavut who did the same work and it ended up being a very long process but I think we came out with a very good piece of legislation.

I'm quite proud of the fact that I pushed the 16th Assembly to establish Caucus Protocols and Conventions. They have shaped how we work, how we govern ourselves, how Caucus works and how consensus kind of works. Consensus is a very strange animal. It helps that we have these guidelines to move us along. They are guidelines, right, so we don't always obey them. But consensus, our consensus, is a work in progress and I hope that it continues to develop protocols and conventions as things crop up.

I'm very happy that we finally, and we've now just had a second set of amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act with respect to distracted driving. I feel extremely strongly that we have a major portion of our population who don't yet realize the dangers in driving and texting, and I urge all Members, if you ever see anybody texting and driving, pull them over and tell them to stop. They are accidents waiting to happen and we are lucky we haven't had anybody killed because of it – yet. So I'm very pleased that we were able to get... Initially the act was changed to put in fines and then just recently we've increased those fines and added suspensions, as well, so that's awesome. I'm very glad for that.

I'm pleased that I was able to take a small part in establishing the Anti-Poverty Action Plan. The Anti-Poverty Coalition enlisted me to present their petition to the Premier in the 16th Assembly. I would have been happier if we had had anti-poverty legislation, but the fact that we have an Anti-Poverty Action Plan and that we're getting updates on that, I'm very pleased with that. We're started down the right road. I would hope that legislation would be the next step.

The Child and Family Services Act: that consultation when we reviewed that act and the consultation for the Mental Health Act. Both those consultations were probably highlights in terms of bills and reports that I was involved in. They were both extremely involved. They were both really quite emotionally draining because we were talking about people's lives, but I'm very pleased that we were able to get excellent recommendations to the Child and Family Services Act, some of which have happened. Lots more needs to be done, but we've had some take place, and the Mental Health Act, which we're going to be discussing later, is going to be a huge improvement on the Mental Health Act that we have at the moment. So I was very happy to be part of those.

The establishment of the Order of the NWT... It was a great ceremony today and we had great recipients today and, for me, I was pushed by a constituent to bring that forward and I was pushed, probably three or four times; every three or four months I'd get this e-mail or question, "Where's it at, where's it at?" So I took it to Caucus, and Caucus, in their wisdom, decided this was a good thing that we should do. It has now been established and it is an excellent addition to the awards that we have within our territory.

Devolution, how could I forget devolution? That we have devolution is an excellent accomplishment and I supported it and I have to give kudos to the Premier and his staff who managed to get everybody on board to get devolution to happen.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, it's been my honour to represent the constituents of Frame Lake these

past eight years. The constituents' concerns that regularly came to my office fall into four categories and I'm sure it's pretty much the same for all of us: their health, social services, housing, and income support, and being able to help people with those kinds of problems is very gratifying. I very much enjoyed that part of being an MLA. I very much enjoy being able to help people to fix their problems, sometimes. We run up against roadblocks quite often and it goes back to the policies which inhibit us from helping people as opposed to assisting us to help them.

Mr. Speaker, I like watching people – and goodness knows there's lots to watch here – in committees and hearings, in the House. The relationships that develop here, or don't, are quite fascinating. I appreciate the friendships and relationships I've made during my time here. I appreciate the opportunities I've had to travel our beautiful territory to get to know it better and to meet many of our people, as Mr. Yakeleya would say.

I wish each of you in this House success in your upcoming job interview. You need to know that I will be watching with interest on election night to see how you do. Thank you to the people of the NWT for letting me have such a great last job before I retire. Thank you to the Members of this and the 16th Assemblies for your support, your counsel and your friendship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES' REPLY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand, you can take as much time as you want to speak to anything you want to. I will reply to the opening address. I know this is the final day in the 17th Assembly. I just want to take this opportunity to recognize two Members in the 17th Legislative Assembly who made my time as a first-time Member very enjoyable, in most cases, I guess you could say, and help me become a better Member throughout the four years, and they are Mr. Bromley and Ms. Bisaro.

Over the four years they have definitely been educators, not only to myself but to all Members of this Legislative Assembly. They have been role models, mentors and definitely leaders in this House and committee rooms, in Caucus. I thank them for asking the tough questions. I know sometimes it is a pretty daunting task on some late nights asking the tough questions, but those are tough questions Members need to know so we better understand creating legislation, putting programs, initiatives and action plans together for the people of the Northwest Territories.

All of these educators, mentors and role models have demonstrated this through their dedication, commitment and hard work to the work that is done in the walls of this legislative building, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to say that they have been excellent ambassadors for the people that they serve and also the people of the Northwest Territories. Ms. Bisaro just mentioned action plans and initiatives that she has been very happy to be part of. I have helped with implementation and creation of these action plans, along with our government. I just have to say it was an honour to be able to work with Mr. Bromley and Ms. Bisaro as it was my first term. I learned a lot. I learned about the hard work and dedication to make change and make things happen. I know they have been part of that. I know Ms. Bisaro, in her opening comments, asked a question about whether or not she did anything for the government. I can say to both Mr. Bromley and Ms. Bisaro, you have made positive changes during the life of this government. I know outside of this government you will continue to do good work for people of the Northwest Territories. You helped me understand, as I said, hard work and dedication can actually make changes for the people that we serve in the Northwest Territories.

This is a special thank you for their hard work and commitment to the formation of the Mental Health Act, the Anti-Poverty Strategy and early childhood development. All of these things that came through during the life of the 17th Assembly. Without both of them being part of the equation, we wouldn't see the end product that is definitely going to benefit the residents.

With that, I just wanted to use my reply to opening address to address two of our hard-working colleagues who will be retiring and having a good life after this government is done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Thank you, Mr. Bromley.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Dolynny.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 22-17(5): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2011-2012, 2012-2013 AND 2013-2014

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present to the Assembly, Committee Report 22-17(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the Office of

the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner Annual Reports for 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014.

MOTION THAT COMMITTEE REPORT 22-17(5) BE DEEMED READ AND PRINTED IN HANSARD, CARRIED

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 22-17(5) be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried.

---Carried

It is the mandate of the Standing Committee on Government Operations to meet annually with the statutory officers of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories to publicly review the annual reports of the statutory officers.

The Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner's Annual Report for 2011-2012 was prepared when Ms. Sarah Jerome was the Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories. Although the report was signed off on October 1, 2012, it was not tabled until June 4, 2014 [TD 106-17(5)], after Ms. Jerome's term was completed on May 10, 2013. This prevented the Standing Committee on Government Operations from meeting with Ms. Jerome to discuss her report.

There was a vacancy in the office from May 10 to December 1, 2013, when Ms. Snookie Catholique's term as the new Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner took effect. The annual report for 2012-2013, prepared in the absence of a Languages Commissioner, constitutes a summary review of the operational budget for the office.

The Office of the Northwest Territories Official Languages Commissioner Annual Report, 2013-2014 was signed off by Ms. Catholique on October 1, 2014, and tabled on November 5, 2014 [TD 181-17(5)]. The departure of the Languages Commissioner from office, coupled with logistical challenges presented by the demands on the standing committee's schedule, rendered it impossible for the standing committee to meet with the Languages Commissioner to discuss the 2013-2014 report.

Owing to the unusual circumstances surrounding the production and tabling of these three reports, the standing committee opted not to conduct public reviews. The standing committee is confident that, with the appointment of a new Languages Commissioner, routine reviews of the annual

reports of that office will resume during the 18th Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Dolynny.

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-17(5),
CARRIED

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 22-17(5) be received and adopted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Dolynny.

COMMITTEE REPORT 23-17(5):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON TRANSITION MATTERS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly Committee Report 23-17(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Transition Matters.

MOTION THAT COMMITTEE REPORT 23-17(5)
BE DEEMED READ AND PRINTED IN HANSARD,
CARRIED

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 23-17(5) be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried.

--Carried

Introduction

Over the course of the 17th Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Government Operations (SCOGO or "the committee") has conducted a number of reviews and issued 19 reports containing a number of recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). In many instances, the GNWT has agreed with our recommendations and made commitments which it has not yet fulfilled. The intent of this report on transition matters is to advise members of the incoming Standing Committee on Government

Operations of the 18th Legislative Assembly on the status of work in progress.

Mandate of the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee on Government Operations plays an important oversight role with respect to government operations. Its mandate includes the:

- review of the departmental performance, budgets and multi-year business plans of the departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, the Executive, Finance and Human Resources and their boards and agencies;
- consideration of bills sponsored by these departments;
- statutory review of the Official Languages Act;
- review of the annual and special reports of the statutory officers of the Legislative Assembly, including the Languages Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Equal Pay Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission;
- examination of the reports on the annual financial statements and public accounts of the GNWT and the reports of the Auditor General; and
- consideration of any other matter referred by the House.

Review of the Official Languages Act

The Official Languages Act requires the committee to review the legislation at five-year intervals. In its report, the standing committee found that Education, Culture and Employment failed to respond fully to the findings of the 2009 review. The committee also found that the department's model for the delivery of official languages programming and services differed from that recommended by the standing committee of the 16th Assembly, without adequate public explanation for its "new approach."

The committee is particularly troubled by the fact that the department has, since 2006, been knowingly operating the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board in contravention of its own legislation and has yet to revise its legislative proposal to remedy this.

The committee is also concerned about the funding model for Aboriginal language revitalization and how the department intends to ensure accountability for the funding provided to language communities.

The department's response to the standing committee's report on the 2014 review was tabled in the final session of the 17th Assembly and was reviewed by the committee. The incoming

committee is encouraged to monitor the department's implementation of the committee's recommendations and to ensure that the department responds fully to the recommendations of the next review to take place towards the end of the 18th Assembly.

Reviews of Reports of the Auditor General

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) is the Auditor General for the Northwest Territories. The committee reviewed the following reports of the Auditor General during the 17th Legislative Assembly:

- 2012 Status Report to the NWT Legislative Assembly (following up on recommendations made in previous audits)
- 2013 Report on Northwest Territories Income Security Programs: Department of Education, Culture and Employment
- 2014 Report on Child and Family Services: Department of Health and Social Services and Health and Social Services Authorities
- 2015 Report on Corrections in the Northwest Territories: Department of Justice

For each of these performance audits, the committee tabled a report of its own. These reports contain 69 recommendations to the relevant government departments. Progress on the recommendations is being monitored by the Standing Committee on Social Programs (SCOSP), whose mandate includes oversight of the departments of Justice, Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services. The incoming SCOSP is encouraged, in particular, to watch for the implementation of a renewed strategic approach by the Department of Justice, referenced in their Corrections Action Plan and their response to recommendation 6 of the committee's Report on the Review of the OAG's Report on Corrections.

The departments tabled their responses to the Committee reports in the fall Session of each year following the presentation of the Auditor General's report.

The OAG advises that, effective in 2016, performance audits to the Legislative Assembly will be tabled in the fall instead of spring. The next performance audit will, therefore, be tabled in the fall of 2016.

Review of the Public Accounts

The Auditor General performs an annual financial audit of the public accounts of the GNWT. This year the committee completed its third annual review of the public accounts. Over the three-year period that this committee has undertaken reviews, Finance has made progress in completing the public accounts in a timely manner.

The committee encourages its successor committee to continue to conduct this annual review, which is an important mechanism for monitoring government accountability, and to ensure compliance with current recommendations.

Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees

SCOGO participates in the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC). Members have found the annual conference held by the CCPAC to be very informative. The committee encourages members of its successor committee to take advantage of this networking and learning opportunity.

The standing committee also notes that the Northwest Territories has been selected as host for the 37th Annual CCPAC Conference, to be held in Yellowknife August 21-23, 2016. This is only the second time in the history of the conference that the event has been held in the Northwest Territories. The committee is confident that its successor committee will ensure that visiting Public Accounts committees from other Canadian and international jurisdictions have an informative and memorable visit.

Reviews of Reports of Statutory Officers

The Legislative Assembly's statutory officers include the Languages Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Equal Pay Commissioner and Human Rights Commission.

In reviewing the annual reports of the Human Rights Commission and the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the committee made a number of recommendations and continues to monitor progress on the issues identified.

Vacancies in the office of Languages Commissioner have resulted in the committee's inability to complete thorough reviews of the Languages Commissioner's annual reports for the last three fiscal years. The standing committee is confident that with the appointment of a new Languages Commissioner, routine reviews of that office's annual reports will resume during the 18th Assembly.

With respect to the Legislative Assembly's statutory officers, the committee wishes to bring the following related matters to the attention of its successor committee:

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Legislation for Community Governments

With the exception of one year, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has, since 1997-1998, annually called for legislation to be passed or amended so that municipal governments are bound by access and privacy requirements similar to those binding the GNWT. This committee supports this

recommendation, as did our predecessor committees in the 15th and 16th Legislative Assemblies. As well, the NWT Association of Communities expressed support for this initiative in a resolution passed in 2012, encouraging the government to commence consultations.

In May 2015 the GNWT provided the committee with a "What We Heard" report, summarizing the consultations. The GNWT has committed that the "final report will be completed in the fall of 2015 as a transitional issue for the consideration of the 18th Assembly."

The standing committee strongly encourages its successor committee to follow up on this long-standing issue.

Update to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Act

Next year will be the 20th anniversary of the ATIPP Act. It has long been a matter of concern for the committee and the Information and Privacy Commissioner that this act is outdated and requires modernization.

The committee is pleased that a review of the act will be completed in 2015-2016, according to the Department of Justice's business plan. The committee encourages the GNWT to include a triggering provision requiring a mandatory statutory review, to ensure that the act is kept current in future years.

The committee encourages its successor committee to carefully monitor the department's progress on this important initiative.

Amendments to the Human Rights Act

The NWT Human Rights Commission, established under the Human Rights Act, celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2014. The commission has conducted a comprehensive review of the act and will submit its recommendations early in the life of the 18th Assembly.

The committee stresses the importance of monitoring this work to its successor committee.

Establishing an Ombudsman for the Northwest Territories

Establishing an office of the ombudsman for the Northwest Territories has been intermittently under discussion since the 12th Legislative Assembly. Most recently, three motions passed during the 17th Assembly have punctuated the dialogue. The first called on the GNWT to bring forward legislation establishing an ombudsman for the NWT. In response, the GNWT argued that the various appeal processes provided for in NWT legislation reduce the need for an ombudsman.

This prompted a second motion referring the matter to SCOGO for further research and analysis. In June 2014 the committee tabled its report, which

found that the complexity of the appeal processes in NWT legislation make it difficult for members of the public to understand their rights and that an ombudsman provides a single point of contact for people who have difficulty dealing with the GNWT.

A final motion again called for legislation establishing an NWT ombudsman. The GNWT's response was tabled in February 2015, concluding that the matter would be referred for consideration by the 18th Assembly.

The committee recommends that incoming SCOGO members urge their Caucus colleagues to set the creation of an ombudsman's office as a priority for the 18th Assembly.

Departmental Issues

Finance

Legislative Initiatives

The Department of Finance has an ambitious legislative agenda. The department has advised the committee that it will be bringing forward legislative proposals for establishing a Public Private Partnerships (P3) Corporation Act and for amending the Tobacco Tax Act, the Petroleum Products Tax Act and existing Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) legislation. The department will also propose amendments to liquor regulations to allow for direct sales from a manufacturing facility.

The incoming committee is encouraged to watch for these proposals.

Implementation of the Financial Administration Act

A new Financial Administration Act was given assent on June 4, 2015, and comes into force on April 1, 2016. One of the key thrusts of this legislation is a movement away from the requirement for the GNWT to seek Legislative Assembly approval for expenditure decisions that have already been made, in favour of increased reporting requirements. The committee's report provides a discussion of the key changes to the act.

The incoming committee is encouraged to monitor compliance with the new Financial Administration Act, particularly with respect to ensuring that government is meeting its new reporting requirements.

Fiscal Responsibility Policy

The GNWT introduced the Fiscal Responsibility Policy during the 16th Assembly. This policy is composed of the 1400 Section of the Financial Administration Manual and contains key rules that bind the government's borrowing. Despite the significance of the policy and the GNWT's commitment to it, the policy was never formally

approved by the Commissioner in Executive Council or signed by the Premier.

During its review of Bill 37, Financial Administration Act, the Minister clarified for the standing committee Finance's interpretation that Section 13(2)(d) of the new act requires the Minister to bring forward the Fiscal Responsibility Policy for formal approval before the April 1, 2016, coming-into-force date. In addition, the Minister concurred with an amendment to Bill 37 to ensure that the Legislative Assembly or one of its standing committees is consulted before the Financial Management Board (FMB) approves or amends the Fiscal Responsibility Policy.

The incoming committee should expect to review the *new* Fiscal Responsibility Policy very early in its term.

Enterprise Risk Management Framework

The committee is pleased that the department is responsive to the observation made by the OAG that the lack of a comprehensive risk management framework was an issue for the GNWT. However, the committee is concerned about the lack of transparency with respect to the work the government is doing in this area. The committee has not been provided a copy of the framework document, if one exists, and the department has declined to share copies of the departmental risk assessment profiles when they are completed.

The committee feels that some of the confusion surrounding this work could be addressed by determining with the Department of Finance what role, if any, the standing committee has in this work and what some of the public deliverables are with respect to enterprise risk management. Enterprise risk management is both a process and a series of outputs. The standing committee must have access to outputs and the information they contain, if it is to have any meaningful oversight role with respect to the process.

The incoming committee is strongly encouraged to explore this further with the department.

Planning and Accountability Framework

The new Financial Administration Act is intended to increase fiscal accountability by giving the FMB authority to establish a framework for planning by and accountability of government and public agencies. The act requires that the Planning and Accountability Framework be tabled in the Legislative Assembly at the earliest opportunity after being established and after any amendments.

The act ensures that the Legislative Assembly or one of its standing committees is consulted before the FMB approves or amends the Planning and Accountability Framework; therefore, the incoming committee should expect to review this document.

Internal Audit Bureau

The standing committee is concerned with the lack of transparency and public accountability with respect to the Internal Audit Bureau (IAB). In its Report on the Review of the 2013-14 Public Accounts, the committee recommended that, "in the interests of transparency and accountability, the Department of Finance share the findings and recommendations of the Internal Audit Bureau with the committee in confidence, particularly where the Government of the Northwest Territories relies on those findings and recommendations as substantiation for actions taken."

The department replied that the "Internal Audit Bureau provides independent assurance and advice to senior officials within the GNWT, whereas the OAG performs the same role for GNWT elected representatives to the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, disclosure to the committee of IAB findings and recommendations related to a particular audit would only be appropriate if it formed an integral part of a department's response on a particular question that committee had related to the public accounts."

The committee is dissatisfied with this response, as it fails to take into account the standing committee's oversight role. The committee feels strongly that there should be full disclosure and encourages the incoming committee to seek it from the next government.

NWT Tax and Resource Royalty Regimes

The standing committee has repeatedly challenged the department to find ways to increase the NWT's own-source revenues. Some of the suggestions made by the committee include maximizing self-reporting taxes, adding an upper bracket to the NWT's tax regime and making innovative changes to the resource royalty regime.

The committee urges its successor committee to continue to press the department to find ways to generate additional revenues for the GNWT.

Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations

Timely Receipt of Quarterly Negotiations and Implementation Status Report

These confidential reports provide the Committee with useful information for understanding the status of the department's work with respect to the negotiation of land, resources and self-government agreements. Although these reports are quarterly, the committee has received fewer than four reports in the last four years and the most recent report was received late.

The incoming committee is encouraged to pursue the timely submission of these reports from the department.

Executive

Government Service Officers

In its review of the department's 2015-2016 Business Plan, the committee acknowledged the positive public response to the department's flagship program placing 18 government services officers (GSOs) in smaller communities. The committee urged the department to take the necessary steps to create at least one or two more GSO positions in 2015-2016 and to confirm the overall rollout plan for this initiative, which would see a GSO in each of the 23 small communities.

The committee hopes that its successor committee will continue to pressure the government for full implementation of this program in all small communities.

NGO Stabilization Fund

In May 2013 SCOGO issued a news release calling on the GNWT to increase the funding to the \$350,000 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Stabilization Fund. The committee was concerned that the total funding available to NGOs had not increased since the program's first full year of operation in 2010-2011. The committee was also concerned about the need to provide clearer information to applicants, overly-restrictive screening criteria, prioritization of projects and the transfer of fund administration from the Department of Executive to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Oversight of the NGO Stabilization Fund now falls to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure (SCEDI). The committee encourages the incoming Members of SCEDI in the 18th Assembly to continue to monitor the disposition of this fund.

Human Resources

Direct Appointments

In the 2013 calendar year, 6.4 percent of the GNWT's employees were directly appointed to their positions in the public service. In its review of the 2015-2016 Business Plans, the standing committee expressed concern that this tool is being used too liberally by government.

Whenever a direct appointment takes place, potential applicants for that job are deprived of a fair competition for the job. The committee called upon the Minister to work with his Cabinet colleagues to review and strengthen the guidelines governing the use of direct appointments and to require stronger reasons for their use.

The department's response indicated that Cabinet supports and will continue to use direct appointments to the GNWT public service. The committee is disappointed by this response and urges the incoming committee to follow up with the GNWT to minimize the use of direct appointments wherever possible.

Management of Vacant Positions

The standing committee is also concerned with the management practice of accessing unspent funds from vacant positions to use in other ways. The committee worries that this provides a disincentive to managers to keep positions fully staffed and has the potential to enable the use of funds for expenditures for which they were not appropriated.

The committee has called on the Department of Human Resources to demonstrate leadership in this area, to reduce and eliminate the practice of artificially maintaining vacancies as a means for increasing funding flexibility. The committee recommends that its successor committee be vigilant in monitoring this issue.

Safe Disclosure Legislative Proposal

The standing committee was expecting a legislative proposal from the department to develop safe disclosure (whistleblower) legislation to protect those who come forward with information regarding government impropriety or illegal activities. The committee was displeased with the department's decision to suspend work on this initiative pending the results of SCOGO's work on establishing an ombudsman.

In the absence of any discussion between the committee and the department on the relationship between these two initiatives, the committee views this delay as unfortunate. The establishment of an NWT Ombudsman might enhance the implementation of safe disclosure legislation by providing a system for independent investigation of questionable government activities, but it does not replace the statutory protection that would be provided to whistleblowers under appropriate legislation.

The committee sees no valid reason to delay this work and encourages its successor committee to ensure that this initiative is back on track.

Workforce Planning Strategy (Staff Retention and Regional Recruitment)

During the 2015-2016 Business Plan review, the committee noted that six of the eight key sub-strategies in the Workforce Planning Strategy are directly related to matters of recruitment. The committee is also concerned that the department has not done enough work in the area of succession planning. The committee has urged the department to increase its focus on retention activities as a means for stabilizing the NWT workforce.

The committee encourages its successor committee to continue to pay close attention to the department's efforts to recruit and retain a qualified and stable NWT workforce.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Transition Matters. Members respectfully suggest that our successor committee consider requesting updates on the above matters from committee staff and government and wish them the utmost success in fulfilling their mandate.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Dolynny.

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-17(5),
CARRIED

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 23-17(5) be received and adopted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Yakeleya.

COMMITTEE REPORT 24-17(5):
PASSING THE MACE:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE 18TH
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a report by the Special Committee on Transition Matters – Passing the Mace: Recommendations to the 18th Legislative Assembly.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Transition is when one group of people willfully hands over political power to another group of people.

This year the Northwest Territories (NWT) will transition from the 17th Legislative Assembly to the 18th Legislative Assembly. This process will begin with the dissolution of the 17th Assembly on October 25th, followed by polling day for the General Election on November 23rd and the appointment of a new government soon thereafter.

The purpose of this joint committee – the first of its kind – was to improve the transition process by providing the best advice of one Assembly to the next Assembly.

The committee was mandated to describe the fiscal and decision-making context for the next Assembly, to make recommendations on how the transition process and the practice of consensus government could be improved, and to recommend priority policy issues for the next Assembly.

The recommendations of this committee are not binding, but are for the consideration of members of the 18th Assembly.

State of the Economy

This chapter provides background information about the NWT economic outlook and the implications for GNWT revenues, including:

- a discussion of the NWT economy in a Canadian and global context and NWT linkages with the domestic and international economies;
- a summary of the current state of the NWT economy and prospects for future economic growth; and
- a description of how government revenues are affected by economic growth.

The NWT economy was severely affected by the global economic and financial crisis in 2008 and not all aspects of the economy have returned to pre-recession levels.

The NWT economic outlook over the next five years is mixed at best. Although some regions are benefitting from resource projects, economic activity in other areas has either slowed considerably or declined.

Over the next five to 15 years, the data suggests a protracted decline in resource production. Existing diamond mines are maturing and identified potential mining operations will not replace the economic activity of current operations. Resource exploration, which is necessary for further development, is also slowing down.

Growing the NWT economy requires transformational investments such as the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link, the Mackenzie Valley Highway and addressing our energy cost and supply challenges. These strategic investments and other initiatives to lower costs for residents and businesses are vital for the long-term growth and sustainability of the NWT economy.

Finalizing remaining land claims would provide greater certainty on land ownership, clarify the terms of engagement among stakeholders for land access, and potentially make more land available for regional and community economic development.

The slow-growing economy produces a flat revenue outlook, which in turn means less fiscal resources to sustain programs and services at current levels.

Decision-Making Environment

This chapter describes major changes in the decision-making environment that may affect the consideration of future priorities by the 18th Legislative Assembly, including:

- the roles and responsibilities of public decision-makers in the NWT other than the territorial government;
- how the territorial government makes decisions; and
- some emerging trends in citizen expectations of government.

Territorial government is not the only policy-maker in the NWT. Other major public decision-makers include the Government of Canada, regional Aboriginal governments, community governments, co-management boards and territorial boards; and courts of law are significant independent decision-makers in their own right. It is also important to continue to think about how all of these decision-makers fit together in governing the NWT.

Recognizing that there are other important public policy-makers in the NWT, the territorial government has the broadest mandate for policy-making within our borders. Our consensus government uses processes similar to those found in provincial capitals or in Ottawa, but without political parties or majority governments. The Executive Council is in place to provide leadership on policy initiatives and direct the civil service, while Regular Members are expected to help guide policy direction and hold the executive to account. It is the Executive Council that prepares and proposes budgets, but the Legislative Assembly ultimately approves spending in law.

Modern technology and increased connectivity throughout the territory has resulted in numerous approaches to public participation in policy-making. For many, information is delivered with the speed of Google, goods delivered with the choice and efficiency of Amazon, and messages responded to instantly through Twitter or Facebook. As for government, it has a public duty to check that the information it sends is accurate, the goods it delivers are safe and accessible, and dialogue with the public is fair and inclusive. At the same time, increasingly, citizens expect government to work in cooperation with other groups and associations to develop public policy.

Recommendations on the Transition Process and Consensus Government

Term Length

The committee recommends that the incoming 18th Assembly retain the current four-year fixed date election schedule.

Territorial Leadership Selection

The committee recommends that the incoming 18th Assembly continue to elect members of the Executive Council.

Regional Balance on Cabinet

The committee supports having regional balance on Cabinet, but does not make any recommendation on the way the 18th Assembly should arrive at regional balance on Cabinet.

Mid-Term Review

The committee recommends that the outgoing 17th Legislative Assembly establish a process convention on priority setting and reporting and that the incoming 18th Assembly endorse this convention.

Priority Setting

The committee recommends that the outgoing 17th Assembly establish a process convention on priority setting and reporting and that the incoming 18th Assembly endorse this convention.

Business Planning Process

The committee recommends that the incoming 18th Assembly conduct concurrent reviews of departmental business plans as well as amend sitting hours and the Orders of the Day during the budget session.

Transition Staging

The committee recommends that the 18th Assembly also establish a Special Committee on Transition Matters during the last year of its legislative term.

Recommendations on Priorities for the 18th Legislative Assembly

Because of the long-term nature of our work, many of the priorities of the 18th Assembly will be similar to those of the 17th and earlier Assemblies. This committee wishes to highlight five key areas that Members of the 18th Assembly should consider when discussing priorities.

They are not intended to be an inventory of everything government does, nor a catalogue of specific projects that individual Members are passionate about. Not all members of this committee agree on the relative importance of each priority, and they are presented in no particular order. Not everyone will agree that these should be the priorities of the 18th Assembly. This is a good thing.

- Reverse the social ills that hold our people down, particularly low education levels, addictions and poor mental health.
- Strengthen and diversify our economy in anticipation of impending diamond mine closures.
- Complete devolution of land and resources and implement a regulatory system that reflects the values of our residents and partner governments.
- Rein in the increasing cost of living, particularly energy, housing and food.

- Plan for and adapt to a changing climate in the North.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Yakeleya.

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT
COMMITTEE REPORT 24-17(5),
CARRIED

MR. YAKELEYA: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Committee Report 24-17(5), be received and adopted by this Assembly.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 24-17(5) is received and adopted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Mr. Moses.

**Reports of Committee
on the Review of Bills**

BILL 55:
MENTAL HEALTH ACT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Social Programs has reviewed Bill 55, Mental Health Act, and wishes to report that Bill 55 as amended and reprinted is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Bill 55 as amended and reprinted is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 75(5) to have Bill 55, Mental Health Act, moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to return to item 12 on the Order Paper.

---Unanimous consent granted

**Reports of Standing and
Special Committees
(Reversion)**

COMMITTEE REPORT 25-17(5):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF
BILL 55: MENTAL HEALTH ACT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

Introduction

Bill 55, Mental Health Act, will replace the existing Mental Health Act, which is out of step with national and international standards. Notably, the new act will authorize the use of community-based psychiatric treatment and provide better protection for patient rights by establishing a review board for hearing complaints.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs thanks the Minister of Health and Social Services for introducing Bill 55 within the life of the 17th Legislative Assembly. This is a significant achievement. The bill was referred to the committee on June 2, 2015. The public hearing with the Minister was held on August 24, 2015. The clause-by-clause review was held on October 5, 2015. With the Minister's agreement, 27 motions to amend Bill 55 were passed at the clause-by-clause review. These amendments are discussed below, along with a large number of recommended actions.

During its review, the committee heard from well over 100 residents and stakeholders. Public meetings were held in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Norman Wells, Tulita, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, Hay River, Kakisa and Fort Providence. Seventeen written submissions were received from the Northwest Territories chapter of the Canadian Bar Association; Elaine Keenan Bengts, the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner; the Status of Women Council of the NWT; Jane Arychuk, president of Aurora College; the Union of Northern Workers; the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association; Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge of the Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation; James and Connie Boraski and Ian Henderson; an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities; a social worker in private practice; and a handful of GNWT employees, community advocates and private residents.

Bill 55 generated a vast amount of commentary and criticism. More than 50 potential amendments were brought forward for consideration, along with roughly twice that number of recommended actions. During the review the committee simultaneously laboured over the intricacies of legal terminology and kept the big picture in view, enumerating recommended actions that, if implemented, will

usher in a healthier future for the people of the Northwest Territories.

New Legislation is Not a Cure-all

In the community visits, discussion about the proposed legislation was often eclipsed by testimonies of struggle to overcome trauma, abuse, addictions, family violence and community dysfunction. The people's pain was plain to see and seemed to stem from a few primary sources: the colonial history of the Northwest Territories, the legacy of residential schools, and failures in the provision of mental health service.

Like the existing Mental Health Act, the new act will focus primarily on treatment of people with psychiatric disorders. Each year in the Northwest Territories, roughly 200 patients are involuntarily admitted into our territory's four designated facilities, located in Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik. Like the existing act, Bill 55 is silent on the topic of addictions and substance abuse, even though these problems often coexist with psychiatric disorders. Indeed, it is ironic that, despite its official title, the bill defines a mental disorder but does not define mental health. In any case, the reality is that mental health and mental illness exist on a continuum. Likewise, mental health services include a spectrum of activities from prevention and early intervention to therapeutic counselling and in-patient hospital care. So, in the words of one NWT resident, "What we need is a companion act for the Mental Health Act. This here is a Mental Illness Act. We need a Mental Wellness Act. There's a bit of funding here and there, but it's really just a patchwork of services." For all intents and purposes, the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan may be thought of as that companion act, and to that end, the committee is calling for substantial enhancements to it.

At the public hearing, the Minister admitted, "There are gaps in our current mental health system and residents are falling through the cracks; it is clear that change is urgently needed. This legislation will fill in those gaps and modernize the current mental health framework." The committee agrees that there are gaps in the system, but does not agree that new legislation will address them all. In fact, this sort of claim only generates false expectations. As legislation goes, Bill 55 is better than the existing act. But by itself, new legislation offers no guarantee of better services. Accordingly, if this report contains a primary take-home message, it is that new legislation is not the cure-all solution. By way of illustration, the committee learned that the department's implementation plans include spending an additional \$500,000 annually on new positions at headquarters, with no new allocations for services in the communities. Under such circumstances, the scope of positive change will be modest at best. Overall, stronger political will, more

effective leadership and substantial new funding will be required if mental health services are going to be delivered when and where people need them.

At this time, I would like to pass the reading of the report over to my colleague Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Moses.

Aboriginal Culture and the Role of Elders

In an eloquent statement at the public meeting in Fort Providence, Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge said, "The Mental Health Act should be written for the people it serves." The committee wholeheartedly agreed and made a point of incorporating provisions on Aboriginal culture and the role that elders play in promoting mental and emotional wellness.

The preamble to the current act, which was not carried over into Bill 55, recognizes the many cultures of the peoples of the Northwest Territories and stipulates that an elder must be consulted when an assessment is being made about the mental state of an Aboriginal person. The committee asked why the preamble had been removed, and the department responded by citing concerns that it might be used to interpret the legislation in outdated or unintended ways. The committee disagreed with this logic, asserting that respect for culture is never out of date. The department also noted that the Official Languages Act, which came into force after the current Mental Health Act, carries obligations to provide interpretation services and deliver services in a culturally sensitive manner. Accordingly, the department argued that any mention of culture in the new Mental Health Act is unnecessary. Once again, the committee strongly disagreed. Sidestepping the problem of the preamble's ambiguous legal status, the committee sought instead to incorporate a number of legally binding principles, including the principle of respecting people's culture, language and religious upbringing. Another culturally relevant addition to Bill 55 is the requirement that the chair of the review board appoint an elder as a cultural advisor if an applicant requests it.

Principles of the Act

As mentioned, the committee introduced a motion to incorporate legally binding principles that will assist in the interpretation and administration of the act. These principles respond to a wide range of stakeholder concerns. The first asserts that there are to be no unreasonable delays in making or carrying out decisions affecting a person under the act. The second asserts that decisions under the act should respect a person's cultural, linguistic and religious upbringing. The third states that least restrictive measures should be used, taking into consideration the safety of the patient and other

people. The fourth speaks to the importance of family and community involvement in the care of people with mental health issues. The fifth speaks to the matter of mental competence, asserting that patients should be supported in making their own decisions for as long as possible. The sixth and final principle pertains to personal privacy, underscoring the fact that information about a person's mental health is, whether we like it or not, fraught with stigma and should be handled with the utmost respect for privacy. At the clause-by-clause review, the Minister concurred with this motion and confirmed that these principles are consistent with the intent of the legislation.

Failures and Gaps in Mental Health Services

Over the course of the review, dozens of people described their lack of trust in the government's provision of mental health services. Fighting back tears, one community advocate bravely asserted, "Silence means approval, so I can't be silent." In another troubling case, a young man who suffered a brain injury following a motor vehicle accident has been placed in the North Slave Correctional Facility because there is no suitable care facility in his home community. The man's father is overwhelmed with frustration because service gaps have effectively led to his son's criminalization rather than his rehabilitation.

Accounts like these line up with the data the committee received on the Community Counselling Program. Over the past five years, roughly 30 percent of its front-line positions have been vacant for 12 months or longer. Three of these so-called permanent positions in Wekweeti, Aklavik and Fort Resolution respectively, have been vacant for five consecutive years. With such inconsistent coverage, the number of resulting service failures is virtually incalculable. All too often, residents have no one to approach for guidance, counselling or after-care. All too often, referrals for other mental health services simply do not happen. This is unacceptable. The department must renew its efforts to recruit and retain qualified workers.

The proposed legislation, like the current act, does not give patients the right to receive services. Rather, it allows for the provision of voluntary services on a discretionary basis. The committee identified serious concerns in this area. A tragic illustration is the case of a teenager who died of self-inflicted injuries in April 2015 shortly after being discharged from Stanton Territorial Hospital. He had repeatedly sought mental health services, but his symptoms were dismissed and he was sent away without a plan for follow-up treatment. A second illustration is the case of a young woman who attempted suicide and was brought to a nearby hospital. She was treated and admitted overnight, only to be released the next day with no apparent plan for follow-up care or counselling. These cases

point not only to gaps in the provision of community-based mental health services but also to possible deficiencies in clinical practice standards.

On a positive note, community-based services, when available, can make a significant difference. One resident described going through a bad patch of depression and anxiety attacks. "I went to the doctor and got pills, even though I'm not much of a pill-popper. But there was a mental health worker and for three years I got counselling. She really helped me a lot." The committee is therefore calling for substantial enhancements to the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, as indicated in the following recommended actions.

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn the report over to Madam Groenewegen to continue reading.

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

Assisted Community Treatment

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 55 includes new provisions for "assisted community treatment," also known as "ACT." Essentially, this is mandatory outpatient treatment, where psychiatric care is provided while the patient is living in the community. For each patient, a treatment plan is created where the patient, health and social services professionals and family members or other support persons agree to implement and monitor the plan.

Ideally, community treatment reduces the traumatic impact of hospitalization and helps the patient reintegrate into the community following a period of hospitalization. However, as the committee discovered, there are potential shortcomings associated with this type of psychiatric care. First, despite its widespread use in other Canadian jurisdictions, community-based treatment appears to be controversial. A 2012 review of Ontario's legislation found inconclusive evidence on the benefits of community treatment. Second, because the department has no plans to bolster resources in the communities, this option will only be available where sufficient resources already exist: in Yellowknife and, potentially, regional centres. Patients from small communities will either have to forfeit this treatment option or live away from home. Third, community-based treatment may inadvertently expose patients to criminalization if the treatment plan goes awry or the patient is not adequately monitored. Fourth, people who agree to monitor an ACT patient may be exposed to legal liabilities. Fifth, people who agree to monitor an ACT patient may experience burnout as the burden of care is handed over to family members and other unpaid caregivers. For all of these reasons, the committee cannot fully endorse the provisions pertaining to assisted community treatment.

Homelessness

On a per capita basis, the homeless population in the Northwest Territories is sizable, and appears to be growing. A significant number of homeless people are struggling with mental illness. The prevailing approach to homelessness and mental illness is to rely on emergency health care and on shelters for emergency housing. In the long run, this approach is costly and ineffective. As an alternative, "Housing First" is an evidence-based intervention model whereby permanent housing and wrap-around supports are provided to individuals who are homeless and living with a serious mental illness. Canada's At Home/Chez Soi initiative was a five-year, five-city Housing First demonstration project. It examined quality of life, community functioning, recovery, employment, and related outcomes. Overall, it demonstrated that the Housing First model can be implemented successfully in combination with assisted community treatment. The committee believes that aggressive action should be taken to address homelessness, especially through the use of Housing First initiatives.

At this time, I'd like to turn the reading of the report to Mr. Dolynny.

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

Suicide Prevention

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. During the committee's travel in the communities, residents described their despair and helplessness in the face of suicide. They want clearer direction in how to support people who are at risk and what to do when something goes terribly wrong. The facts and statistics for the Northwest Territories show an obvious need to strengthen suicide prevention efforts. According to the 2011 Northwest Territories Health Status Report, the annual suicide rate in the Northwest Territories is 65 percent higher than the national rate. The same report indicates that the suicide rate in small communities is several times higher than the national average. The chief coroner for the Northwest Territories reported that the suicide rate for 2014 rose substantially over previous years. Furthermore, Statistics Canada data for 2010 show that the suicide rate among youth in the Inuit homelands – which include the Inuvialuit of the western Arctic – is up to 30 times higher than that of youth in other parts of Canada.

According to the latest national and international evidence, suicide is largely preventable. For this reason, suicide prevention efforts should be strengthened and include training in Mental Health First Aid for community leaders and GNWT employees. The government also should investigate methods used in Québec, where an

aggressive provincial strategy has led to dramatic declines in the rate of suicide.

With respect to Bill 55, the committee sought to introduce provisions to better ensure that people who have attempted suicide, or threatened to do so, receive proper assessments and follow-up care. A new provision pertains to cases where a person has recently caused, threatened, or attempted self-harm. It will ensure that the person undergoes further assessment to determine whether an involuntary admission is necessary. The Minister agreed to the motion and assured the committee that education and training will be provided to health professionals so that the new provision is correctly administered. The Minister also explained that involuntary psychiatric assessments are completed by a trained psychiatrist or physician and is comprehensive in nature, including an investigation into the presenting concern, the history of the concern, a mental-status exam, a physical exam, personal history, direct observations, and consultation with other professionals.

The committee also drafted a motion to establish self-harm as a criterion for involuntary admission, under the proposed Section 13. However, after reviewing the draft motion, the Minister indicated that he could not concur with it. He explained that recent harm is not a guarantee that a person will harm themselves or others in the near future and, further, that an involuntary admission solely on this basis could result in a challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Moreover, while the legislation in some other jurisdictions includes recent harm as a criterion for involuntary admission, it indicates that the risk of future harm must also be present. Persuaded by this reasoning, the committee chose not to introduce the motion.

Strategy for Youth and Adolescents

During its review of Bill 55, the committee learned that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among Canadian youth and that roughly 20 percent of Canadian youth have a mental health issue. Moreover, in about 70 percent of cases, mental health problems emerge before a person reaches the age of 18. These facts came to light in a 2006 report by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. The groundbreaking report called the treatment of children and youth the worst part of the mental health system in Canada. The report made such an impact that all Canadian provinces subsequently developed stand-alone mental health strategies for youth and adolescents. The Northwest Territories has not yet followed suit. However, as he indicated at the clause-by-clause review, the Minister will be recommending that such a strategy be undertaken in the 18th Assembly.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn it over to my colleague Ms. Bisaro. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Ms. Bisaro.

Patient Rights

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the current Mental Health Act, the courts are the only recourse for people who wish to have a decision reviewed or appealed. This approach is expensive, inefficient and out of step with best practices elsewhere in Canada. The new act will enhance patient rights by establishing a quasi-judicial review board for hearing complaints. Applications to the review board may pertain to such matters as involuntary admissions, findings of mental competence or objections to treatment. Every application will be handled by a three-person review panel consisting of a lawyer, medical doctor and lay person. In response to a stakeholder query, the committee confirmed that members of the review board will be paid for their services.

To enhance patient rights, the committee sought two changes pertaining to the review board. The first change requires the chair of the review board to appoint an elder as a cultural advisor where an applicant requests it. The purpose is to ensure that matters are handled in a culturally sensitive manner. The Minister concurred with this motion, but noted that the review panel already includes a lay person who will play a patient-advocate role and that the panel has the ability to call an elder as a witness at a hearing. The Minister cautioned that providing patients with the option to request a cultural advisor may result in delays or increased operational costs. The committee therefore agreed to the inclusion of a notwithstanding clause that will allow the review panel to continue its proceedings if, in rare circumstances, a suitable cultural advisor cannot be found. A second change pertaining to the review board provisions requires that the composition of the review board reflect the diversity and gender balance of the population.

The committee contemplated ways of enhancing patient rights in other ways too. Initially, it drafted a motion to allow a voluntary patient who disagrees with a doctor's discharge decision to remain in the designated facility until the case has been considered by a review panel. However, the Minister explained that an order from a review panel would likely result in undue delays and hardship for the patient and unnecessary operational costs. He subsequently proposed to grant every patient – voluntary and involuntary alike – the right to a second medical opinion. The committee accepted this line of reasoning and introduced a motion to that effect. At the request of the Minister, a companion motion was introduced to ensure that notice of the patient's right to a second opinion is conspicuously posted.

The committee also introduced a motion to facilitate greater involvement on the part of family members and other support persons. Recognizing that a patient's right to privacy imposes certain justifiable constraints and, further, that some patients do not want their family involved, the committee introduced a motion that will impose a duty on the attending doctor to ask a voluntary patient if he or she would like someone to be notified of their circumstances. A companion motion was introduced to ensure that the doctor makes reasonable efforts to notify the person, and the Minister concurred with these motions at the clause-by-clause review.

In addition, the committee acted on recommendations from the Northwest Territories chapter of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA). The CBA explained that mentally ill people are criminalized whenever they come into conflict with the law and end up in correctional facilities instead of medical facilities. Individuals who suffer from psychiatric disorders, the CBA continued, are frequently subjected to apprehensions or periods of detention that are virtually identical to those resulting from criminal offences. To mitigate against these tendencies, the committee and the Minister settled on several additional provisions. First, a peace officer will be required to convey a person to a health facility without delay. Second, a peace officer will be required to inform the apprehended person, again without delay, of the reason for their detention and their right to legal counsel. Third, the peace officer will be required to facilitate the person's access to legal counsel. Fourth, in the event of a necessary delay in conveying the person to a health facility, the patient will have the right to communicate with a family member, health professional or other person. Finally, in the event of a delay, the peace officer will be required to contact a health professional to discuss the person's condition and circumstances. At the clause-by-clause review, the Minister indicated that these changes are consistent with Charter rights and the intent of the legislation.

With respect to the selection of substitute decision-makers, the committee acted on concerns of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Status of Women Council of the NWT. Because the original language in Bill 55 would only have allowed for an express wish to be considered after the selection process had begun, the committee introduced a change. It states that, notwithstanding the prioritized eligibility list set out in Section 30, if a medical doctor believes a patient is competent to participate in the selection of a substitute decision-maker, the patient's express wish must be first in priority. The Minister concurred with this motion at the clause-by-clause review, but cautioned that the change will complicate the process of selecting a substitute decision-maker and place additional

burdens on the department to establish practice standards and train health care providers.

Protection of Privacy

The Information and Privacy Commissioner provided a lengthy submission on Bill 55. The committee asked the Minister to respond to it and then deliberated on the issues. First and foremost, the committee determined that privacy issues pertaining to the Mental Health Act will largely be governed by the Health Information Act.

Second, the committee observed that points of disagreement between the Minister and the Commissioner focused largely on whether privacy provisions should be contained in the statute or in regulations. Recognizing that regulations can be more easily changed and brought into force without the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly, the committee nonetheless concluded that privacy protections will have the force of law in either case.

Third, the committee took up the Commissioner's concern about the bill's failure to prohibit board members from disclosing information obtained in their role as board members. A motion to establish a confidentiality clause was introduced at the clause-by-clause review with the Minister's agreement.

Fourth, in reference to Section 56, which authorizes the creation of a registry of certificates issued under the act, the committee noted that the Health Information Act expressly permits the creation of such a registry. The Commissioner asked for a statutory amendment to clarify the registry's purpose, but the committee concluded that regulations are an appropriate place to specify this. Moreover, the committee was satisfied with the Minister's explanation that the registry will be used to keep track of the number of involuntary patients and thereby assist in long-term planning. The Minister also offered assurance that certificates will be securely filed and that only relevant information from certificates will be entered into the registry.

Fifth, in reference to the concern about law enforcement's access to certificates—and, specifically, access to the sensitive information contained therein, the committee confirmed that federal legislation protects personal information and places obligations on RCMP officers to respect confidentiality. The Minister further indicated that unnecessary information will be redacted from certificates, a practice consistent with the department's obligations under Section 28 of the Health Information Act. These matters will be prescribed in regulations, and the committee concluded that regulation-making authority relating to the apprehension of persons will include the authority to prescribe how information is shared.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn the reading of the report over to my colleague Mr. Moses.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Moses.

Regulations and General Considerations

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A large number of operational requirements will be laid out in regulations. For this reason, the department is being strongly urged to draft regulations in consultation with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, key stakeholders and members of the public. An area that will require careful scrutiny is the designation of authorized persons for apprehending, conveying or detaining individuals. Regulations should clearly establish who, and under what circumstances, these persons will be employed.

The committee was encouraged to learn that the Department of Health and Social Services is developing an agreement with the RCMP regarding its role under the new act. That said, the committee is concerned about the risk of improperly trained persons being called upon in communities or situations in which there is no RCMP presence.

With the Minister's agreement, the committee introduced a motion to define a "peace officer" within the act, stipulating that it should mean a member of the RCMP or a prescribed person or class of persons. The Minister agreed that the definition of a peace officer in the Criminal Code of Canada is quite broad, and confirmed that the original intent of the legislation was to define a peace officer as the RCMP. A companion motion was introduced which provides regulation-making authority to prescribe other classes of persons or alter the definition of a peace officer in the future.

The department was asked to clarify whether the medical records of a patient who is transferred to another facility will be sent along with the patient so as to prevent unnecessary repetition of requests for the patient's medical history. Departmental staff confirmed that the under subsection 96(2), the relevant records of a patient who is transferred to another facility, whether inside or outside of the Northwest Territories, must be transferred to the receiving facility. However, to strengthen this requirement, the committee introduced a motion to ensure that the receiving facility receives the records as soon as possible. The Minister concurred with this motion.

A number of additional motions were passed at the clause-by-clause review. A pair of motions was passed to ensure that patients will not be provided with the home address of the chairperson of the review board. A motion, which was introduced at the Minister's request, replaces a phrase in subsection 84(1), and clarifies that documents being served on a patient can only be served on the public trustee and endorsed with the name of the facility if the person is an involuntary patient and has been found mentally incompetent to manage

his or her estate. Finally, to correct a handful of minor drafting errors, several technical motions were passed during the clause-by-clause review.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1

That the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report for consideration by the Legislative Assembly in June 2016.

Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Social Programs thanks all stakeholders who provided comments on Bill 55 or attended public meetings.

The committee advises that it supports Bill 55 as amended and reprinted and presents it for consideration to Committee of the Whole.

MOTION THAT COMMITTEE REPORT 25-17(5) BE DEEMED READ AND PRINTED IN HANSARD, CARRIED

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the presentation of a portion of our report. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the balance of Committee Report 25-17(5), Report on the Review of Bill 55, Mental Health Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Recommended Actions

1. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that its operational practices align with the principles of the new Mental Health Act.
2. That the Department of Health and Social Services review its clinical standards and protocols for the release of voluntary patients, including the use of risk-assessment screening tools and provision of follow-up care.
3. That the Department of Health and Social Services renew its efforts to recruit and retain front-line mental health workers, targeting positions with long-standing vacancies.
4. That the Department of Health and Social Services guarantee access to safe and affordable housing for front-line workers as a way of strengthening recruitment and retention.
5. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure appropriate housing is available for patients being discharged from

designated facilities, including patients receiving psychiatric care under community treatment plans.

6. That the Department of Health and Social Services strengthen efforts to re-establish a residential addictions treatment facility for the Northwest Territories or establish a pan-territorial facility.
7. That the Department of Health and Social Services expand its outreach, ensuring that health care workers provide services in remote communities on a more frequent basis.
8. That the Department of Health and Social Services offer mobile treatment services.
9. That the Department of Health and Social Services introduce a comprehensive after-care and relapse prevention program for use by counsellors across the Northwest Territories, based on the model developed by Shepell, a national mental health organization.
10. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that individuals with a criminal record for a violent or sexual offence are not denied access to southern residential treatment facilities.
11. That the Department of Health and Social Services work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to develop "integrated community plans" for Aurora College students who have mental health issues.
12. That the Department of Health and Social Services collaborate with other GNWT departments to offer cultural camps and on-the-land programs, focusing on mental health, healing, and traditional Aboriginal knowledge.
13. That the Department of Health and Social Services provide respite services for family members who are providing care for mentally ill family members.
14. That the Department of Health and Social Services employ local health care staff or lay dispensers in communities in order to increase patients' compliance in taking prescription medication.
15. That the Department of Health and Social Services provide a mechanism for hearing the concerns of patients and their advocates regarding prescription medication, focusing on measures to offset negative side effects.
16. That the Department of Health and Social Services review its official languages protocol to ensure that patients are receiving interpretation services as required.
17. That the Department of Health and Social Services introduce job sharing and part-time options for mental health workers in order to

- reduce the risk of burnout and make front-line positions more attractive.
18. That the Department of Health and Social Services adopt an approach that relies on therapy and counselling as a viable alternative to prescription medication.
 19. That the Department of Health and Social Services hire additional psychiatrists in order to reduce lengthy wait times.
 20. That the Department of Health and Social Services hire a dedicated psychiatrist to address the needs of children, adolescents and youth.
 21. That the Department of Health and Social Services simplify job titles for front-line mental health workers so that workers will be more approachable.
 22. That the Department of Health and Social Services strengthen its services for seniors who are experiencing dementia or Alzheimer's.
 23. That the Department of Health and Social Services hire additional medical social workers who can provide services at the intersection of mental health, counselling and social services.
 24. That the Department of Health and Social Services work with community agencies, non-profit organizations and local churches to establish safe spaces where people with mental health issues can gather and receive support.
 25. That the Department of Health and Social Services provide à la carte options which communities may use to support the implementation of assisted community treatment.
 26. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that psychiatrists, medical doctors and other health care workers receive appropriate training in the use of assisted community treatment.
 27. That the Government of the Northwest Territories take measures to limit the liability of people who agree to monitor an ACT patient.
 28. That the Department of Health and Social Services monitor and evaluate each community treatment plan on an annual basis, looking for deficiencies and employing corrective actions.
 29. That the Government of the Northwest Territories take stronger measures to address homelessness among residents who have mental health and addiction issues, looking to the success of "Housing First" initiatives in other parts of Canada.
 30. That the Department of Health and Social Services expand its suicide prevention efforts across the Northwest Territories, ensuring the use of culturally appropriate messaging.
 31. That the Department of Health and Social Services develop, and widely disseminate, a protocol for small-community residents on steps to be taken when someone has committed suicide or when someone is threatening to commit suicide or engaging in self-harm.
 32. That the Government of the Northwest Territories adopt a proactive approach, providing training for community leaders and GNWT employees in Mental Health First Aid or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), so that more people are alert to signs of trouble, equipped to intervene and able to prevent situations from escalating.
 33. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that front-line workers are appropriately trained in the use of valid, reliable, evidence-based screening tools for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation and other mental disorders.
 34. That the Department of Health and Social Services develop and implement a stand-alone, multi-departmental strategy and action plan for addressing the mental health needs of youth and adolescents, drawing on proven methods, programs and expertise in other jurisdictions.
 35. That the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure that child protection workers, social workers and school attendance counsellors are placed in schools, recognizing that K-12 schools are natural and effective settings for early intervention.
 36. That the Department of Health and Social Services appoint a lawyer as the chair of the review board.
 37. That the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure that peace officers receive cultural-competency training in the use of force, including mechanical means or medication, for apprehending, conveying, detaining or controlling individuals under this act.
 38. That the Department of Health and Social Services provide training for all authorized persons who apprehend, convey, detain or control individuals under this act.
 39. That the Department of Health and Social Services post sample applications online to guide people who are preparing applications to the review board.
 40. That the Department of Health and Social Services collaborate with the Department of Justice to ensure that a psychiatrist or qualified psychologist assesses potential clients for dangerous-offender status prior to inclusion in the Domestic Violence Treatment Options (DVTO) diversion program.

41. That the Department of Health and Social Services specify the purpose of the registry in the regulations.
42. That the Department of Health and Social Services include a description of the purpose of the registry in its plain-language communication materials.
43. That the Department of Health and Social Services stipulate in regulations that only pertinent information from certificates be entered into the registry, in accordance with Section 28 of the Health Information Act, which states that personal health information must not be used if non-identifying information is adequate for the intended purpose.
44. That the Department of Health and Social Services regularly remind peace officers and other authorized persons of their duty to respect the confidentiality of patient information.
45. That the Department of Health and Social Services inform patients who receive services outside the Northwest Territories that they are subject to privacy laws in outside jurisdictions rather than privacy laws of the Northwest Territories.
46. That the Department of Health and Social Services consult with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, key stakeholders and the public on the development of regulations.
47. That the Department of Health and Social Services provide training for staff on the new legislation, highlighting relevant sections of the Act and regulations, and giving direction on required procedures.
48. That the Department of Health and Social Services develop an agreement with the RCMP regarding their role under the new Mental Health Act, including cultural-competency training for RCMP officers.
49. That the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that the new act harmonizes with the requirements of the Wellness Court Diversion Program.
50. That the Department of Health and Social Services establish in regulations that an Aboriginal chief may serve as a peace officer.
51. That the Department of Health and Social Services make efforts to educate the public about mental health issues, with a focus on informing residents of available services and reducing stigma for mental health consumers.
52. That the Department of Health and Social Services implement a comprehensive communication plan for the new legislation, including the circulation of plain-language materials.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Moses.

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND MOVE
COMMITTEE REPORT 25-17(5)
INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 25-17(5) be received and moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 100(4) to have Committee Report 25-17(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of Bill 55: Mental Health Act, moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. SPEAKER: Committee Report 25-17(5) is moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Item 14, tabling of documents.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 344-17(5):
2014 PUBLIC SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 345-17(5):
NWT TRANSPORTATION REPORT CARD 2015

TABLED DOCUMENT 346-17(5):
FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE FOR
ORAL QUESTION 919-17(5):
DISCUSSION PAPER ON
ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents, entitled "2014 Public Service Annual Report," "NWT Transportation Report Card 2015" and "Follow-up Correspondence for OQ 919-17(5): Discussion Paper on Energy Efficiency Act."

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 347-17(5):
SKILLS 4 SUCCESS –
10-YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

TABLED DOCUMENT 348-17(5):
2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT ON
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES – GOVERNMENT OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents, entitled “Skills 4 Success – 10-Year Strategic Framework” and “Government of the Northwest Territories 2014-2015 Annual Report on Official Languages.” Mahsi.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 349-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES CONTRACTS OVER \$5,000
REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING
MARCH 31, 2015

TABLED DOCUMENT 350-17(5):
NWT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND
INVESTMENT CORPORATION
2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 351-17(5):
NWT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND
INVESTMENT CORPORATION
2015-2016 CORPORATE PLAN

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents, entitled “GNWT Contracts over \$5,000 Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2015,” “NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2014-2015 Annual Report” and “NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2015-2016 Corporate Plan.” Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 352-17(5):
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES 2014-2015

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled “Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services 2014-2015.” Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Yakeleya.

TABLED DOCUMENT 353-17(5):
PASSING THE MACE: RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE 18TH LEGISLATION ASSEMBLY –
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON TRANSITION MATTERS

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Report of the Special Committee on Transition Matters, “Passing the Mace: Recommendations to the 18th Legislative Assembly,” dated October 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Yakeleya.

TABLED DOCUMENT 354-17(5):
CBC NEWS REPORT: PROVINCE TO
LOWER FOOD PRICES IN
REMOTE NORTHERN MANITOBA

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table a CBC News report on the Province of Manitoba lowering food prices in remote northern Manitoba communities.

TABLED DOCUMENT 355-17(5):
2015 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HUMAN RIGHTS ACT
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

TABLED DOCUMENT 356-17(5):
MOVING FORWARD – IMPLEMENTING THE
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2015
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE NWT

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I wish to table 2015 Northwest Territories Human Rights Act Comprehensive Review.

As well, I wish to table the document entitled “Moving Forward - Implementing the Recommendations of the 2015 Comprehensive Review of Human Rights in the Northwest Territories, An Implementation Plan for Changes recommending an independent comprehensive review in the Northwest Territories Human Rights Act.

Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Motions

MOTION 50-17(5):
MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY,
CARRIED

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a motion. WHEREAS the Office of the Auditor General, in its 2011 report to the Government of the Northwest Territories, clearly indicated that the Medical Travel Policy is inconsistently applied;

AND WHEREAS the Office of the Auditor General, in its 2011 report to the Government of the Northwest Territories, clearly indicated that there is no sound mechanism in place for monitoring and evaluating the Medical Travel Policy;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has had more than four years to respond to the Auditor General's report;

AND WHEREAS there are communication gaps between regional health centres and Stanton Territorial Hospital;

AND WHEREAS residents of small communities have, from time to time, experienced difficulty accessing the Medical Travel Program;

AND WHEREAS patients with impaired mobility or cognitive ability, life-threatening conditions, such as cancer, or language barriers, should generally have access to non-medical escorts;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services immediately introduce a policy change to ensure access to non-medical escorts for patients with impaired mobility or cognitive ability, life-threatening conditions, such as cancer, or language barriers;

AND FURTHER, that the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that the Medical Travel Program is consistently applied across all regions of the Northwest Territories;

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AND FURTHER, that the Department of Health and Social Services ensure that a mechanism is in place for monitoring and evaluating the Medical Travel Program;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the government produce a response to these recommended actions for consideration by the House by February 2016.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to make it right to the point here. I want to thank the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre for seconding this motion.

This motion is to let the government know that there is a huge hole in our Medical Travel Policy. The Minister indicated, through his press release with the staff, that there is a policy that needs to be looked at. As a matter of fact, the Minister has stated, February 7, 2014, from Hansard, and I'm asking him questions: "We have a Medical Travel Policy. We want to have a Medical Travel Policy

that is hassle-free for all our patients." That's a good goal. That's a good one.

I want to state to the Minister that the Auditor General, in 2011, clearly indicated that this Medical Travel Policy is inconsistent and not applied evenly across the board. There are no sound mechanisms in place for monitoring and evaluating the Medical Travel Policy and that the government has four years to work on the report by the Auditor General. They are all clear examples that I had written down in this document from residents from the Northwest Territories between the regional health centres and Stanton Territorial Hospital. There are communication gaps to where this person in my region came to Stanton, had chest pains, he was actually having a heart attack. They didn't know why he was at the Stanton Hospital. That's just one example; there are many more.

Also, the small communities do not have a link of an all-weather road, so from time to time, these incidents my people have experienced difficulty with accessing the Medical Travel Policy. Things are a little different, you know, it's not all the same. So I want to let this government know that when there are people who are really in need to be escorted for the head injuries, back injuries or life-threatening conditions such as cancers or, you know, even when I was leaving back to Norman Wells, once I came down to the hospital to get checked out. There was an old lady from Deline. She was sitting there and I asked the young person next to her father-in-law why she was down here. She said, "The Health brought her down here. She does not understand or speak English. I had to come down to get her, and get her back to Deline." So, language barriers are a real big one for my region, my community and other communities.

I'm saying that with the flexibility that they should have some generality asking questions to the health to have these medical escorts. So, this motion strongly recommends this government to introduce a policy so that there is an avenue to look at non-medical escorts for patients in these types of life-threatening conditions, language barriers, where you know from common sense that this person needs a non-medical escort, a family member should be asked.

There are lots of conditions and I want to tell the government that I look forward to their revision of the policy, but it's seven months away, you know, and we have to look at how we can do things better for our people who are in the small communities who need medical support.

I heard, through the discussions of drafting this motion from our committee on this side, there are a number of ways that could be looked at to sustain our costs in regards to this policy, so I would like to let this government know that we certainly want to improve our patients' experience, because right

now a lot of them don't have a good experience. The Minister knows, and we know, that his department is working on things like this, but we also need to know to have some real good flexibility that creates as good a program that we could, in fact, stand up quickly and honestly and say we are improving our patients' experience and helping this government here.

I want to thank the Members for allowing me, at this late stage of the government and our life here, at this time of day, to have this motion come forward, and I want to know that we, on this side, are listening to people who are having these difficulties with the Medical Travel Policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Now to the seconder of the motion to speak, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the motion brought forward by my good colleague Mr. Norman Yakeleya, the MLA for Sahtu, and I think it's very timely. It's not just a personal experience he's gone through. These are experiences we are hearing time and time again. Some of the challenges have been brought to my attention, even as of late, and it's unfortunate, sometimes an experience like what Mr. Yakeleya had personally, all of a sudden it becomes a lightning rod for people all of a sudden to wake up and go, "Hey, wait a minute, that's happened to me," or these are the types of things where, you know, the northern culture has been, whereas people have kept to themselves and sort of accepted sort of sometimes the bumpy road and just said, "Well, I'll put up with it. I'll put up with it."

But this issue is on the radar right now and it's got people phoning in. Recently, I've spoken to a constituent, in particular about the medical travel issue and their experience through it, and certainly their family and relatives and the trials and tribulations that they've been challenged with and, you know, I mean, the motion speaks loud and clear itself, but I'll speak to some of the areas they drew up for concern. I know these are areas that are being worked on. I shouldn't be remiss on that; I need to emphasize that. I know medical travel is complicated. It's never been an easy beast to wrestle down and solve and it's one of those things that it's very expensive. Let us not kid ourselves that medical travel is certainly an amazing benefit, but it's an important one and represents the values and type of people we are and we feel it's that important and this is why we need to do a good job. If we've committed to do this process then we're obligated to do a decent job, and that's the gap right there where I think we expose for fault or failure or liability, whereas in the system itself it has agreed this is what we're going to do.

It's funny, that type of commitment is kind of dangerous because when folks finally get through the medical travel gauntlet of approval, whereas their doctor made recommendations and they finally agree that, yes, everybody's agreed that you require medical travel, even in non-emergency situations, but it's the same in emergency situations as well. Then it's, like, what do you do. The family waits. The patient waits. Whether they're waiting by themselves or waiting to find out approval from their escort, connecting the dots seems to be an issue, and I don't know how that could be done better. I don't know if we have to hire a super A-type personality to get in there and put sticky notes and come up with these processes and spreadsheets. I don't know what the right solution is. The Department of Health is a huge department. I'm sure they can find someone who has great ideas how to link these things, but linking folks through this process has been really a problem.

When you have someone that's approved for medical travel, how do you link the escort? How do people know what they're doing, where they're going and what time to be there? I mean, I've heard many horror stories about how people have believed that they were supposed to be on that plane and they get there and there's no plane ticket sitting there waiting for them. They didn't get cab fare to that airport so they pay out of their pocket. They get there and then they're told there's no plane ticket there. Then they don't know who to call when they're panicking. When you're sick it may, frankly, be an unfortunate experience. If you're super deathly ill or you're trying to be the hero through being the escort helping that person who's going through this terrible experience, people are under a very difficult challenge at that time emotionally, they're stressed, and all of a sudden now they don't have plane tickets, they don't know who to call. It certainly isn't Ghostbusters.

But the fact is they are stressed. We need, I don't know if it's a simple pamphlet that once you're approved they hand it to you and say, how do you connect these dots? Any problem, you call this phone number and this person has the authority to delegate a solution. I don't know where it's going.

But just to continue on, I don't have a lot of the issues here that I'm going to tie committee time up with here, but there is very little follow-up. For example, if you're someone from a small community, which happens regularly that English isn't your first language. I mean, this shouldn't be a shock to our system. It shouldn't be a shock to anybody in this area of the Assembly. There's the language problem. Then, of course, there's just the connection on how you tie everything together, and certainly, there's not a follow-up process either to make sure that, hey, did it work, how do we make it better.

I mean, sometimes they call those the 360 process where people make phone calls, who are from the system, obviously, find out, hey, did it work, what could we do better, how do we, as Stephen Covey would say, sharpen the sword. You know, you've just got to keep working on the system, tirelessly trying to make it better and better.

Again, I recognize and respect that the people there work on this thing every day, and I recognize that it's complicated each and every day that they're working on, but these are people working in ideal situations and when you're on medical travel or trying to get medical travel, you're not in an ideal situation. If you're in a place, as I said at the start, you don't know who to call, where to go, when to be there, and all of a sudden it starts to have a ripple effect. It just makes the whole experience such an incredible burden that it's great frustration.

I'm happy we have the motion here before us, and I think, really, what it's saying is we can find ways to do it better, and I certainly look forward to the department finding ways to make this work better. There may never be a perfect solution, but as I said earlier, I'm sure we've got someone who could consider things like how do we connect, as I said, people to their processes better, how do we do follow-ups, how do we ensure that the quality assurance programming on the medical travel is there and make sure people understand exactly what they need to do, where to go, and certainly where to go if you have trouble.

That's all I'm going to say. I think that it's an important motion. Again, I want to thank Mr. Yakeleya, and the opportunity to second is certainly an important one and a privilege to work with my colleague on this initiative.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion here today. I'm sure there are some challenges, but as the Member just mentioned, we've come a long way in medical travel in the last year and a half here. I've done a couple statements on this issue. We're still having little issues with medical travel, elders that get approved for medical travel but when they go to the health centre the people that are working there basically tell them, oh, you're okay, you don't need an escort. I mean, that has to stop. If they're authorized to take an escort, we need to ensure that their escort goes with them. That's an issue I have here today.

As I mentioned, the department is doing a far better job than they were two years ago, and I'd like to commend them on that. Keep up the good work. Maybe it's just in my riding. I'm not sure. I'm just kidding.

As I mentioned to the Minister, they're doing far better than they were a while back. Keep that up and I hope that it only improves more in the next few years.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this motion, and I'd like to thank Mr. Yakeleya and Mr. Hawkins for bringing it forward.

First and foremost, we're very thankful that the mover of this motion is here with us. We know he suffered a very traumatic injury and sustained injury, as well as his family. So on behalf of the Assembly, I want to make sure that we wish him well and much healing for him and his family.

It's only when you go through yourself the trials and tribulations of pain, of injury, you can actually assess whether or not our health system is actually working for the people it serves. It's a testament to our system. It's a testament to the work of men and women who work for us.

I want to say, first and foremost, I've worked alongside the medical community for over two decades and we've got some great people who work in our health facilities and in our travel area, who do the booking and who work at health centres. I want them not to read into this as something that they're doing wrong. It's something that we can do better. I think I want to make that perfectly clear. We have made strides in medical travel but have we made the leaps and bounds to make sure that we're actually there for the people we serve.

This motion has evolved tremendously over the last couple of days as this motion was discussed in the committee. We were looking at basically a no-ask policy first, and quite frankly, it didn't garner the support of members, and we could see why. It would be too problematic. But it's something to consider down the road.

I'm glad that the mover of the motion brought it to us today with more cognitive... He talks about impaired mobility and cognitive ability. Those are key attributes to which we need to be very cognizant. Because, as we heard earlier, everyone in this room, we hope, is of sound mind and body today. As I say, we hope. But when you're in pain and you're not firing on all cylinders, everything is magnified tenfold. You're not able to think clearly. You're not able to make that decision. You're not able to make a phone call. You're not able to hold a bag or even walk up a flight of stairs to get on a plane or take your bag off the rail. You're not able to do those things, so having an escort, really, in essence, is a key attribute to the healing process. For whatever reason, this motion talks about very specifics in nature which I like, and I think we need to give consideration where consideration is due.

As well, it's very pertinent for us to note that we've waited a very long time. When I say we, residents of the Northwest Territories, Members of this House, committee, and of course, the Auditor General of Canada. He's still waiting too. He's asked this government to act accordingly. The government of the day said, yup, we'll do that. We'll get on it and we'll have it done by a certain date, and that's actually documented for everyone to see. Well, of course, we've gone past that date. We've gone past that date many times. It's unearthly to still hear stories to this day, and I can tell you, as a Member who has to listen to a patient or a constituent come in, the moment we know it's an issue of medical travel, we all know we're going to be there for a while. It's not one issue that falls off the rails when it comes to medical travel. It's a story, and it's usually a cascade, it's a myriad of issues, one after the other, to which you're here as a Member and you try to help.

Now, of course, we put tools in place. We've got system navigators, and that's a great move that the department did. But as I said, when you're sitting there listening to a patient go through their story about what happened to them, you feel for that person. You go, geez, why couldn't we have done something better? So this is one of those motions where it says why couldn't we have done something better, why should we not do something to improve?

So, I really appreciate the motion for what it is. This is a very subtle nudge to the Minister to say you know what, don't leave it on the backbench. Let's tackle this issue. We know the Minister has approached committee. We know the Minister has talked about the bigger plans. I'm sure today he'll share some specific details about where they're going with medical travel and I'm hoping the public is able to understand where we're going, should we get there sooner.

The motion talks about getting back to us in February of 2016. Hopefully, some of us are here, but I'm encouraging the Minister and the department, let's not wait until February 2016. There are certain things we can do now. That's what this motion says. Let's do it now. We've been waiting years. Years.

So I want to leave you with this, I can go on at length with this because this is definitely up my alley, but I want to leave you with this here: You don't get what you wish for, you get what you work for, and clearly we haven't worked enough on this one. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the mover and the seconder for putting forward this motion. I support this motion.

One of the things that I kind of thought about, and hopefully this never happens, or perhaps maybe it actually has happened, is that the thought of an elder who has to be transported from another community and that elder is unilingual and is brought to a foreign place and that elder is left to their own vices, to fend for themselves to talk their way into a cab and to get to the hospital. You know, I would never want to see a circumstance like that, especially with an elder from a small community. Hopefully it doesn't happen.

This motion ensures that likely in the future that those situations will not happen. That a lot of the policies and initiatives that this government puts forth we need to be culturally sensitive in terms of understanding the culture of businesspeople. At the same time, there are things that are needed, especially for elders, and this motion basically presents that.

So, with that, I support this motion. Mahsi.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My comments will be brief. I appreciate the mover and the seconder for bringing the motion forward. As a member of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, I was party to an update from the department last month on what they are doing in regard to the Medical Travel Policy. As I understand it and remember from that update, they are in the process of developing recommendations around non-medical escorts. So my preference is to wait for that recommendation and that work to come from the department.

I agree with most of what is in the suggested motion, but I can't say that I agree with absolutely everything. One of the conditions that is being suggested for a non-medical escort gives me some pause. I do agree, certainly, with consistent application of any policy, that's an absolute, and I do agree with monitoring and evaluation of any policy, in this case the Medical Travel Policy.

So that said, I do not wish to vote against the motion, but I will be abstaining. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Members for bringing this motion forward. Medical travel is a big issue throughout the Northwest Territories, and as my colleague mentioned, standing committee did get a briefing last month as well as on Monday, October 5. The Minister did table a document, NWT Medical Travel Program, Patient Escort Supports Report on What We've Heard and it is mentioned that they are working on their recommendations that were developed out of that report.

We all know that medical travel, as we go through our business plans, averages out to over \$30 million a year. Now the escort portion is over \$5 million and when we break it down that's over 13,000 medical travel patients every year. So we've got to find ways to do things better that can cut our costs, whether it's providing more services to the regions, or ensuring that people get the proper treatment when they do go out, because I'm sure a lot of these costs are travel that's repeated over and over.

With the report, I know there have been some concerns and some discussions talked about staff turnover as well as capacity issues in the regions and there's nothing that we can do about that. All we can do is continue to provide support and try to help our patients get the right programs, the right treatment, the right services that they need. I know there's been an appeals process that has been discussed and that the department is working on it. I know, as I mentioned at the onset of my comments, that this is something that we've been working on for the life of this government.

What else we've been hearing is that some cases, when it's not approved, people are just paying for their own escorts and that is something that needs to be addressed, whether it's an afterwards appeal process to get remuneration on the hotel, airfare costs, per diems for people who need assistance. So the first part of the motion that was brought before us in the House, I do believe it's being worked on. During our presentation to standing committee, as well, if you look at the document that was tabled on Monday, it says they are working on a lot of recommendations in there. Whether this motion will speed up the process, as I mentioned there are capacity issues, staff turnover, that's going to reflect that.

The second part of the motion here is to apply throughout all the regions, and recently over the summer we passed Bill 44, the Health Administrations Act, that's going to assist in transformation throughout the Northwest Territories. They're going to provide better services to regions that are having some of those issues with medical travel, as well as all health and social service concerns in terms of services and programs provided to residents. However, due to the fact that this medical travel concern is something that we've been talking about, the Auditor General has brought it up and standing committee is trying to stay on top of it, among the many other emerging priorities throughout the life of this government. I will support the motion just on the fact that it is still important and I've got to show my support of the importance that medical travel and the escorts for our most vulnerable, our youth, our elders and those who are described in the motion.

I do understand and I do think that the department is working on it right now. There are challenges. Whether or not this motion is going to speed up the process, I have to have faith in our departments and when the governance and system transformation comes through I think it's also going to reflect on the services that are lacking in some of our regions that don't have these services currently.

So I thank the mover and the seconder for bringing the motion forward and I will support it based on the fact that it is an important issue and we've got to protect our residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion and I'd like to offer comments that might be classified or categorized as tentative support.

The motion calls for immediately introducing a policy change to ensure access to non-medical escorts for the patients with particular issues. Then again on the last furthermore that the government produce the report to these recommended actions for consideration by the House by February 2016, that's almost five months from now. We know that this is being worked on since 2011. So I think that's a healthy opportunity to help the interim or the new government to do its work and provide its response.

We did begin this work in the 16th Assembly and we're somewhat frustrated that we didn't make more progress there. It's gone for the life of this Assembly and I know that the department is actively working on it. This is the message: please get it done.

Consistently applied is the second ask here. That's something that I think everybody in the House can support and I certainly do.

The mechanism, calling for a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation, again, that's a no-brainer. We need to do that with all of our policies, and this one in particular, as already noted by my colleagues, is a very significant policy for our residents and a very expensive policy. So we need to make sure that we stretch our dollars as much as we can. I know, in fact, that we have done a considerable amount of work on the Medical Travel Policy. We are working on this 24/7, on-call process, where doctors can be reached 24/7 by a community nurse. We know that we're working on getting Electronic Medical Records in place so there's accurate and ready information on patients to help assess their situation. We've established Telehealth with equipment and skills in every community in the Northwest Territories so we can create images of patients in their community immediately and with immediate results, and through our IT they can be transferred to the

appropriate doctor or professional, again, for immediate consideration and evaluation. All those things should be helpful.

So, finally, I guess, I would note, I think it's already been noted very straightforwardly, the more dollars we put into this the less dollars there will be for actual health care, so it's a fine balance and there will always be a tension. It's not an easy one to do but I think, you know, we've been at this for five years at least and we should be able to see some vast improvements. I'd like to see that summarized in place and presented to committee by February of '16, as called for in this motion. I'll be supporting it, and thanks to the mover and seconder. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Menicoche, to the motion.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, I'll be supporting that motion. One of the things is that Members on this side of the House have been awaiting the review of the Medical Travel Policy and I'm sure the Minister will have heard that during his travels to all our constituencies that people raise concerns about medical travel. Even though this motion is quite specific and it may seem costly and expensive, but it's just about that frustration of our people moving around and it's another symbol that Members on this side of the House cannot wait for that review. But I think for me it only serves to let government know we've got to get this work done. We all know elections are coming and I'm sure that all the Members who will be running again as MLAs will certainly hear medical travel being heard.

Once again, the motion calls for three months' time to start working on it. I know the bureaucracy is not running for re-election, so I would just let them know as they continue to work on the medical travel review that this particular portion be included as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the mover and seconder for bringing this motion to the floor for this important conversation around medical travel. I clearly hear the Members as well as I clearly hear the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Medical travel is an essential component of our health care system, one that affects each and every one of us, every resident, at some point in their lives. As a result, it's a subject about which many people feel quite passionate, as we've heard today, and hold incredibly strong opinions. We all want to know that support is there to ensure that we can access service when needed.

Frequently our residents are forced to access health care services in difficult situations, often when they're ill or they're in pain and they're facing

difficult diagnosis, when both parents are needed to support the treatment of young children or when our elders, who may not be fluent in English or familiar with the city they're going to, need help getting around. At these times we want to know that our loved ones are not alone, and as a system we want to be compassionate, but the reality is that we need to balance that compassion with affordability because medical travel is a major cost pressure for our system.

Last year we spent \$16 million to provide this service and about one-third of that went to cover non-medical escorts. Our medical travel budget is routinely overspent. Utilization rates are slowly increasing as we face an increase in chronic disease and our ability to contain these costs is impeded by uncontrollable factors like rising fares. Another pressure is that the federal funding that we have counted on for many years to help us in this area is declining and will cease to exist completely after next fiscal year.

As a government, we strive to find a balance between supporting our residents and keeping our system affordable. This isn't always easy, especially when we are faced with other competing pressures like demands for improved mental health and addictions services. The changes proposed in the motion, to provide guidance on the situations in which patients should have access to a non-medical escort, are almost identical to what is in the policy today. Our current policy clearly spells out criteria for approval of a non-medical escort that mirror very closely what is proposed in the motion. The challenge is not drafting policy guidelines; the challenge lies in the application and interpretation of those guidelines.

The Medical Travel Policy requires the referring health care provider to make the recommendation whether a patient or a client meets the criteria to be eligible for a non-medical escort. Determining when a patient's physical limitations or need for an interpreter mean an escort demands careful consideration of many factors, including the nature of the medical condition, the duration of the required travel and whether the final destination is Yellowknife, Inuvik, Edmonton or elsewhere, the patient's previous experience and personal desires, to name just a few. This is a judgment that is best made by a health care provider in consultation with the patient and the patient's family members.

I frequently receive appeals from Members of this Assembly or the public who feel that they require a non-medical escort and ask me to intervene in the decision-making process or to overrule the recommendation of their health care provider. Mr. Speaker, let me state clearly that I have not, and I will not, second-guess the advice of health care practitioners in our system. None of us wants a system where decisions about access to medically

necessary services are based on politics. This would undermine the public trust in the fairness and equity of our system and would not be consistent with the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Speaker, I'll close by saying I recognize that our Medical Travel Program is not perfect. As Members of this House are aware, the department is working with Stanton Health and Social Services to improve the program. We have just completed consultation with stakeholders across the Northwest Territories on how to improve our policy around non-medical escorts. We recently put in an appeal process for anyone who doesn't agree with a decision made under the policy. That's a new resource that we have and I believe that the improvements the Members are seeking with this motion are already in process, and for that reason, and in addition to it being a recommendation to Cabinet, Cabinet will be abstaining.

I would just like to point out one additional thing, Mr. Speaker, and it's one concern I have with this particular motion that's in front of us. While I recognize that motions are recommendations and aren't necessarily binding, it is obviously common convention that a government doesn't make decisions for future governments. With respect to this motion in front of us today, upon dissolution all requests for documents and responses actually die in the life of this government. So this is actually recommending that the next government do something which will die on the floor. But I would like to say, even though the motion dies on the floor and the requirement for a response dies with the dissolution of this government, I want to give the Members an indication that the department is working on this file and they've heard you clearly and they know that we need to make improvements in medical travel, and the next government, I hope they're as passionate about medical travel as the Members are in this House. Maybe this motion will be brought forward again so that there can be an appropriate response, but the department is working on this and is committed to getting it right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be abstaining from voting on the motion for a couple of reasons. Number one, the work that's outlined in here is already underway. We've already been briefed in Standing Committee on Social Programs on the review of the Medical Travel Policy. So, reference to the Auditor General and the report and all that, it's already happening.

To the issue of us determining who should get a non-medical escort, it's taking that decision out of the hands of the medical professionals and I don't think that's our role. So I'll be abstaining from voting on the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya, closing remarks.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, colleagues, for allowing this motion to be brought forward and have your views on it. I certainly know that this motion here, as Mr. Abernethy so eloquently laid out, is going to die. This motion may die here in this Assembly but this issue is still alive and will be still alive in our communities, with our elders that come and talk to us. I have a list of people who have e-mailed me on their experience with the Medical Travel Policy. It may sound that there's not an issue, but in our small communities and our larger centres, regional centres, it's an issue, so I hope that our constituents are listening all across the North.

We have a communication gap, big time, with the Medical Travel Policy. I want to let them know that since 2011, four years ago, the Auditor General – the Auditor General – stated clearly, “We've got a problem here.” It's only now, at the dying end of this Assembly, that the Minister is saying we're going to fix it, be patient with us. For one thousand four hundred some-odd days we had to let people go through this and...(inaudible)...their experiences, especially the elders. Shame on this government for allowing senior people, elders...and I witnessed personally elders in our community travelling without an escort. Shame on them. Shame on them. Our most precious persons in our community.

You know what? This motion says to the government we're not going to take it. Give some flexibility to our people in the health centre. We're not asking them. But there should be some common sense questions, common sense questions by the health practitioners, and some of them are not always nice people. I know that.

I'm really wanting to thank the people here to look at this issue here. People have cancer. They need to have someone to look after them, to care. That's just common sense.

I know that there are lots of dollars spent on it. But we're in the Sahtu. We've got to fly. We don't have these large centres where we can just jump in a car and go and drive over there with a bunch of family members. Come on. Build us a highway and then maybe.

But I want to say that this motion is passionate, and I want to say that I look forward to the next government and this government looking forward to seeing what we can do to change it. We've got to change it now. There aren't many elders left in our regions here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask for a recorded vote.

RECORDED VOTE

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

COMMITTEE CLERK TRAINEE (Mrs. Mager): Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Blake, Mr. Dolynny, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Moses, Mr. Bromley.

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

COMMITTEE CLERK TRAINEE (Mrs. Mager): Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod - Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. McLeod - Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mrs. Groenewegen, Ms. Bisaro.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. In favour, nine; opposed, zero; abstentions, nine. The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

First Reading of Bills

BILL 72:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 2, 2015-2016

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave Lake, that Bill 72, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2015-2016, be read for the first time.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 72 has had first reading.

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

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 72:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 2, 2015-2016

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave Lake, that Bill 72, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2015-2016, be read for the second time.

This bill makes necessary supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

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.

---Carried

Bill 72 has had second reading.

By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 10-17(5), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider business before the House.

Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other Matters: Bill 54, An Act to Amend the Forest Management Act; Bill 55, Mental Health Act; Minister's Statement 221-17(5), Sessional Statement; Committee Report 25-17(5), Report on the Review of Bill 55: Mental Health Act, 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 deal with Bill 55, Mental Health Act, and Committee Report 25-17(5), Report on the Review of Bill 55, Mental Health Act.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. We'll take a break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, committee. We'll start with Bill 55, Mental Health Act. Committee has agreed to consider Bill 55, Mental Health Act. I'll go to the Minister responsible for opening remarks. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am pleased to be here to discuss Bill 55, Mental Health Act. The development of this bill has been the result of significant time and effort by the department, and would not have been possible without input and contributions from members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, the public and front-line workers.

The primary purpose of Bill 55 is to ensure that those suffering from mental illness receive appropriate mental health care and treatment as

soon as possible and in the least restrictive manner.

This legislation will modernize our current mental health framework while, at the same time, recognizing the unique needs and challenges of the Northwest Territories. It will better protect the rights of patients and those acting on their behalf, with the importance of culture and community at its core.

While the bill will address many gaps in our current mental health system, we know that the work does not end here.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, community members and front-line workers for their significant contribution to the development of this bill.

I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. I will go to the chair responsible for Social Programs, the committee that considered the bill, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As mentioned earlier during our review, when we read our document on Bill 55, there was a long consultation process. We had about 17 written submissions and we visited nine communities. We opened up our discussion on August 24th with the Minister. I appreciate the Minister and his department with the work that he did with committee over the length of this bill.

As we proceed, I believe committee members may have other questions for the Minister as we proceed with Bill 55. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. Minister, do you have witnesses you'd like to bring into the House?

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

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

Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Could you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my right is Debbie DeLancey, the deputy minister of Health and Social Services. On my left, Thomas Dorian, who is legal counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Committee, we'll go to general comments on Bill 55. General comments. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the department and the Minister here today. As this has been a very long and a very swift journey to have this bill before the House, I do want

to commend the Minister and his department for getting this bill near the end of our term and I want to thank the department for assisting committee as we went from community to community to discuss the intricacies of this bill.

I guess, first and foremost – and some of this stuff may sound familiar to the department here – as I said in the clause-by-clause review, I believe what we have before is a very action-rich and a very resource-poor bill before us and what I mean by that is the fact that we've got a lot of new actions in order to deal with mental illness in the Northwest Territories, many of those which I support as a Member who has had the pleasure of going literally line-by-line and community-by-community to make that evaluation.

Where I feel that it is resource poor, although we have heard some indications that there will be some money invested in this, that money will pale in comparison to what really is needed to make this bill fully and truly effective. I want to just be cautious as we go through this bill and hopefully approve it here today, that the department has a big undertaking to try to get the much-needed resources. The Minister has his colleagues sitting across from us here; we have the Finance Minister here. You're going to have to find some money, Mr. Minister, otherwise this bill won't be as effective as we may think it is and it's going to require some infrastructure, it's going to require some human resources and it's going to require a lot of community involvement.

So I do challenge the Minister to do the necessary lobbying. I know we're going to be finishing up session here in a day or so. I know the Minister acts in his capacity up until the next Assembly is sworn in. So I'm hoping that during that period of time that we're able to put the tools together to kind of put the necessary action items together to make sure that, again, if this bill goes through, that we're going to have to start on that venture.

Things that I've noticed as we went through this act and taking this act on the road and trying to dabble in a little bit into my own medical background as a pharmacist is that – and I'm just going to say something here – according to statistics from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, at least 20 percent of people with mental illness also have a substance abuse problem. So there's a clear correlation, and I'll explain more about where this number comes from and what it means to this act, but there's a clear indication as we investigate more and more in Canada that there is a commonality between addictions and mental health. Again, when you look at the overall aspect of this act, addictions are relatively silent. I think there's going to be a bit of a wall there when we start rolling this out, and I'll tell you that in a second.

What we're seeing is that with the new paradigm shift in treatment is integrating the treatment of both mental health and addiction as being treated together. A lot of the studies coming out now that have some of the best outcomes when we treat mental health and addictions as one. Now, where this puts the residents of the Northwest Territories in a bit of a predicament is that our addictions treatment facilities are down south and that's going to be causing a problem and you heard time and time again and even some of the recommendations is the fact that we strongly encourage addictions treatment programs need to come back to home row.

I know the Minister is very adamant that through cost efficiencies and trying to save money, economies of scale, that it's not possible. But the health care system is saying we need to work together with addictions, we have to find ways to find solutions. There are many studies here. There are a number of studies I can provide to the Minister and the department later to back up the information that I'm talking about, but as the Minister always says, these are silos and there are silos now with mental health and addiction service across Canada.

Many organizations, many jurisdictions, many provinces have seen that and, again, this act is silent on that. The growing trend right now in the provinces is integrated diagnosis and treatment initiatives. These are going hand in hand, and again, many of the new paradigms in terms of treatment are showing that these integrated diagnosis treatment programs are starting to roll out across the provinces and even at a provincial level – I'll pick Alberta, for example – addiction counsellors are being cross-trained to do mental health work and mental health counsellors are being cross-trained to do addiction work. So it's happening in other provinces. In fact, it's gone even further than that even a province like Ontario, that Minister of Health made an integrating mental health and addictions services as one of his four goals in the strategic 10-year plan. So they've noticed the fact that this is important to them as well. I know we're not Ontario, but we need to look at what's leading the charge across Canada when it comes to the flexibility of treatment options and integrated services.

So I'll leave it at that particular point, Mr. Chair, and again, because this act is relatively silent on addictions, I just wanted to point out some of the recent trends that we're seeing across Canada and some of the silence that we have pursuant to this act.

One of the last things I want to talk about is the fact that, yes, there is a triggering mechanism of a five-year review of this act, and I'm very thankful that it is. I think it was well received across the

communities and I applaud the government for including it. Not every legislation has a triggering clause and I'm glad we have one in this one. So, kudos to the department for allowing that to happen. However, as I've said before in committee, in public settings, I don't think we need to wait for that five-year review before we initiate that trigger. I think we're going to slowly find out, once this act and if this act comes online, that we're going to probably have to do some massaging of this act sooner than later and we all know how the speed of government happens sometimes and I don't want to fall victim to that trend. We waited over 30 years for this to happen, so let's not become victims of our own demise.

Let's make sure that we are proactive by design and I strongly encourage the department to look at it early on in the life of the 18th once this thing comes online. I would include even up to a year, up to two years after we go live with this that it comes up for formal review and a full public consultation process. Hopefully by then the stuff I talked about earlier with integration of addictions might be able to be incorporated with mental health within the paradigms of one act.

I will conclude saying thank you very much for allowing me to speak and I do want to thank my colleagues. This was the last act that we had the pleasure of travelling together. You get to know your fellow counterparts quite intimately, I guess, sometimes when you're doing road community travel. But this is a great group from the Social Programs committee. They're enriched with plenty of rigor and I just want to say, for the record, it was a pleasure working with them and we've got a great chair that leads us down that path. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the Member's points about this bill being resource poor. During committee and other discussions, we were pretty clear that we know this bill is going to take some money to make a reality and we're talking about just a specific bill, not any additional plans that we have outside of that.

At this time we feel it's going to take an additional three positions to help us make some of this work, plus training, plus we have to have costs for the review board. That's just a starting point and we will be going through the business planning process, rather, the department will be going through the business planning in the 18th Assembly, at which point they'll be coming forth for a financial ask to help cover the costs of implementing the Mental Health Act.

On top of that, the department will continue to monitor and determine demand of some of the programs or opportunities that are outlined in here, like the review boards help us determine ongoing

costs so that they can make some evidence-based decisions based on what the resources are going to be.

With respect to the five-year review, I agree with the Member. I think it is a good thing that we have a five-year review in here. The department is currently developing an evaluation framework for the implementation of this particular bill that will help us determine what aspects are working and what aspects are not working. I anticipate, as with any new legislation – and this is new legislation – that there will be some massaging, and I committed to that and indicated that when we were reviewing this bill in committee.

As far as requiring a two-year review, at this point I would say that that is something we should leave in the hands of the 18th Assembly, who can decide whether they want to conduct a formal review. I would suggest that two years might not be enough time for us to actually see some of this stuff working quite the way we want it. It is going to take a little bit of time to write the regulations. I will point out that we are not planning to go live with this legislation probably for a year. So, two years might be a little soon.

With respect to addictions, I think everybody gets this. This bill is a mental health piece of legislation; it is not an addictions piece of legislation. But in the Department of Health and Social Services, as throughout the system, the professionals clearly understand the co-morbidity of addictions and mental health. In fact, the Department of Health and Social Services has a mental health and addictions division which is focussed on collaboration, integrating services, working together around mental health and addictions. We have mental health and addictions counsellors throughout the Northwest Territories in many of our communities recognizing the co-morbidity of this, so I believe the department clearly understands.

With respect to addictions, the recommendations indicate developing a treatment facility here in the Northwest Territories, and I have heard people indicate that they would like to see a treatment facility, but we know that we have had four different treatment facilities in the Northwest Territories, and for utilization, staffing and a multitude of other issues, all four of those facilities have failed. We also know that the facilities that we have had here in the Northwest Territories, because of those issues like low utilization and other things, we weren't able to provide the types of programming that we currently have access to in our four southern facilities, which are very, very specific. We have psychologists and psychiatrists who are working one on one with patients in those facilities who are also working with our professionals on plans of care for when those individuals are returning.

When we did the mental health and addictions round table, we heard clearly from residents throughout the Northwest Territories that what people wanted when it comes to mental health and addictions is options. Treatment facilities are but one option. We heard clearly that people wanted options at the community level, at the regional level. We also heard that people wanted on-the-land options. Since two and a half or two years ago when Nats'ejee K'eh, our last treatment facility, failed, a report that they conducted, or conducted themselves, demonstrated their clients and staff were at risk. There was underutilization, high expenses, \$420 per day compared to \$145 a day that we are getting in our southern treatment where the range of programming far exceeds anything we have been able to deliver here.

We have clearly made significant changes in the way we are dealing and supporting people's addictions. We have community counsellors, mental health and addictions counsellors in every region of the Northwest Territories in most communities. We have Matrix programs that are available in almost all of the regions at this point providing outpatient community-based treatment options for our residents. I have had an opportunity to talk to some of the people who have participated or taken Matrix who have indicated that they are getting positive results and they appreciate the program being available.

We also have on-the-land programming in partnership with different Aboriginal governments and organizations throughout the Northwest Territories offering a wide range of services that two years ago weren't available. Two years ago we had one treatment facility that was putting people at risk, and some community counselling. We have improved some of the protocols and standards for our community counsellors and our addictions counsellors. We have on-the-land programs. We have Matrix programming. We have ASIST in many communities. We are pushing really hard to get Mental Health First Aid out there. We are doing an awful lot. Is it enough, Mr. Chair? No. We continue to need to evolve our programs and services to meet the needs of our residents.

To that end, recognizing the co-morbidity but also recognizing that we do have a challenge around mental health here in the Northwest Territories, and building upon this act, I have already directed the department to begin the preliminary work on the development of a comprehensive mental health or youth mental health strategy that can help guide us in the future.

The Member talks about money. As we move forward with the strategy, that is going to change the direction on how we respond to youth. There will likely be some costs and the future Assembly is going to be faced with some hard decisions about

how to pay for these particular services and these changes and enhancements that we need to put in place to provide our youth and adults who are suffering with mental health, a full spectrum of services and programs that will help them through their needs.

I have heard a lot of people, once again, say we need a treatment facility in the North, and given what I have seen with the treatment facilities in the North, I don't agree with that. What I think we need here in the Northwest Territories, and I have seen it recommended in other places, is something more akin to a mental health transitional facility or mental health transitional housing facility much like the one described in the Members' report. I believe something like that will give us far better results for our residents as opposed to building yet another facility that may or can fail here in the Northwest Territories.

Thanks to the Member for his questions. Thanks to the Member for his support of this bill. If anyone else has any comments, I am happy to answer them. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have any questions, but I do want to make a few comments to this bill.

It is a long time coming, both the amount of time it took to get from department to committee and then the time committee spent on it, although it was compressed. I know we had a lot of hours in a short period of time.

This bill, as I stated earlier today, is very much an improvement over the current bill. I look forward to seeing how it is going to work. In terms of the concerns that we heard in our public hearings and in our travels, I think most of them have been addressed by committee. We didn't agree with all of the concerns that we were presented with, but certainly in our deliberations we took a great deal of time. If we were going to sort of put aside somebody's concern, we took a great deal of time to understand why we were doing that and whether or not it was the right decision and if that concern could be addressed elsewhere. I feel quite comfortable with the changes that we have made to the bill, based on the concerns that we were presented with and I don't think that the ones that we did not accept, I don't think they have had a huge impact on the success of the bill, on the future success.

One of the things – and Mr. Dolynny mentioned it already – that I am really quite concerned about is the assisted community treatment program and the provisions in the act for that. I support the principle, absolutely, but I am extremely concerned that without the programs and services at a local level

and, as I think we stated in the report, without increases in those local programs and services, it is basically going to be assisted community treatment in Yellowknife and maybe in a couple of the regional centres.

The Minister has referenced, and I think it was referenced elsewhere, that there is going to be an addition of three PYs. Those PYs are all going to be at headquarters. Maybe that is okay for the first year, while you are developing regulations and while the act is not in force, but if there is not a significant change in the provision of programs and services at the local level, assisted community treatment won't work, in my estimation. I echo Mr. Dolynny's comments. You are going to have to find more money somewhere or else, and money for people somewhere in order for it to work.

One of the major concerns that committee had, and many people who made submissions also had, right from the start, it was really interesting. It was a huge topic at the very first public hearing, and that was the lack of reference to any sort of culture in the act. We have added enough provisions in the act that I feel quite comfortable that those who made submissions about culture would read the act, or would understand it now, that the act does allow for a cultural component. It is so much of the way that people live in the Northwest Territories is based on their culture or their spirituality or their religion, whatever it happens to be. We have allowed for that to come to how the act is going to operate.

I am extremely pleased that the Minister has publically now stated that there will be a development of a strategy for youth and adolescents. It was something that at committee we felt strongly was required and there was a period of time that we were not sure whether or not that was going to be happening, and I'm really pleased that is going to be developed because I think it's also going to add to the success of the act.

My last comment has to do with the recommendations that are in the report. They aren't recommendations specifically to the bill, but they are recommendations, as I see it, to the way the bill is going to operate, to the way the programs and services are going to operate. I would ask, we've had a couple of reports in the last couple of years where the response from government to a report has not responded publicly to recommendations that don't affect the act specifically. So I would ask the Minister to inform his future Minister that any response to this standing committee report should include, publicly, a response to the recommendations that are in this report because they are key to making the act work from an operational perspective. So that's all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Madam Bisaro. I'll call on the Minister for a brief response, then I think you said there was a statement, but I think the Minister wants to make a statement. Thank you. Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thought I heard a couple of questions in there. The assisted community treatment, we do hear what the Member is saying and what the other Members have said and there will be many assisted community treatments ordered in the community at a Yellowknife and regional level. We also believe, with our current resources, and it will all be on a case-by-case basis, depending on the individual's condition. If an individual is relatively stable, or stable and requiring meds, and wants to go back to their home community, we can actually set that up today with a community health nurse, where that person would have to report to the community health nurse on any given day in order to receive their meds. Those types of things we can do and we should be able to do right away. We also have community counsellors who will be able to work on the individuals based on a plan of care that may have been established with a psychiatrist or psychologist at Stanton. So today we could provide some level of act. But we do hear you and acknowledge that as we roll this out, we may find that it's taken up more time or resources than anticipated, which is why I've previously indicated we're going to monitor, and continually monitor, to determine demand and usage so that we can seek resources where appropriate in the future. But we do hear you loud and clear and it will be something that is going to be monitored.

With respect to lack of culture, I have concurred with all the motions that I feel, and I believe committee feels, will help improve this bill and bring back some of the culture components that may have inadvertently been removed or excluded as a result of the drafting, and I think we have a better bill as a result of that.

The Member mentions a youth mental health strategy and I'd like to just take this opportunity really quickly to indicate that I'm pleased to announce that I have received the final report of the Mental Health Quality Assurance Case Review on October 1st. As Members will recall, I directed this case review back in the late spring in the wake of the death of a young Yellowknifer who had been a patient in our mental health system.

The work of the review committee got underway in June 2015 and has been carried through to completion with the original timeline I committed. I'm pleased to share that it is a very comprehensive report and I believe it will serve to guide to move the health and social services system forward in ensuring improved care for our residents and families impacted by mental health. To be really

clear, so we get it out there, the report contains five major recommendations and 11 supporting recommendations for a total of 16, all of which will be addressed in the form of an action plan which I have committed to the Members and to the public previously. This action plan will be done in January. Originally I was hoping we would have it done sooner, but given the magnitude of the recommendations, we want to make sure that we get it right and the department has indicated they need until January to prepare that action plan. That action plan, all the recommendations within the committee report, all the research that has been done over the last couple of years plus future public consultations and discussions will inform the youth mental health strategy that will be developed in the 18th Assembly, that I assume will be developed in the 18th Assembly. I've already directed the department to begin the preliminary work so that they're ready to move forward with that strategy, if it is the wish of the 18th Assembly and I anticipate that it will, given the amount of interest that exists throughout the Northwest Territories in this particular area. It will also inform the development of a more generic or sort of adult-based strategy as well.

So, we are moving forward. We will, absolutely, take into consideration the recommendations of the report and input from future committees of this House.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've heard my colleagues and I've heard the Minister and I appreciate all that I'm hearing. Mental health and this legislation and the policies associated really are of deeply personal concerns to many people across the Northwest Territories, and I've heard, through the committee, that they were able to put their finger on that pulse of their community hearings. I know that we've heard from many individuals and families, organizations, institutions, First Nations. I think this is a very strong cross-section of our society and it's a common issue that I think there's a high degree of interest in doing a better job of addressing. In particular I would like to single out a family, some individuals, Connie and James Boraski and Ian Henderson, who delved into their personal experience, which involved some pain, but they had considerable perseverance and commitment and dedication to drawing the best results for everybody that they could from that experience and were very willing to share it. So I learned a lot through communications with those families.

I just want to back up the calls for the recognition of the need and the intentions to act and, in fact, there's some work going on already on a youth adolescent strategy towards mental health. I see

there's a preventative element, which I always like to see, as well as progressive early intervention. This is very important. I see the intent to develop assisted community treatment for outpatients where sufficient resources exist, and we've heard some comments on the need for resources.

I'd also like to recognize, really, the hard work and the excellent work by committee and staff and the response to that work and interaction with the committee from the Minister and his staff and legal professionals, and that includes, of course, Glen Rutland, who was legal counsel for the Standing Committee on Social Programs. I was able to see them in action a number of times.

One specific thing I would like to mention is clause 9.(1) and I'll just mention it here, Mr. Chair, rather than interrupt our review later, which is a response to some specific situations and in particular, for me, allows a patient who feels unsafe being on his or her own but is being released from hospital care and who wishes to remain admitted in the hospital may now, with this new legislation, seek a thorough review of his or her situation through a second opinion before being released from hospital care.

I think we've had some specific incidences and situations where that option was not available to a patient, with perhaps dire consequences. So, I really appreciate the committee going after that and the Minister and staff stepping in to address it in the most effective way. I would note that other clauses were developed or amended to support this clause, including, I highlight, the requirement to ensure that the patient understands their right to seek a second opinion before leaving hospital care. I think that's obviously a requirement that if we have good legislation, it needs to be known about and understood and transparent. So there's a commitment in the legislation to make that happen. Of course, the Minister did mention in his comments a recent report on the specific case study that he commissioned. He mentioned the five major recommendations and 11 supported recommendations. He also mentioned that some were very substantive requiring more time to deal with. So I guess if I had a question at this moment in time it would be should we anticipate any of those recommendations require a legislative response.

Is the Minister prepared at this time? Has the analysis been advanced to that degree that he can respond to that question? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I requested the mental health case review under the Evidence Act and I have to comply with the terms and conditions of the Evidence Act. So I need to be careful as to what I say and what I don't say, but upon my initial review, recognizing that I am not

a lawyer, I don't believe that any of those recommendations require legislative change, but I'm seeking advice from the legal counsel right now on how I can legally get this into the department so that they can begin drafting an action plan based on the recommendations and they may determine that maybe some legislative requirements or amendments may be required. But in my review, recognizing I'm not a lawyer, I did not see any that jumped out to me that might require legislative changes.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for that, and I recognize in some ways it's a delicate situation in timing and we need a little time for the job to be done. I recognize that we're talking about a future Assembly, but I hope if it is required that we can have some alacrity to deal with that legislative change despite having just done these amendments.

Thank you. That's all I have.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. I think Mr. Bromley's comment goes directly to Mr. Dolynny's comment about the requirement for a review of the legislation, and as we are rolling out to developing regulations and recognizing future strategies and action plans, there is a possibility that we may have to do some legislative reviews. I believe the department, the government would be open to that. Mind you, it will be a new government, but I anticipate, given the interest in this particular area, that reasonable responses will be provided.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Committee, we're on general comments. Next I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank my colleagues and members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs for their insight and their comments this evening. I think they've hit it right on the head about the issues that were of concern to committee as we moved through the process with Bill 55.

I just want to say, when I started with the 17th Legislative Assembly and we went through all the department discussions and briefings as new Members, even before we went into the TLC, one of the biggest things that I remember and I recall, and I bring it up on many occasions, is that mental health and addictions are the biggest cost-driver for our government and to be able to be where we are today and address part of that issue with mental health and, as Mr. Dolynny said, mental health and addictions go hand in hand, and even though we're passing the Mental Health Act, we've got to make sure that we're also keeping in mind that a lot of the mental health issues are stemming from underlying issues such as addiction, housing, suicide and that this act should reflect and be that first step moving forward into addressing our addictions issues as well. On June 2nd when the bill was referred to

committee, a lot of work has been put into this bill both in the department as well as standing committee and staff, and I thank Mr. Bromley for recognizing our hard-working staff. He's come to some of those meetings and we appreciate that.

A lot of work in the last four months on this bill and part of it didn't even get started until towards the end of August. So from the end of August to where we are now is a significant amount of time and work gone into this.

I won't go into some of the details, as Members have mentioned them earlier. One thing I'm glad that we did get back in there was the principle section of the bill and added that in, mainly because it does touch on some of the cultures and religions and some of the areas that weren't represented throughout the bill. That's great to see.

Also, as mentioned in the report earlier, the 27 amendments to a bill. I know in my short time, my first term, that's the most. I was happy when we got four amendments and then the Child and Family Services Act. So 27 amendments in committee, and working with the department, they broke that down from just over 30. As Ms. Bisaro said, you didn't get everything in there, but I feel quite confident about the work that committee has done, that the department has done, the staff has done. It really reflects how it's going to affect our residents of the Northwest Territories.

Two things that I would really like to focus on here that have been mentioned was our mental health strategy for children and youth. Every jurisdiction in Canada has one, every province except for the Northwest Territories, and by modernizing and updating this bill, I think, as the Minister stated earlier with the review that was taking place, we're going to see some good recommendations coming out of that, the 16 recommendations to move forward. I look forward, whether I'm still in this House or even just as someone that's concerned about the mental health and care and treatment of our residents, that I'll be looking to see that report if it should become public or working with other Members to see that through.

Every community we went to, a treatment centre was brought forward. It was one of our goals of the 17th Legislative Assembly to use existing infrastructure, which there are plenty out there. We know they're out there and we've got to find a way that we can utilize it. We've brought suggestions forward for a pan-territorial treatment centre and I know the Minister did allude to earlier that this is a Mental Health Act, but it goes hand in hand with addictions and that's something that we need to address.

A lot of other good concerns were brought from the communities, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, grief, loss, residential schools is a big one and those need to be addressed. If there was one

question that I had, it is I know we do send a lot of people out for addictions issues, but we do have a lot of people out there who aren't battling addictions but are suffering from PTSD, from grief, depression, trauma, from residential school. We've got to find a place where we can offer them the services equal to those who are battling addictions.

A couple other things as mentioned earlier. I guess we can do our part creating law, creating legislation, putting in the programs and services, Mental Health First Aid, ASIST, other screening tools, those kinds of things, but we need to get support from the communities, and that's what we heard in the communities, as well, is government can only do so much, but as residents, as families, as leaders in the communities, they need to step up and be part of the team, as well, and work together, Aboriginal governments, NGOs, past survivors of addictions or mental health disorders. I just want to say that I really wish that residents and Members of the House, interested parties, stakeholders, could have seen the meetings that committee had, not only with the department but also within themselves working together, late nights in the communities, on the weekends, trying to get together whenever we could, e-mails and the work that our staff did to get those amendments, motions, providing reports all together within this short time frame was a lot of work and I know it had an effect, exhaustion, fatigue on not only our staff, but Members as well as we were dealing with other issues.

So I want to thank them for all their hard work, even right down to terminology within the clauses. When we did pass some of those amendments on Monday night in the public hearing, the Minister said on occasion that even though they were just small changes, it did strengthen the bill. So when Members do the questions and we asked and you try to change one word here and one word there, it does have significance behind it and that has strengthened the bill for residents.

I know this is just the first part in addressing our mental health and addictions issues, but it is a big step and I am really glad to be part of it. Everybody who assisted, family members who have experienced it, community members who have helped out other community members going through issues and not being able to find the services or the help that they needed, and I guess that when we put this into some of our other action plans, mental health and addictions action plans, anti-poverty strategies, early childhood development, economic opportunities strategies, when all those action plans come together, I think we are going to see a healthier Northwest Territories that is going to be a little bit better.

As Members have said earlier, it is quite fitting that the standing committee finish off their four-year term with such a significant piece of legislation that

is going to have a strong impact on residents of the Northwest Territories. I think they have done a lot of good work. Members working with the departments, whether it be Justice, Education, Housing or Health and Social Services, moving forward I think there was a lot of good work done by committee. I was very happy to be part of it and it made me stronger as a Member, building off the energy and the hard work and commitment from Members and the staff that I worked with.

I know that on this particular bill, we had various staff members coming on trips and working in committee and I just want to thank everyone who had a part in this.

Really just the one question in terms of where do we send people who are dealing with mental disorders that don't have addictions problems and are still seeking help. I guess that is the only thing. I am really glad that the department was able to work collaboratively with the Members and be open to making these changes. I think moving forward in the 18th Assembly, mental health and addictions is going to start to see some progress and see some really good things moving within our jurisdiction and can be a leader to our other northern jurisdictions and hopefully they will see what we are doing and can do the same for their people as well. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the standing committee and their staff and all the residents across the Northwest Territories who contributed to the public hearings and contributed by different means to ensure we got this bill to be the best bill that we can. I do know that committee worked awfully hard and I appreciate their willingness to work with myself and the department in order to make amendments to the bill, that I believe, and I believe committee believes, to make this a stronger bill at the end of the day. I really appreciate the work and the time that they put into this.

To Mr. Moses' point, also to Mr. Dolynny's point, we do keep in mind addictions. If you look at the way the department is structured, we have a big division of mental health and addictions. We have the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan. We understand the co-morbidity. We understand the requirement to collaborate and work together. I do remember when Caucus got together and talked about treatment options in the Northwest Territories utilizing existing facilities and following up on the Mental Health and Addictions Forum where we heard very clearly that people want options, they want a range of programming. We have followed through on that and we do have treatment facilities available for our residents. We also have on-the-

land programs. We have enhanced or better trained community mental health and addictions counsellors at the community level who are ready to work with individuals who are struggling.

As I said to Mr. Dolynny, we are not perfect. We need to continue to find ways to strengthen our response to mental health and addictions, in particular addictions. One area that we haven't brought across the finish line that would go to local or regional treatment facilities would be the mobile treatment option, where we can really utilize existing facilities on a rotational basis to provide community-based treatment in facilities that can move around so we can get different catchment areas, different groups of individuals who may not be willing to go to southern treatment.

I have already attempted to utilize, maybe, on-the-land programming or maybe community-based programming to look for something different. The key is to create as many options as are reasonable, affordable and functional, that actually are helping people.

I still don't believe that developing another treatment facility in the Northwest Territories at this point, given our resources, given our realities, that we will ever be able to provide the incredible range of programs and specific programs that our four southern facilities are.

Another point is, and we heard this during the Mental Health and Addictions Forum, it is great if you build a treatment centre in Yellowknife. Fifty percent of the population is still going to have to travel and what cultural components are going to be built into it? If you put it into Hay River, like the last one, 85 to 90 percent of the population are still going to have to travel. If you are going to have to travel, are we not better off having high-quality programs that have the capacity to provide psychologists, psychiatrists, withdrawal management, medication management, constant counselling and, as Mr. Yakeleya often points out, dietary programming? They have the capacity to deliver these because they have clientele of 90 to 100 people. We have 12. At any given time, we have 12 people in treatment. When we had a facility in the Northwest Territories, we had 12 people in treatment. When we have facilities in the South, we have 12 people in treatment on any given day. We have a utilization issue and a demand issue, but we are moving forward to provide a wide range of programs.

I would like the deputy to talk briefly about some of the work we are doing around trauma, to talk to Mr. Moses point about PTSD and trauma, so if we can go to Ms. DeLancey, that would be great.

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

MS. DELANCEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member raised a really important point about people suffering depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and we know that trauma in early childhood really is the root cause of the majority of addictions problems and many mental health issues. So, over the last year, the department has put a lot of effort into exploring the need for what is called Trauma Informed Practice. We have had workshops and training sessions for front-line practitioners. Just over the next couple of weeks, we are rolling out training from an expert group who actually run a trauma centre in Ontario, for our community counsellors. Our senior management team met with the lead on that this morning and it emphasizes what we are starting to recognize more and more, that the more you can deal with people at the earliest stages of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, deal with childhood traumas, the more we can intervene and prevent some of those later-in-life onset addictions and mental health issues. This is an emerging area of practice. It is one that we are really emphasizing and it will become increasingly important. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one final point on facilities. I had the opportunity to travel to Iqaluit in April when I had an opportunity to visit a mental health transition housing facility providing transitional housing and support for individuals who are struggling from mental health issues.

In talking to their Minister over there, they have such incredible success with it just helping with the homelessness problem, but also helping people to prepare to be ready to go out for treatment if that was their choice. Also, helping people with mental health transition back into the community. It was a great facility with a huge opportunity.

If we are talking about needs of those types of things, I think something like that would be a far more valuable asset than building another treatment facility which, if as predicts future, will fail. I think that is something that we should think about more than we should be thinking about building another facility to have it fail too. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly think today is a fantastic day that we are now at this stage that we are talking about the bill becoming a reality. It wasn't that long ago that the Mental Health Act was being looked at as strong, maybe, but we're not sure, and possibly, maybe next term. So a lot of things had to come to bear to bring an introduction into this ring and certainly an amazing amount of work has brought it forth here.

I certainly want to begin by stressing how appreciative I am of the department to bring this forward and for the Minister to bring this forward and certainly for the committee to do the work that was required to go through this in order to have a bill here today. You can tell how important the bill was. I have heard people speak about the Mental Health Act for years and I know, from my own experience of dealing with headaches created with the old act, I can tell you first hand I have seen it as a frustrating piece of legislation and I certainly look forward to the implementation of the new act.

You can also tell how serious the standing committee took it. As I understand it, there is, and I'm going to use the very specific terminology of a whack. There is a whack of amendments, and they put a lot of heart and soul and passion into their work that they've done. I want to thank them for that. It's not easy work sitting on a committee, just like the saying it's not easy being green. But committee work is very important. Many hours of briefings, details, you go through it over and over again, and that work, it needs to be stressed how important it is, and again, I give committee a pat on the back.

The issues I want to raise very quickly are that I've sat with constituents in meetings with their psychiatrist talking about their loved ones. I've been to discussions at families' houses about the strain and stress about mental health problems in the Northwest Territories, and I honestly find it heart wrenching. I mean there is no humor in this. To me it seems almost like one of the most complicated issues, and in my experience there are certain issues you get in this House you just want to stay away from because you just know it's going to be, you know, it's not a 10 minute sit and listen; it's not here's an hour of your time all wrapped up. I'm serious. These are tough issues to deal with and there's no way of sort of just saying do you want to hurry up? I want to go a movie tonight or something. No, you have to sit and listen and understand and appreciate from the people's perspective.

Hearing people talk about either their children or their spouses or their parents, I mean, it is absolutely a very deeply emotional experience, especially even when they're talking about themselves and how challenging it is.

One of the things I've found, not just with the act, and I'm going to stray only for a moment here, is the fact that so much work still needs to be done on the public education aspect of mental health and for those who want to seek it feel paralyzed, parents are paralyzed, loved ones are paralyzed because of either the stigma that is created by them or the challenge and fear of getting involved or feeling that the system itself can't help them or won't help them. Sitting at people's houses, a family's house, or

sitting even at the hospital talking to the folks who have been going through these challenges, I can't say it enough, and I'll probably say it a few more times as I go on, but it is a very emotional experience and sometimes just watching people feel helpless is just such a terrible feeling.

I want to point out, and a couple of my colleagues have mentioned it. I heard Mr. Dolynny mention it, and I think Mr. Moses mentioned it, and probably others have mentioned about how mental health seems to go hand in hand with addictions and the literature supports that. I've watched people who have mental health problems also lean into the addictions world. Let us not assume that that's an easy experience for those who watch.

The big thing about this one, of course, like anything, is we can create the best piece of legislation, we could have a million pages of clauses talking about this and certainly about that. So, it doesn't matter if it's one page or a million pages, it really comes down to how it's going to be implemented and certainly how it's going to be supported.

The implementation and support is certainly, if I'd say, just as important as the time it took to draft the concepts. Of course, you get drafting from speaking to the professionals and their experience in and around the system, so I certainly look forward to how it's going to be implemented and see where the supports are going to be there. It's funny, sometimes we talk about supports as brick and mortar and sometimes it's just a phone call, so it's going to be an array of things to see this come to life.

My last experience in helping a family was watching someone who had a loved one who self-medicated. They would seek help. They would get help. They would be fine. Then they would not medicate because, well, heck, they didn't need it they said, and the family struggled knowing that there was no power for the psychiatrist to implement an order to say if you don't take your medication, we're going to make you. The destructive behaviour that they had done when they'd get off their medication was terrible. People were fearful. When they were back on their meds, they knew that it was a problem. But like I said, mental health goes hand in hand with addictions and they'd get into other trouble and not just addiction, they get into other types of criminal behaviour. I think really what we see is good people who just needed help and support.

I just don't know what to say enough in the sense of how excited I am that we are here to this day and I can honestly say I never ever remember getting a phone call when someone had a mental health problem and I thought, goodness, I can't wait to hear what's going to happen, where this conversation's going. I can tell you, every single

time I've had a call on this, I know it's going to be a struggle.

I know I'm not telling anyone anything new here and I can just say that I certainly know that I hope this prepares us for the challenge ahead. I mean, it is a new act. It's like preparing for the knowns, in other words the known problem, but sometimes that's easier than preparing for the unknowns. What are we going to be prepared for? What is the act going to facilitate and be flexible enough to address things that come along? That's the problem. You try to predict where this challenge, the mental health issue, is going and how to be prepared for it. So, I don't have a particular question. My last statement wasn't necessarily a question, more an anecdote about making sure we're ready.

I am just going to wrap up by saying that, you know, I'm so happy we're here. I fully support this, support the implementation of this. I've witnessed it firsthand. I definitely believe education needs to be done. I know this is a department that represents health, not the Department of Education which is another Minister, another department, another budget. But you know, we have to ask ourselves, what can we do? I mean, if I may liken it in the way that we've had other problems in the world and social sort of understanding and realization has caused us to rise up and meet the occasion as required. But will the government eventually find a way to engage its citizenry in a way that we all rise up and all say that no one should ever be ashamed of having a mental health challenge and we should see so many hands up that say we're going to help you through this challenge. I look forward to that day. I know this act isn't going to do that and I'm under no foolish sort of delusion that it's going to be easy to get there some day, but I just know that as we, as a society, have risen up and said certain behaviours are not correct on other areas, let us find a way to rise up on this one and be there to help when you need help. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Member's comments and I would just like to speak to a couple of his thoughts and observations. I think we've all probably, as MLAs, had somebody approach us who had the same type of issue that Mr. Hawkins' constituent had about trying to keep a family member on their meds, someone who has a mental health illness, and the assisted community treatment is designed to do just that. That is giving the tools to the psychologist and psychiatrist that they haven't had before. When I talked to some psychologists and psychiatrists here in the Northwest Territories, this was the exact model that they were referring that would give them the tools. So, we're thrilled to have the act in there,

recognizing some of the concerns that have been raised over properly resourcing.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about rolling this out. We know it's going to take us up to a year before this legislation goes live and in that time we have to do a number of regs, a significant amount of training, because business is going to be done in a different way and it also must include public awareness. We must make sure people understand their rights and obligations under this legislation but also the rights and obligations of professionals throughout the system. I believe that was actually one of the recommendations in the committee's report, making sure that we help people become aware of what all this means and how it affects them and how they can utilize it. So there will be a public awareness piece to the whole rollout.

The Member, at the close, talked about our need to rise up, the need of everybody to rise up, and I agree 100 percent. In the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan one of the action items, including creating a conversation in helping to destroy the stigma that exists around mental health, and I think everybody in this room has an obligation to help destroy and break down that stigma. In the department we've done a couple of things. We released a Mind and Spirit magazine, which we got some pretty positive feedback on, intending to begin the dialogue and help inform people about the stigma around mental health and start attempting to break down. We also released a video, "You're Not Alone," and I would strongly encourage every Member of this House to tweet, share, put it on your Facebook, get the information out there so people know they're not alone and that there are places they can call or go to when they're struggling.

Lastly, with respect to all of us rising up, I would strongly encourage all Members to encourage all their constituents and everybody they know to take the Mental Health First Aid training program. I've made that challenge in the House. I've personally taken the Mental Health First Aid training. If you break your arm, chances are that someone in this room will be able to stand up and stabilize that until you can get to a proper medical practitioner, but not everyone can stand up and help somebody who is struggling with a mental health disorder. So, please take Mental Health First Aid. Encourage everybody you know to take Mental Health First Aid. It's delivered two times every year per region. Every region is funded to deliver Mental Health First Aid twice. It's a phenomenal course. It helps you identify, but also it's customized for the North and it can help direct you to resources that exist within your community or region to support people who are struggling with a mental health disorder. So, please, you know we all need to work together to break down the stigma, please, whether you're

planning to come back or not, take Mental Health First Aid. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next I have Mr. Nadli

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, wanted to make some general comments in support of the initiatives and the efforts that have been made by my colleagues and the committee in leading the work with the department, as well, and all the staff that contributed to this and all the public who spoke out locally in terms of at least laying out the framework of how we deal with mental health issues across the North.

A question that I wanted to ask the Minister and, of course, being from a small community, sometimes you experience people who pose a danger to themselves or others because of their circumstances of mental illness. As it sits currently in terms of how all the legislative framework would work and operate, I wanted to understand how it is that if a person is posing a danger to themselves or others, how the community would deal with that in the context of the current legislation. Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The legislation actually provides, with support from committee, that we made an amendment that if somebody at a community level is having difficulty, the recommendation would be, get them to the health centre and the health centre can do an assessment, and based on their current status, whether or not they're a harm to themselves, whether – and thanks to the committee for this – they have recently harmed themselves or others. The community health nurse can then make a referral, have that individual go on an involuntary basis to Stanton or the closest location that is providing some psychiatric services – currently that's Stanton – for a full psychiatric assessment. So they do need to go into the health centre. We do need to get them into the health centre, but there's a whole range of options now available under this legislation to the health practitioner so that they can refer them on.

MR. NADLI: Thank you for kind of outlining how it is that maybe if another term could be used for community protocol in terms of trying to utilize what exists currently in the community.

The community has strengths, and one of the strengths is that we have caretakers, we have leaders that work sometimes with the front-line workers, mental health workers, the nurses. Sometimes you're left with all that you have and so it's really critical that at least an understanding of how communities would deal with circumstances like this is very critical at this moment in time in the NWT.

The other element that I wanted to understand is how it is that perhaps local persons might be involved when there's been mention of culture being an element of the proposed legislation. Would there be a link in terms of perhaps elders or chiefs or priests who perhaps could play a role in dealing with matters and persons that perhaps could pose a danger to themselves or to others? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Within the legislation, going back to his first point before I go to the second point, it is going to require a significant amount of training and development of our staff to make sure that they understand their roles, and that's going to be the community counsellors, the mental health and addictions counsellors, all the social services side, but also the health side is going to require a significant amount of development and training as we move forward with these new regulations, protocols and this new legislation that gives our people more options.

As far as culture, committee brought forward a number of recommendations on this bill to make sure that the bill recognized the nature of the Northwest Territories and the fact that we are a territory of indigenous, Aboriginal people. One of the things that is very specific is the requirement for an elder or a cultural advisor to be included on the review boards when individuals wish to have their release or whatnot challenged. So it's designed to require cultural advisors, which could be an elder, will likely be an elder.

MR. NADLI: No further questions, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Committee, we're on general comments for Bill 65. If committee is agreed there are no further comments, we'll go clause-by-clause review of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee also agree that we'll take it in groups of 20?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Well defer the title until consideration of clauses. Clauses 1 to 20.

---Clauses 1 through 110 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): To the bill as a whole

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree that Bill 55, Mental Health Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Bill 55?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Abernethy, thank you, witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Next we have Committee Report 25-17(5). Does committee agree consideration of Committee Report 25-17(5) is also concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, committee. Committee Report 25-17(5) is concluded. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Hawkins?

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

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

Report of the Committee of the Whole

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee has been considering Bill 55, Mental Health Act; and Committee Report 25-17(5), Report on the Review of Bill 55, Mental Health Act; and would like to report progress and that Committee Report 25-17(5) is concluded and that Bill 55, Mental Health Act, is ready for third reading. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Do I have a seconder to the motion? Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

---Unanimous consent granted

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

MR. HAWKINS: It gives me great pleasure to recognize April Taylor. She's an employee here at the Legislative Assembly and she's there with her very young, very bright, hardworking student and daughter named Kiera. Thank you, and may everyone give them a warm welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Welcome, Kiera, to the Assembly. Item 22, third reading of bills, Mr. Lafferty.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 45:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 45, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, be read for the third time. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 45 has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Beaulieu.

BILL 49:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE DEH CHO BRIDGE ACT

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 49, An Act to Amend the Deh Cho Bridge Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 49 has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 56:

MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 56, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, be read for the third time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 56 has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 59:

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION LAW AMENDMENT ACT

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 59, Estate Administration Law Amendment Act, be read for the third time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 59 has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Beaulieu.

BILL 60:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT, NO. 2

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, No. 2, be read for the third time.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, No. 2, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 62:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CORONERS ACT

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 62, An Act to Amend the Coroners Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 62, An Act to Amend the Coroners Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: You skipped 61.

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, 61, sorry. Okay, 62. Motion is in order. To the motion. Oh, sorry. It's done, eh? It's not on my list here. Okay, Bill 62 has had third reading. Sorry, guys. I just want to get out of here.

---Laughter

Mr. Beaulieu.

BILL 61:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
PUBLIC AIRPORTS ACT

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Public Airports Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Public Airports Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 63:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Victims of Crime Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Victims of Crime Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 64:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS ACT

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Co-operative Associations Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Co-operative Associations Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Lafferty.

BILL 65:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE SAFETY ACT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Safety Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Safety Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Abernethy.

BILL 68:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT, NO. 2

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, No. 2, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, No. 2, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Bouchard.

BILL 69:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT, NO. 2

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 69, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Bill 69, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 72:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 2, 2015-2016

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 72, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2015-2016, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Member is asking for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod – Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. McLeod – Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Dolynny, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Moses, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Blake, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Abernethy.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. In favour, 16; opposed, zero; abstentions, zero. The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

SPEAKER'S RULING

Colleagues, I will now provide my ruling on the point of privilege raised by the Member for Range Lake on Tuesday, September 29, 2015. To start, I find Mr. Dolynny raised this matter at the earliest possible opportunity.

The point of privilege relates to a press conference held by the Premier and Minister of Finance on September 2, 2015. During the press conference, the Premier and Minister announced funding to the Power Corporation for up to \$29.7 million to prevent an increase in power rates for all NWT residents.

The Member for Range Lake stated that the announcement of this funding left the impression that a final decision had been made on this matter and there was no meaningful role for the Legislative Assembly in debating and approving it. In his view, this is a breach of parliamentary privilege or contempt.

I have reviewed the rulings of other Speakers noted by the Member, specifically in Ontario and the House of Commons. Those cases are very similar to what we are dealing with here. In both cases the Speakers ruled that there was no breach of the privileges of the House. Mr. Miltenberger, in speaking of the matter, stated, "There was no impairment of freedom of speech. There was no attempt to obstruct the final decision of the House."

I agree with him on this and find that there is no prima facie breach of privilege.

Now we must deal with the contempt issue. The best definition I have found of contempt comes to us from Speaker Charbonneau of the Quebec National Assembly. "Contempt is any act or omission that hinders the work of the Assembly or that undermines its authority or dignity."

In stating his case, the Member quoted from the press release that was issued the same day as the news conference. The news release says the following: "The GNWT will provide NTPC with up to \$29.7 million."

"Without this decision, NTPC would have had to apply for a two-year rate rider."

"Our government doesn't believe it makes sense to pass these costs on to residents and has decided to cover them instead."

The Member stated that these comments make it seem like the funding is a "done deal," like there is no meaningful role for the Legislative Assembly in approving it. I find it hard to disagree.

The news release creates an improper impression about how our government works. In my view, it undermines the important work of MLAs in this House and the dignity and authority of this institution. To quote former Speaker Fraser in the House of Commons case: "We are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy."

Not long ago this Assembly wrote down what consensus government means. One of the principles that we agreed to is: "Except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced in the Legislative Assembly."

In speaking to the point of privilege, both the Premier and the Minister indicated that a decision was urgently required. I do not dispute this, but the timing of the media release and press conference raised some questions. A letter was sent to Members from the Minister of Finance on August 31st, indicating that the proposed funding would be included in the upcoming supplementary appropriation bill. The letter said nothing of an urgent situation. It does not say that the funding request would be made public prior to the upcoming session.

The media release and press conference occurred two days after the letter was sent. On the day of the press conference, all Members of the Legislative Assembly were in Yellowknife to attend Caucus meetings. If an urgent or emergency situation did

indeed exist, a committee meeting during this time to discuss it could have been easily arranged.

Also in the case of a real emergency, legislation allows the government to request a special warrant. This was done for the forest fire situation this summer. It was not done for the matter at hand. I don't want to suggest that the low water situation would have met the conditions for a special warrant. That's not the issue here, but it does raise question as to why a public announcement of the proposed funding was so urgently required before a bill could be introduced in this House.

Many Members, in speaking in favour of the point of privilege, noted that the government followed a similar process last year. They also noted that concerns were raised by Members at the time, who assumed that same approach would not be repeated.

I accept the Minister's statement that Cabinet holds this institution in high regard. I believe that neither he nor the Premier intended any lack of respect for the institution they have made honourable careers serving. In fact, when you read the speaking notes drafted from the Premier's press conference, which are posted to the website, there is clear and appropriate reference to the role of the Assembly. The notes make use of words like the "GNWT intends to fund" and "the funding will be included in a bill for the consideration of the Assembly later this month." Although none of this language is reflected in the press release, it is included in some of the media reports that followed. I am, therefore, confident that they were expressed at the news conference.

Colleagues, this is a good point of privilege and one that could go either way. I want to thank the Member for Range Lake for raising it as well as all the Members who spoke to it.

I find that the wording "September 2nd press release," although very inappropriate, does not constitute prima facie contempt of this Legislative Assembly. A future Speaker, including this one, might not rule the same way under the same or similar circumstances in the future. I will have to remind all Members that we do not operate like a majority Parliament. Our House and committees have important roles to play in making decisions that affect the territory. If we want others to take the work here that we do seriously, we have to start with ourselves.

Thank you, colleagues. I know you will take my advice seriously. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Thursday, October 8, 2015, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
 - Motion 51-17(5), Appointment of Chair to the Northwest Territories Honours Advisory Council
 - Motion 52-17(5), Appointment of Languages Commissioner
 - Motion 53-17(5), Language Training for Senior GNWT Managers
 - Motion 54-17(5), Climate Change Planning
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Mental Health Act
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 54, An Act to Amend the Forest Management Act
 - Minister's Statement 221-17(5), Sessional Statement
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 55, Mental Health Act
22. Prorogation

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 8th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

