



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Members Present

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 1:29 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Good afternoon, Members. Item 1, Ministers' statements. Minister of Human Resources.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 140-18(2): CANADA'S TOP EMPLOYER OF YOUNG PEOPLE 2017

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that the Government of the Northwest Territories has, for the third time, been selected as one of Canada's Top Employers of Young People.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to creating a public service that is inclusive of young people and values the meaningful contribution that young Northerners make in the public service. This prestigious designation recognizes employers that offer the nation's best workplaces and programs for young people who are starting their careers. It is proof positive that the Government of the Northwest Territories is one of Canada's leaders in attracting and retaining younger employees to their organizations.

Mr. Speaker, being named one of Canada's Top Employers of Young People also reflects this government's commitment to education, training and youth development. The Department of Human Resources manages numerous programs and initiatives aimed at creating employment opportunities for Northern students and helping to provide diverse work experiences for young people. This includes:

- The Summer Student Employment Program, which provided valuable work experience to over 300 students last summer;
- The Graduate Internship Program, which provided relevant work experience to 24 recent

northern graduates last year and, in some cases, provided the work experience for interns to move into permanent placements with the public service;

- Paid and unpaid educational leave benefits to pursue post-secondary studies; and
- Providing meaningful work and an opportunity to shape the NWT's future to young people in all our communities.

Mr. Speaker, young people are the future of our public service and the Northwest Territories. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to ensuring that young people are valued members of the public service by providing opportunities for growth and development throughout their careers. Our government will continue to build on these programs and opportunities for young people for which we were recognized.

Being chosen as one of Canada's Top Employers of Young People for the third year is a testament to the importance the government places on making a place for young people in our public service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 2, Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SMALL COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Small Community Employment Support Program provides wage subsidies to employers in our small communities. Those employers can offer work and on-the-job training to unemployed youth and adults.

That means places like small businesses, schools, local governments, NGOs, and local housing authorities can apply through their local ECE service centre for financial support to train local people in the jobs small communities need.

Last year this program was funded just \$339,000;

this year, we're seeing a proposed increase of \$3 million in the main estimates, plus a further commitment of \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, with this we can hope to see more people training and working, more small businesses thriving, and more families' incomes invested in their communities. We need to put this program to good use.

Mr. Speaker, we heard in the Budget Address that the government intends to develop a Small Community Employment Strategy to improve the way it spends program money.

I'd like to see that strategy lay out a clear, concise plan for improved community engagement and outreach, dedicated job creation, and enhance supports targeted at our young people.

With the new fiscal year rapidly approaching, time is short for preparation and for implementation, but I believe this program will be one to watch. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELECTORAL REFORM

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the issue of elections. As elected representatives of the Assembly, we are all directly affected by how well our electoral system works. Certainly how Canadians vote and the mechanism for determining how that vote produces a representative Assembly is a pertinent topic right now on the national level.

For all of us as representatives, it's important that we have confidence in the electoral process. We need to know that the process is fair in order for us to represent those who voted for us. I want to know the level of support I have, and I need to know what work I need to do in order to represent those who didn't vote for me.

In the last territorial election the numbers of voters declined from the previous election in 2011. We are currently looking at modernizing the Elections Act, making changes to the process to get people more involved. Mr. Speaker, I think we must commit to making this happen well before the next election period. Having this discussion in the last year of our term leading up to the election will be far too late.

We need to consider new ways to inform voters and find ways of making voting easier and more efficient and fair. How can we make sure every qualified voter is registered? How can we make the process transparent and open to anyone who wants to volunteer? How can we streamline the rules and

accountability around campaign contributions? We can make sure NWT electors and candidates have these answers before the next election if we get to work on this as a government and put some resources towards this now.

Engaged voters don't just vote; they talk over coffee, around the dinner table. They speak at government meetings and come out to constituency meetings. They write officials and the media and their MLAs to express their opinions. They start and sign petitions, and sometimes they gather in public and have marches.

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly is committed to openness and transparency as a government; this must extend to our electoral process, to make sure that democracy actually works for the will of the people. It's a vitally important conversation, and it's all about having your voice heard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to my constituents and all citizens of the NWT who are out there voicing an opinion, stepping up, and getting involved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NAATS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Naats'ihch'oh National Park is named after Naats'ihch'oh Mountain east-west of Tulita, an influential place for the people of Sahtu. It is near the NWT-Yukon border. The park is in the traditional lands of the Mountain Dene and home to many animals such as grizzly bears, Dall sheep, mountain goats, and woodland caribou.

The Sahtu vision identified in the Sahtu Land Use Plan supports the concept of balance between management and development, and one of the Land Use Plan's goals is to increase the economic self-sufficiency of the region through sustainable development by addressing barriers to industry involvement and increasing non-renewable resource development in the region.

The Sahtu Land Use Plan's Zone 41 Proposed Conservation Initiatives designation notes the economic importance of the area for its mineral exploration development potential. An important consideration for the board is that access to high mineral potential areas, such as Zone 41, is essential to the future economic development and supports the mineral strategy under way.

Tourism development potential remains a strong possibility in the Zone 41 region and the area, and it is important that transportation corridors remain

successful to encourage possible future tourism development initiatives and balance on realizing the Sahtu potential and being mindful of conservation and preservation. To me, Mr. Speaker, this is truly responsible development, consultation for a meaningful conclusion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AURORA COLLEGE PROGRAM REDUCTIONS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the cuts to Aurora College. I am simply confounded by how stubborn the Minister and the government is being with the cuts to the social work program and the Teacher Education Program. How much public backlash and criticism must they face before it becomes evident that this is not what the people of the Northwest Territories want? It is not about us, Mr. Speaker, about the Regular Members, but the people we serve. Their voice has been loud and clear on this issue. They have protested outside this legislature. They have written scores of letters. They have filed petitions. Mr. Speaker, what will it take to put the brakes on this cut and get these programs reinstated?

Mr. Speaker, the government's own Skills 4 Success plan presents the facts quite clearly. From 2015 to 2030, the NWT will need to recruit 777 elementary and kindergarten school teachers, 577 secondary school teachers, 448 early child educators and assistants, and 382 college and vocational instructors to meet replacement and expansion of existing programs.

Also from ECE, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment labour market information resources, we know that social and community service workers are forecasted to increase in demand throughout the next 15 years. The medium-term forecast increase is from 340 positions in 2014 to 410 positions by 2030. That is a 21 per cent increase in positions, and our students will not have an option of obtaining those opportunities here in the North.

What bold initiative is this government taking to ensure we can meet the demand? It seems, Mr. Speaker, that we are cutting the programs that allow these students to seek these opportunities and learn a trade that is in demand here in the Northwest Territories. I stand against that. I am asking this government to reinstate those programs, to reinstate the funding, at least until we get a strategic plan on the table that we can review, assess, and support. Without that support, I think we should stop this plan and get those students back in class where they belong. Thank you, Mr.

Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COORDINATION OF ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVES

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the GNWT laid the groundwork for its anti-poverty plan. One press release described it as our "tattered social safety net." It was three more years before we got an action plan called, Working Together.

Now five years have passed. Forget the tattered social safety net; we are in fiscal restraint these days. Yet Northerners living in poverty still have not seen enduring improvements.

It is not for a lack of trying, but for the lack of coordination and new investment. NGOs, community groups, and public servants work hard, but often, it seems, at cross-purposes.

They are under-funded and limping along with annual roundtables and status quo anti-poverty funding of just \$500,000 per year spread over 33 communities.

The problem is that there is no functional overarching government plan, no 14-department strategic attack on poverty. Prenatal work happens over here, with Right From the Start, but work with youth mental health happens over there, with an action plan under Mind and Spirit.

Who makes sure that these initiatives tie back to the anti-poverty goals? Working Together was supposed to coordinate efforts and evolve over time, but it is full of references to work that was already done and under way, not new work or new money. For example, the first plan prioritized better funding for grade school, but the government resists fully funding junior kindergarten.

The second plan said the rent supplement program should address unaffordable housing. Housing is still too expensive, while the budget in 2017 shrinks the program by \$300,000.

Third, it recommended that the GNWT address barriers to jobs in small communities. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regular MLAs are the ones who want to do just that,

through increases in the Small Community Employment Support Program.

However, the government wants to try to deliver that program with no changes in the policy, which means they will continue to have problems getting the money out the door. The program is just not deliverable in its current form, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, to truly tackle poverty, we need a well-funded, well-coordinated government-wide approach to guide investments and programs showing the best returns.

We must empower Northerners to take jobs we need in childcare, education, social work, land-based work, not take away from local opportunities. Take Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. If you were to employ two people in Fort Resolution, two in Lutselk'e, and two in Ndilo, that would be six more families bringing in income and getting off income support.

A rising tide can lift all boats, but only if our approach truly brings our people and our anti-poverty efforts together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to people in the gallery. I would like to recognize former NWT Commissioner, former Speaker, former Minister, former Member, honorary Table Clerk, Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford. Welcome.

In addition, I am pleased to recognize and welcome a special guest to the Northwest Territories, Consul General of Switzerland, Mr. Pascal Borno. Masi for joining us here today.

With them, of course, Carmen Moore; thanks for being with us and doing a fantastic job. Masi.

---Applause

Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF JESSIE LOUITIT

MR. THOMPSON: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to introduce all of you to an amazing young lady, Jessie Loutit. I had the pleasure of watching her succeed in sports such as hockey and soccer throughout her years in Fort Simpson.

After graduating from high school in Fort Simpson, she went on to university and decided after two years that she wanted to start rowing with the University of Calgary team. Instantly, she fell in love with the sport and two years later she decided to move to Auckland, New Zealand, to row during the winter months. The time on the water was extremely beneficial for her. Upon returning home,

she won a silver medal in the Women's Pair in the 2010 Canada University Rowing Championship. This was the first and only medal won at these championships in the history of the University of Calgary's rowing club.

Mr. Speaker, after this competition she decided she was completely motivated to pursue her dreams of making the national team. Unfortunately, in the summer of 2011 at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta she had a major road biking accident, which set her back on her rowing goals. Following the accident, she went through two surgeries on her knees and months of rehabilitation and was able to slowly start training again.

In 2013, she moved to London, Ontario, and attended the University of Western Ontario rowing team as well as working on her second degree. She made the varsity team during the 2013-14 season, winning a bronze medal in the 8+ and a national championship banner. To add to her success, she was named to Team Canada to attend the World University Rowing Championships in Korea, and they placed fourth overall.

To fast forward, she moved back to Calgary where she competed for the Calgary Rowing Club and won their Female Athlete of the Year award.

In 2016, she had more success with her teammates at various regattas and attended the National Rowing Championships, where they won a bronze medal only to be beat by two crews who just returned from the Rio Olympics and the world championships. Later that fall, her and her pair partner were named the Calgary Rowing Club Members of the Year. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, colleagues. This past year, she won an award from the Provincial Rowing Association for her commitment to this sport.

This year, she will be moving to Victoria, BC, to try out for the national team. I would like all my colleagues to give her a big round of applause and wish her all the best of luck. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OUT-MIGRATION FROM SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the majority of the NWT is made up of small

communities -- 26 small communities and seven regional centres and two of them in the capital of Yellowknife. Earlier this month, a report on CBC North stated that 2016 population statistics show a decline in small communities compared to the 2011 census. Overall growth of the NWT population remains flat. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, economic activities of small communities include traditional activities such as fishing, hunting and trapping, tourism, and seasonal jobs. Governments and First Nations are the main employers in small communities. People leave for jobs and educational opportunities elsewhere.

The current GNWT budget of position reductions and amalgamations favours larger centres. For example, an economic developer officer position that was cut from my community is now serviced and will be delivered out of Hay River.

Decentralization efforts stop at regional centres. Jobs do not reach small communities. Young people do not have opportunities to come back to. The cost of living remains high and does not appeal to people who have gotten hooked on the material benefits and lifestyle that comes from a larger-wage economy. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, the people who have chosen to make our small communities a home want to see their community thrive. Mr. Speaker, I encourage the GNWT to strengthen our small communities in order to give them a vibrant future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT COLLECTIONS

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, the experiences of many single parents -- predominantly women -- who rely upon maintenance enforcement payments are generally not good. Our measures for collecting these vital family supports have improved over time, as have penalties such as lifting the driver's licences of deadbeat debtors, but, as a constituent of mine who is very familiar with these processes has pointed out to me, provisions for collecting and paying garnishees still leave a lot to be desired.

A major failing is that the thinly staffed maintenance enforcement office must track down people owing maintenance payments. Frequently, this means spouses who have fled abusive relationships must monitor the very people they are trying to stay away from. I asked the Minister's office if it would not be possible to require employers to report new hires to maintenance enforcement. I was told this can't be done, owing to privacy laws. Mr. Speaker, I don't

accept this. Employers immediately file a TD1 tax form when they hire a new employee so taxes can be collected. If the tax collectors can get their money, so should the spouses owed money for children's food, clothing, and shelter.

Difficulty collecting payments from self-employed persons is another shortcoming. When payments are made under service and supply contracts, there is often no trail for the money to the name of the person. The legislation needs to be reviewed to create increased enforcement powers.

I will give one other example. The Maintenance Orders and Enforcement Act and regulations say an employer must immediately begin collecting garnishees and remit them within 14 days, but they don't cover how employers process their payroll or how to remit payments. Cheques sent by mail can take a long time to arrive. People owing maintenance may change work frequently, so they are always catching up on long time frames. This needs to be improved.

Mr. Speaker, women are the majority of those relying on maintenance enforcement payments. Women are most frequently the partner fleeing domestic violence. In all fairness, we should build a maintenance enforcement system to serve the people who are owed the money. I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In our mandate, there is a commitment to amend the Environment Protection Act, including the development of air quality regulations. Our government started the long-overdue process of developing air regulations in June of last year. The deadline for public submissions was September 16th. Five months have passed, and the only thing I can see is a statement on the ENR website that says, "An update on the anticipated timelines will be posted in early 2017."

Those of us who lived in Yellowknife before 1999 will remember that sour taste in the back of our throats from the air emissions from Giant Mine. That went on for decades without any regulation whatsoever, contaminating most of the soils around this community. At least one Dene child died from those emissions, and many more people were made sick.

Indigenous elders have raised concerns about fugitive dust from roads of the diamond mines for over 20 years. While the companies have made

some effort to reduce dusts from the road, a lot more could and should be done. The correlation of dust from the diamond mines with the avoidance of the mine sites by female and young caribou remains untested. Successive environmental assessments have recommended that air quality regulations be developed by GNWT, and ENR Ministers have accepted that challenge.

Air quality regulations can also be the essential tool to allow us to set a price on carbon emissions to meet our national and international obligations to fight climate change.

The complete absence of enforceable air quality legislation and regulations in the NWT has been highlighted as a problem for many years. It was noted in all the NWT environmental audits from 2005, 2010, and 2015. With devolution now almost three years behind us, there is no longer any excuse for the lack of regulations.

There are serious issues at stake with the proposed air quality regulations proposed by the Minister. Very significant and broad discretion would be housed in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its Minister. There are very few commitments or requirements to ensure that there is public access to documents, and no opportunities for public involvement.

This is not consistent with the co-management approach currently in place for land and water, not consistent with the expectation of communities and the public, and not consistent with the mandate of the 18th Assembly towards open government.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MACKENZIE DELTA COMMUNITIES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a great need for jobs in the Mackenzie Delta. I am really disappointed that very few jobs have been created in my region in recent years. Our government could make a huge difference.

The employment rate in Fort McPherson and Aklavik is barely over 40 per cent. Only one community in the Northwest Territories has an employment rate lower.

The lack of jobs is a big reason that incomes are so low, Mr. Speaker. In one of my communities, 42 per cent of the people who have filed tax returns make

less than \$15,000 a year. It is very, very hard to live on such a low income considering the high cost of living in our small communities.

When our high school students graduate, this is what they see. For some, it could take years to find a job in the region. Our young people are fighting against the odds, Mr. Speaker, but they are fighting just the same, and I am proud of them.

Even a few jobs can make a big difference, Mr. Speaker. In my riding, a total of 538 people had jobs in 2014. Our government could do incredible good if it found a way to add 10 jobs a year per community for the next three years of our Assembly. That is 90 jobs over three years, Mr. Speaker.

Ninety jobs would take 90 families out of poverty and benefit the government, as well as the people.

Mr. Speaker, one concern I have about the budget is its focus on combining departments and cutting positions to save money, taking work from our people and hurting local economies, for example cutting back the ferry services on the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers. The focus on the budget cuts has taken us away from improving local economies, creating jobs, and other goals of our Assembly.

We seem to forget about the savings and revenue to be gained and people who need work to support their families. I look forward to seeing some job creation by this government in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AURORA COLLEGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has received virtually all the blame for Members of this House and from the public for the cutting of Aurora College's Teacher Education Program.

I, too, blame the department, but not for cutting the program -- that was Aurora College's decision. I blame ECE for allowing the college to operate in a manner that resulted in a teacher program that the college saw fit to cut. The Teacher Education Program costs two to three times more to deliver than similar programs in the South, has a 75 per cent dropout rate, and costs anywhere from \$250,000 to \$750,000 per graduate.

The worst part, Mr. Speaker, is that the graduates of the program, solely because of where their degrees are from, have a hard time finding teaching

positions not only in the South but also in the territory. These are failures of the college, not the students. However, again, I put the blame on ECE for handing tens of millions of dollars over to the college without the oversight to ensure that the people of the NWT get what we pay for and that the graduates of the college get a world-class education and a degree that is respected throughout Canada.

Many of my colleagues have stressed that the decision to cut the Teacher Education Program should be informed by the college's upcoming strategic plan. There have been strategic plans in the past; the last one was for 2006 to 2015, and arguably it left the program in worse shape. Besides, Aurora College has had 47 years to develop the Teacher Education Program. It should be the college's crown jewel. Instead, it is the first program that Aurora College has ever cut.

If ECE did not reduce its contribution to the college, there is no doubt that the program would continue on. However, ECE did not tell the college to cut the Teacher Education Program -- the college made that call on its own. Much like what government does, the college found it impossible to find any savings in what many have commented is a bloated administration, and instead chose to cut a program that they knew they were failing to deliver appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, just so there is no confusion, I believe that we should be educating teachers in the Northwest Territories, but I believe that they should be receiving an education on par with anywhere else in Canada. So do we continue to fund the Teacher Education Program regardless of the program's quality or success, essentially throwing good money after bad? Demanding that the Minister reinstate funding for the program and maintain the status quo might win me political points, but it will not do justice for the people of the Northwest Territories, and that is my concern. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. The first thing we have to do, obviously, is honour the commitment that was made to any of the students in the college's access program who were assured that they would be able to enter the Teacher Education Program this fall, because I am sure the college knew this cut was coming.

Second, and most importantly, we need to change the way that Aurora College does business. For too long it has operated in a bubble, with this government demanding little from it in the way of

financial accountability or educational outcomes. There is no need to wait for the next strategic plan to begin making changes. Strategies, action plans, strategic frameworks: these are too often excuses for inaction.

I would say that the cut of the Teacher Education Program is the canary in the coal mine, but for many years many people have been aware that changes need to be made of the state of the college. Hopefully, this cut is a wake-up call that will spur the government to begin making the foundational changes needed to give us the educational institution that the people of the Northwest Territories need and deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Honourable Premier. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and as you acknowledged earlier, one of the Yellowknife North residents joining us today is the former everything, but is a current resident of Yellowknife North, and that is Mr. Tony Whitford. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge my resident and constituency assistant, Ann Peters, for joining me here this week and appearing in the gallery. She is helping me with all the stuff that falls behind when we are in session. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a couple of former constituents of Inuvik, Mr. Alex White, as well as Ms. Danielle Deslauriers. Welcome, and I hope you enjoy the proceedings. As well, it is always great to see Mr. Tony Whitford in the gallery, and welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure he is used to it every time he appears, but I would also like to recognize Mr. Tony Whitford, former Member for Kam Lake. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the

gallery. Item 7, Acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 616-18(2): SUPPORT TO ADDRESS TRAGEDIES IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the tragedies that have occurred recently in my riding, and this is questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services, can he please advise this House if there are any policies or procedures in place to address tragedies that occur in small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is no formal written policy; however, it is a common long-standing practice within the health and social services system that responding to a tragedy is a priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Recognizing that every situation is different, that every community has a different response, what we tend to do is work with the community leadership to find out what it is they expect or what they are hoping to get from the Department of Health and Social Services when a crisis arises, and providing that service as best we can and working with the community to make sure that we are meeting their needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I think the Minister kind of answered my second question, but I am going to ask it anyway so we can get a little bit further information. Mr. Speaker, when dealing with these tragedies, will the Minister explain what the department does to ensure that there are necessary supports that are available to the communities besides just talking to them?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There have been a number of tragedies in the Member's riding, and the Department of Health and Social Services has responded to each one of them, but in each case the response was different based on what the community told us they were looking for as far as supports. We recognize that smaller communities do not necessarily have access to all the supports that exist in some of the larger communities, and where appropriate and where desired by the communities, we have sent professionals from other communities in when those crises occur.

So we tailor based on need, we tailor based on expectations, and in some situations communities have indicated to us that, you know, they want to handle it on their own; others, they are like, we

need some psychologists, psychiatrists, we need some support staff in there. In some situations we found that there is a particular professional out there in the Northwest Territories that the community really feels comfortable with, that they want to bring in. We supported those individuals coming in, but there is no one model, Mr. Speaker.

We work with the communities, we listen to the communities, and we tailor our response based on what we are hearing from them on what they would like to see and how they would like to see that delivered.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer. Then to the credit of the department in the regional health and social services, we have had a unique situation in the last couple of weeks here and they have done an amazing job with our tragedies, but in regard to dealing with these type of tragedies, can the Minister tell us if the department tries to utilize traditional acknowledge or healing in addressing these issues?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Absolutely. I will give an example. In Sahtu we had a situation where there was a tragedy in one of their communities and what was requested of us was to support a bunch of the youth to go out on the land in order to experience healing and get out of the community, which we supported fully because it was the right thing to do. It is what the community wanted. It is what the youth needed. Listening to the community is critical. We do those types of things.

Sometimes, we hear, we want something done on the land immediately. Sometimes we say, give us a couple of weeks to stabilize here. Then we want to do something on the land. We are open to whatever the communities are suggesting is necessary in these times of crisis. Like I said, it is about working with communities and listening to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the Minister for the answer. It is great to hear that the department is working with the communities when these tragedies happen.

Mr. Speaker, when a tragedy occurs in the small communities, will the Minister advise us who the department contacts? Is it the leadership, the family, or is there just whomever they decide who needs to be contacted? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In times of crisis, it can be difficult sometimes to determine who the most appropriate person to communicate with, whether it is the family, or maybe the family may not be the

appropriate person depending on the incident that has occurred.

As a general rule, we do try to communicate with leadership in the community to help us coordinate our activities in the community, but I say that with a caution that you have to be flexible. You have to recognize that there are times when family might be the most appropriate individuals to be in touch with for a multitude of reasons. As a general rule, we try to do our communications through the community leadership.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 617-18(2):
MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT PAYMENTS

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice regarding maintenance enforcement. As I pointed out in my statement, the thinly resourced maintenance enforcement office must now go sleuthing around to find deadbeat and sometimes abusive spouses, often relying on tips from the very women who need to stay away for their own safety. Yet, as soon as a new hire is made, a flare goes up for the tax office.

I refuse to believe that this information can't be passed on to the maintenance enforcement office. Will the Minister commit to assign staff from his department to work with Finance and plug this loophole? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The maintenance enforcement office, of course, was set up many years ago so that parents did not have to deal directly with those who owed money under orders that were filed with the office. Of course, there are many things the office can do: they can garnish wages; they can seize property; and they can attach and sell assets. The Member opposite has raised an interesting issue which I am prepared to look into as to whether there are constitutional or Charter bars to obtaining the information she spoke of upon the person, or a possible creditor becoming employed. Thank you.

MS. GREEN: I thank the Minister for his commitment to look into this area and figure out how we can plug this loophole. It is one that benefits some of the most disadvantaged people in our territory, who are single mothers.

Another shortcoming I pointed out was the difficulty in collecting payments from the self-employed. I will remind the Minister that maintenance payments we collect very often lift the cost of social assistance off the public purse. It is worth making an effort here,

Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to having his maintenance enforcement people sit down with the tax department experts and make a report to standing committee on possible improvements?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Naturally, Mr. Speaker, we are always interested in improving the system; however, sometimes there are loopholes that cannot be plugged as the result of Charter or other privacy concerns.

MS. GREEN: We are talking about people who are self-employed, so I do not see how the Charter concerns relate there. I would ask the Minister, when he is looking at how to plug the loophole of finding out who is employed, that he include the people who are self-employed?

Another sort of antiquated portion of this problem is that remittances are forwarded by cheque in the mail; two things which will disappear in our lifetime, Mr. Speaker. We need to tighten up the time frames and methods on these payments. I am told that a change in regulations would make that happen. Will the Minister commit to looking at how to speed up payment?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, without a doubt, it is difficult often to make collections of any kind from the self-employed because they are obviously working for themselves. For that reason, it is difficult often to obtain the kind of information the enforcement office needs to make collection of arrears. With respect to the other matter, clearly we should look into a faster method of getting payment to the creditors.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hope that I can take that as a commitment that the Minister will look into making the payments faster.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we recently heard a report of a local woman being shortchanged on an NWT court-ordered support payment because a BC court lowered the amount of money payable under the order. Now, NWT payment levels are set with an eye, of course, to the cost of living here, so a payee's income goes down in BC.

It seems to me that it is wrong that a court there should lower the amount owed under an NWT judgment. My question is: will the Minister commit to consulting with his BC Justice Minister colleague to eliminate this provision in their law? Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, payments under court orders are always subject to recalculation. In fact, we are attempting to develop a child support recalculation service that will avoid the necessity of going back to court in every case.

Courts, however, always have the right to make changes to payments, and really, that is within their jurisdiction and responsibility. I do not think I could have any influence over that, particularly the courts of British Columbia.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 618-18(2):
COORDINATION OF ANTI-POVERTY
INITIATIVES

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I talked about funding towards the anti-poverty initiatives for the GNWT. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the anti-poverty, the Minister of Health and Social Services, a couple of questions.

The GNWT is committed to compiling a broad set of social indicators to measure its progress on the Working Together action plan. Separate from individual departments' monitoring and accountability plans, how will the GNWT measure and report on its overall success in combatting poverty? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have already talked about this a couple of times during this particular sitting. One of the challenges we have is that we do not have a truly defined definition of what "poverty" is in the Northwest Territories, which does make it hard to evaluate any of the work that we are doing against it. We have made a commitment to work with our stakeholders to find a definition.

At the same time, during our last Anti-poverty Roundtable, the department did present a number of criteria that we are going to consider monitoring and evaluating to help us determine success. We have got a lot of feedback from the participants on things we should be looking at, and that work is being evaluated now so that it could be brought to the advisory group to see if we could bring those criteria down so we could actually have some solid things to evaluate. That work will help us evaluate success going forward, but there are a couple of things that need to be done. The description or the definition is certainly one of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: In the GNWT, which Minister in what department is responsible for tackling and coordinating the various government initiatives that fall under Working Together?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a number of

Ministers who have responsibility for the individual action items that are included within our anti-poverty documents, the GNWT's Anti-Poverty Action Plan. My role is to continue to work with stakeholders to get this information out, and to remind Ministers of their obligations under this strategic framework, which includes five areas in supporting children and families; promoting healthy living; ensuring safe and affordable housing; making our communities sustainable; and providing an integrated continuum of services. Mr. Speaker, we work together to make that a reality.

MR. BEAULIEU: What new, not continuing, actions or initiatives have come out of the most recent Anti-Poverty Roundtable?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The priority of the most recent roundtable was to actually develop the evaluation criteria that we will use going forward, and the conversation around a definition came up again. That is our goal in that group, is to share information on different projects that are happening, to share good ideas so that people can take those good ideas back to the regions.

The main activity coming out of that is let's get this evaluation criteria in place; let's start evaluating the great success that is out there today from the NGOs, from the Aboriginal governments, from the community governments, as well as from the GNWT.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I talked about all 14 departments working together. How does the GNWT's vision for reducing and eliminating poverty in the NWT include a plan for eliminating silos between the departments? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing about silos for a number of years, and it's certainly a pet peeve of mine; I've raised it as a Regular Member on multiple occasions.

One of the things that's being done to help us break down some of the silos is we actually have some interdepartmental deputy minister committees that are actually tasked with making sure that they're working together on shared files, that they're not duplicating efforts, that they're working for a common goal. They have opportunities to discuss the different pillars that were identified in the framework, as well as the initiatives and work being undertaken on a number of the different priority areas across the Government of the Northwest Territories; for example, mental health and addictions, Justice and Education are clearly

partners with Health and Social Services all in an attempt to break down the silos and work together.

Do I believe that all the silos are gone? No, absolutely not, but we are working in the right direction to start breaking these down. I'd say over the last eight years we've seen a number of these silos start to fracture and come apart and work starting to happen together, which I think is a good thing for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 619-18(2):
AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Earlier today I spoke about the importance of moving forward with our mandate commitment of developing air quality regulations. Can the Minister tell us how many submissions were received on the engagement materials for air quality regulations that were put out last year? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ENR, we've received 29 formal responses; 10 from the Aboriginal governments and 19 were from stakeholders. We are currently processing the feedback that we heard and, based on feedback received from the parties, we're conducting some additional legislative and legal analysis and technical research on select items in the framework. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that response. Does the department intend to respond to all the concerns and issues that were raised and to do so in a transparent fashion, maybe through a table of responses or some other mechanism, as I recommended in my submission?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, we are planning on responding. We are actually distributing a "what we heard" document on the draft Environmental Protection Act to the parties with the possibility of bringing a draft bill to this House in the near future, and a second round of consultations will be conducted with all the interested stakeholders on the draft bill during that time.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks again to the Minister for his response. Does the Minister, though, actually have a timetable for these steps that he's outlined? Can we expect to see a legislative proposal for the bill, this "what we heard" document, in the current session?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, there is a new

timetable. In order for us to appropriately address the feedback received from the engagement consultation, we have had a bit of a process change and therefore a change in the timeline has been required. We are pursuing components of the regulation framework through the Land and Water Board process. As far as the timeline goes, we have an LP that we're working on and we're looking to have an EPA bill, an Environmental Protection Act bill, passed in the fall 2017 Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the complete responses from the Minister. I sincerely thank him for that.

I've talked about the importance of sound air quality regulations for the protection of human health and the environment. Given that this is a new regulatory field for our government and one obviously of great public interest, can the Minister commit to bringing forward a draft of the air quality regulations to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we'll make an opportunity to have a discussion with committee on the draft regulations. Our intent is to have the regulations come into effect in the spring of 2018, so we'll have some opportunity before then to have some discussions with committee and all interested stakeholders.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 620-18(2):
SAHTU LAND USE PLANNING

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement here. Despite the challenges resource developers face today, it is important to understand that the non-renewable resources are the NWT's natural long-term strengths. My question today is for the Minister of Lands: how is this government, through the land-use planning process, working to conclude withdrawal of lands referred to as 41 in the Naats'ihch'oh Park area east-west of Tulita? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The Sahtu Land Use Planning Board is the authority for amendments of Zone 41, and I can advise that there is an application to make an amendment now that the final boundary for the Naats'ihch'oh National Park Reserve is established. So Lands is coordinating a

cohesive NWT position to take to the board. Thank you.

MR. MCNEELY: I'm glad the department is on that, but looking back, the recommendations by the draft was dated June 2016. The correspondence I received was this past Friday recommending the conclusion of this Lands 41 within the park area. My second question is: will the Minister give us a time frame when this issue can be concluded?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I know the amendment application was filed on January 9, 2017; of course, the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board is independent of the Department of Lands so I can't really give a date as to when they will conclude their examination of this matter.

MR. MCNEELY: Will the Minister look into it and get back to me, please? If so, when?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I will look into it, and I think I can provide the Member opposite with some additional information. Of course, I can't directly affect the timing or the decision of the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, would the Minister, in his review, check into the amendment being referred to with the new amendment as a special management zone? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I am uncertain as to the exact details of the amendment or the type of amendment that was filed on January 9, 2017. I, however, will look into it and attempt to provide such information to the Member opposite that I am able to.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 621-18(2):
AURORA COLLEGE BUDGET REDUCTIONS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Education on the funding to Aurora College. When the Minister and his department were involved in discussions with Aurora College about identifying reductions, was a discussion held about how the college could leverage additional funds from other sources, from third-party sources, to make up the reductions that our government was asking of them? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my knowledge, we didn't ask them to look for third-party funding to offset the reductions. When we looked at these two programs, as I have said many times in this House, the department in collaboration with Aurora College did look at efficiencies.

We do give a big investment into these programs. The graduates that we weren't getting out of the program was an indicator. These two programs were both selected and brought forth to this government to have this debate on the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Perhaps, maybe, that is the point. Are we too involved with the day-to-day operations of this college and providing strategic direction to them? As my honourable friend, the Member from Hay River North, pointed out in his statement earlier, issues with the success of the college are not new, and instead of helping them, we seem to have been turning away from that and are now offering them guidance on how to cut programs, not how to improve programs.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: given that 66 per cent of the revenues of Aurora College are provided for by government and, in our neighbouring territory, the Yukon government only provides 49 per cent of revenues to their equivalent Yukon College, would the Minister be open to giving direction to Aurora College to establish its own fundraising foundation so it can bring in third-party resources to fund its programs and operations?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, we do fund the majority of dollars to Aurora College to run their programs and services. This year alone, we have developed a schedule to have more meetings with the board as well as the president of Aurora College to have that open communication. We have given them mandate letters in terms of the work that we expect to see them do. We are currently working on an accountability framework with Aurora College. Obviously, we want to see how that money is being spent in the contributions that we do give to them.

In terms of third-party funding, we do have the Aurora Research Institute, where we do get funding from outside sources to come and do research in the North, but that can be a discussion that we have with the board of governors and the president moving forward. We are looking at new direction that the college is taking, and I think that is something we will have a talk with them about.

MR. TESTART: I am sure the Minister is well aware that we are all eagerly awaiting the strategic plan and the process that will come forward from this. Can the Minister advise how the college will be

used to support the Skills 4 Success strategic plan?

It looks like we are cutting off two programs that have direct relation with that strategy, so are we going to fill our labour gap solely on the backs of southern institutions, or are we going to build some programs here in the North that work to support that plan?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: A lot of these things were indicators in terms of reductions within the program. As mentioned in the honourable Member's statement, he was talking about the in-demand jobs that we are going to see in the future. For K-12 teachers by 2030, it is going to be 1,354 teachers in the K-12 system. Currently, Aurora College graduates an average of seven. We continue to support our out-of-territory students.

We have 33 right now down south. For degreed social workers, it is 158. Aurora College does not offer a degree program, but we do work with students who want to go and continue their education down south through our Student Financial Assistance Program. For current demand for social community service workers, that is 479. Aurora College currently graduates anywhere from four to five.

The Skills 4 Success document is a driving factor when we are looking at this new direction that Aurora College is doing. They understand that. It is something that we mandated them to look at, and we will continue to work with them on getting that direction so we have programs and services that will meet the needs of our in-demand jobs in the North.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that the Minister has made it clear that our government is driving the strategic plan for Aurora College. I do think that is problematic. I think that we need to decide if it is going to be a third-party organization that can decide its own priorities or if we are going to decide its priorities for them. So, I am going to ask the Minister, just clearly: is he willing to put a hold on cutting funding to Aurora College so they can preserve these two existing programs until such time as the strategic plan has been completed and has been considered by this House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Historically, we have had low graduation rates out of these two programs in particular. The social work program, for the investment that we do put in, we are getting about four graduates that do come out. Then, with the TEP program, for the amount of money that we are putting into that program, we are

averaging about seven graduates a year who come out of that program. We feel that investments should be looked at for other programs that will meet other in-demand jobs, so we are going to continue with having these two programs in terms of reductions moving forward and working with Aurora College on that strategic plan that can redirect the work that they are doing so we do meet the in-demand jobs for northern employers and within the public service, as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 622-18(2):
ADDRESSING MIGRATION FROM SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the story of the out-migration of people from the small communities into large centres, it kind of reminded me of an old western movie that I used to watch, where there are abandoned buildings and there are tumbleweeds and there are dust bowls. My questions today is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. With that image in mind, what is the GNWT doing to help small communities survive as small towns and grow? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will take my colleague's comment and say there are no tumbleweeds in the territory. What is the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs doing to help small community governments? The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs really works with community governments to basically deal with their infrastructure. We provide funding so that they can have clean water, so that they can have waste facilities, so that they can have emergency planning, fire services. We also provide a component so that they can build capital planning and programs that actually support people to deal with sports, because we recognize that sports are key to keeping people engaged and to keeping children healthy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NADLI: Recently in the work of the Auditor General's report it highlighted this department does indeed work with small communities. My question is: how will MACA's response to the Auditor General's recent recommendations improve the outlook for small communities?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Auditor General's report actually gave us 13 recommendations. A lot of them were talking about things like waste management, fire safety, and emergency planning. Some of it that pertains,

maybe, to the honourable Members' question are around our accountability framework so that we can actually provide questions so that we make sure that community governments are providing the services they need within their communities, and we have some way of verifying them as well.

The other thing that might be applicable is for the designated authorities, of which there are nine within the territories. The recommendations were around working with the federal government, Indigenous and Northern Affairs I believe they are called, to actually work in partnership so we can better support the communities. We take their suggestions very seriously, and we actually have met with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada in December. We are looking at strengthening that partnership so that the provision of services to designated authorities will be stronger.

MR. NADLI: The Minister is in very good spirits today in terms of working together. We ask, on this side of the House, if the Minister could help us to work with the Department of ECE in terms of job creation. How is MACA working with other departments on initiatives to improve the opportunities for people living in our small communities such as education, job creation, and programs for youth? Would the Minister work with her colleague from ECE and ensure there is a clear focus in terms of a job creation initiative to save our small communities?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that we can't work in silos. We have two forms of committees. We have the deputy ministers who meet regularly for various committees, economic development, social causes, etc. We also have Ministers' committees, that we meet for the same economic development, social programs. I see jobs as economic development, but also taking care of people, which is a social program. We are trying to work really closely together across departments to provide the best services for people within the Northwest Territories, and specifically to help not only the bigger centres but the small communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I applaud the Minister for taking their leadership initiative and trying to engage other departments and trying to step away from working in silos. Has MACA considered ways it can help make life easier for people living in small communities so that they don't have to move away for jobs and also for educational reasons? Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Municipal and Community Affairs

does try to work with smaller communities as much as possible so that we can keep people in their communities. That is why we have a focus on sports and recreation. We also provide a lot of training so that people can operate their own, for example, water treatment centres. We offer training so that people can actually maintain them in their communities.

We do a circuit rider program that will go into the communities and actually provide one-on-one support to those people as well. We are looking at our training mechanism so that we can provide, not only face-to-face, but online training so that people can access more support. We are always open to any suggestions from the Members on how we can better provide support services.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 623-18(2):
SMALL COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT FUND

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about the Small Community Employment Fund. My questions are for the Minister of ECE. Mr. Speaker, while the program's budget has been increased, it sounds like we are spending money on developing a strategy on how to spend the money. Mr. Speaker, my first question to the Minister is: what specific portion of the program's new budget will be used to develop and implement the small community employment strategy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is planning to develop a small community employment strategy in 2017. As the Member noted, and as we have heard questions in the House, there have been concerns about how we roll out the program. It is a significant increase from the \$1.25 million that we had in the two line items. Moving forward, obviously we are going to have to get feedback from small communities, work with the small communities to see what the challenges are, what barriers are in place, and how we can roll out some of this funding, as well as working with the committee to get their input and feedback. We heard a lot of that over the last couple of weeks.

As you know, of that, \$1.2 million that we currently had in the budget was never fully utilized, so we have to do a better job of letting community organizations, Aboriginal groups, employers out there in industry know that we want to use this program. We want our small communities to benefit from that. That is going to be all in the works with

that strategy and how that fund is rolled out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: My second question for the Minister is: what is the department's timeline for developing and implementing this strategy in order for it to be effective in 2017-18?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We have already started beginning that work on that Small Community Employment Program. We have started a review of the guidelines itself. We want to have a goal, moving forward, of ensuring that the program is accessible, flexible, and is best positioned to support businesses and residents who live in small communities. We are hoping that funding will start flowing once this budget is passed, April 1, 2017. We do expect to have a strategy hopefully by the fall of 2017.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: I appreciate the response. Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the new fiscal year is rapidly approaching. What specific actions will the department take under this program to ensure it is well promoted, fully subscribed, and creating jobs for our small communities for the duration of 2017-18?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair -- Mr. Speaker. I am sorry. It was a long day yesterday in Committee of the Whole. We have already begun looking at and reviewing our guidelines. We are working with the departments on how community projects in other departments are implementing, how we can support that and also have some job creation moving forward. We are trying to find ways we can promote the program to our small communities, our Aboriginal government, industry, as well as our employers.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response. Mr. Speaker, my final question for the Minister is: will this money be eligible to assist in specific projects related to each of the small communities across the NWT where it may involve more than one or two GNWT departments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, as I mentioned, we are going to be working with the departments to identify community projects and initiatives as well as working with our Aboriginal governments, municipal governments, organizations in the small communities that might look at developing small project, so we can put this money to use, so we can get our residents the skills that they need to enter the workforce, the labour market, and help develop the skills and the training they need so that they can seek work throughout

the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 624-18(2):
REDUCTIONS TO FERRY SERVICES ON PEEL
AND MACKENZIE RIVERS

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my Member's Statement, I made reference to the cuts that are in my region, which is the ferry service during the fall in both the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers. Mr. Speaker, just when the department mastered operating in the fall season, it seems they have decided to cut this service. I would like to ask the Minister: why has the department made the decision to cut the ferry operations for the late fall services both on the Peel and Mackenzie ferry crossings? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Transportation.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Upon review of the ferry service in the Member's riding, I have been on record that the costs outweigh the benefits when we have had a serious look at this. That is the reason why we are bringing this forward in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: I do not know who they got to do their survey, or what they are basing this on but, Mr. Speaker, just look at the employment alone. Twenty to 30 people working every fall up there, especially the important time during the year just before Christmas, Mr. Speaker. Also, keeping the cost of living down during these times when the prices rise, which is both the fall and the spring, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister: has the department been working with the community of Inuvik to ensure that they don't run out of LNG, which is one of the other reasons for this operation running the place during the two months of freeze-up?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Yes, this is one of the things that we have looked at with the decision of moving forward. As the Member is well aware, the Dempster is closed 40 per cent of the time during this operation due to weather and unforeseen circumstances. Most of the suppliers have already had a serious look at how they are operating, have made adjustments to have extra storage capacity for propane and LNG in the community. Based around some of those decisions, that is why we are able to bring this forward in this year's budget.

MR. BLAKE: I think the numbers that the Minister is using are from a couple of years back, when they were just learning how to actually operate in this

climate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I actually got some numbers from November alone. We had over 120 tractor trailers hauling freight or B-trains hauling fuel up in that area. I would like to ask the Minister: what is the department's plan if, for some reason, Inuvik is in an emergency situation with a need for LNG during freeze-up time?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I have said, we have already engaged with stakeholders on this very topic, and we are very confident that the LNG plant and the propane people will have sufficient storage to get the community of Inuvik through this transition.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you never know how long this freeze-up could last. It could be two months; it could be three months, depending on the weather. For some reason, the pipeline to Ikhil, for example, something happened to that. That would have an impact on the LNG storage that is in Inuvik. Will the Minister take a closer look at this operation, and possibly reinstate it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have already had a close look at this. This is the reason we bring this forward as a reduction in the Minister's budget proposal, and I stand behind the department's decision to bring this forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

QUESTION 625-18(2):
AURORA COLLEGE PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has previously mentioned that Aurora College had a review of its programs. I assume there are outside agencies that also review these programs. I know in this House, we get to see the annual report which is tabled, as well as the public accounts. None of that really helps us hold Aurora College accountable.

I would like to know, with the reviews of the programs, what happens if the department finds that Aurora College is not living up to what they would like? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and yes, we do have third-party reviews by other

partner institutions that, obviously, we work with. For instance, the Bachelor of Education program is reviewed by the University of Saskatchewan. The nursing program is credited and reviewed by the Canadian Association of School and Nursing, as well as the Registered Nurses' Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The trades program, that is reviewed under the Apprenticeships Division within our department.

It is something that we always look at and look into in terms of reviewing the program, making sure that it is meeting the educational objectives, as well as making sure that students that are taking those programs have the opportunity to transfer to other institutions once they have completed, so we do outside reviews from other agencies when we are looking at these programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMPSON: The Minister mentions the Bachelor of Education program was reviewed by the University of Saskatchewan, yet we see the 75 per cent dropout rate. We hear anecdotally from former students and people in the education industry that it is hard to find jobs. What comes of these reviews? I know the college can be told to do better, but is there any real consequence to failure by the college?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I agree with the Member that we do need to do a better job of making sure that Aurora College is accountable, not only to the department. It is public dollars that we are investing into Aurora College, so they can provide the programs as well as the services to meet the educational needs of our residents, our young adults, so that they can get into the career force and be part of society and working in their communities, hopefully.

We are working on developing an accountability framework currently with Aurora College, but we have also set up more scheduled meetings with the board of governors, as well as the president and the chair so that we can keep each other updated on work that is being done. This is the first time that the board of governors has also received mandate letters from myself to ensure that they are going in the right direction moving forward. There is a lot of work going on, and we want to make sure that any students who enter Aurora College programs do, in fact, come out with the education that they need in order to be able to get a job within our communities.

MR. SIMPSON: I hear that the Minister of this term, there are a lot of changes to the way that the government interacts with Aurora College. There are mandate letters for the first time, more meetings with the Board of Governors, a new accountability framework. It sounds like the department is aware that there is an issue. The problem is that

government is good at taking half measures, but it is not very good at fundamental change. I think what we need here is fundamental changes to an organization that has been now entrenched in their ways after decades.

Is the Minister of the opinion that we need something beyond -- not opinion. How about this: Is there a plan in the future to look at the foundation of Aurora College to really get down to the function of the administration of what we want this to be? Is that in the works?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I know the reduction review that we are going through with Aurora College has sparked a lot of discussion and debate right across the Northwest Territories. It sheds light on some of the concerns that the honourable Member has mentioned in terms of the foundational structure of Aurora College administration. If that is a review that the government wants to go through, that is something that we would take a look at, and see what are some of our challenges and barriers within the Aurora College system that we are having high dropout rates in these two specific programs, and that our graduation rates are pretty low and have been historically low over the last few years, and how do we adjust fixing those, and also changing the direction of Aurora College so that we are meeting and providing program services to meet the in-demand jobs that we are going to see here in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister mentioned that if that is the type of review that the government wants to go through; I will remind the Minister that he is part of the government. He is the head of the Education, Culture and Employment Department. The problem, I guess, with government, with half measures, is that you have to make decisions that are unpopular and might not get you re-elected, but you need eight years to make those decisions.

That is how you get real change done. I will ask the Minister if he will make an unpopular decision and commit to a foundational review of Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree; we invest a lot of money in Aurora College. We've seen with these two programs in particular that there were some challenges. We have low graduation rates. Once again, I do want to emphasize to any of the students who might be listening who are in these programs: focus, study hard to completion and graduation, because that was one of the indicators that brought these programs forward. I will talk with the departments

about that foundational review. We'll have discussions. We'll sit down with the chair as well as with the president and see what the next steps in moving on that foundation review can be and what it will look like. Obviously, we're just going through that strategic planning process right now so we want to see what comes out of that first and then we can move into the next steps.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 15-18(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' PARTICIPATION AT THE ASSOCIATION OF MINERAL EXPLORATION BC ROUNDUP IN JANUARY 2017

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to Written Question 15-18(2) asked by Mr. O'Reilly to the Honourable Bob McLeod, Premier, on January 31, 2017, regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories' Participation at the Association of Mineral Exploration BC Roundup in January 2017.

Can the Premier provide a list of all NWT Ministers and staff who travelled to Vancouver for the meetings and:

1. Total cost of travel including transportation, showing air travel by executive versus economy class; accommodations; expenses; and associated allowances;
2. Any related contract costs for the trip, particularly costs of conference registration, exhibitor staffing, any fees for consulting services outside of those provided by public servants, any funding by the GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment of the costs of other NWT representatives attending;
3. A description of hospitality events, including costs and numbers and names of persons attending; and
4. Procedures in place to track and report on accomplishments resulting from trip activities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise this House that seven Ministers and 24 staff were in Vancouver at the time of the Association for Mineral Exploration BC Roundup. While attendance at the Roundup may not have been the primary reason for travelling to Vancouver, all seven Ministers and 24 staff attended one or more events at this year's Roundup. For example, on January 23rd I met with the Premiers from Nunavut and Yukon to discuss

how we might work with Canada on the development of an Arctic Strategy and how all three territories can work together to develop a Pan Territorial Sustainable Development Strategy. provided the Legislative Assembly with details on both of these initiatives in my Minister's Statement of February 14th. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a list of the seven Ministers and 24 staff.

Mr. Speaker, as most Members are aware time is required to reconcile credit card statements and expense reports, but since only 21 days are allocated to respond to written questions, I am advising the House of the following predicted costs on the understanding that the final costs for Ministerial Travel will be calculated, confirmed and made public through the Ministerial Travel Report.

Total cost of air travel for the 31 participants was \$35,350.47. All travel was economy class, except for seven legs of southern travel which had to be accommodated through business class travel when economy class travel was not available.

Participants' accommodations costs varied by lengths of stay, but have been calculated at a total of \$32,239.46 for the seven Ministers and 24 staff. Other expenses for the 31 participants such as meals, incidentals and taxis totalled \$21,182.95. No allowances were paid.

The GNWT paid \$3,614.29 in Roundup registration fees and exhibition costs charged to the GNWT totalled \$26,621. No consultant fees were paid.

The GNWT supported the participation of 14 individuals representing NWT Aboriginal governments in this year's Roundup, and contributed additional funding to the NWT Chamber of Mines. The contributions toward these "other NWT representatives" totalled \$70,636.89.

The hospitality events hosted by the GNWT were a private Cabinet luncheon with industry and Aboriginal organizations, and a public coffee with Cabinet at the booth, costing a total \$3,717.75. The Chamber of Mines used a portion of the GNWT contribution referenced above to host an NWT Night reception.

Mr. Speaker, to put all these costs in some context, I would like to advise the House that the GNWT's direct costs and contributions associated with the 2016 Roundup total approximately \$137,000. The difference between the 2017 costs and the 2016 costs can be attributed to increased participation of Ministers, increased participation of staff and increased participation of GNWT sponsored representatives from aboriginal organizations.

As I said in the House on several occasions, mining is the engine of the NWT's economy and we cannot

take our mineral potential for granted. Promoting awareness of NWT priorities and advocating for its interests on the national and international stage is an ongoing responsibility that Ministers and staff undertake by participating in a range of events, including meetings with other government leaders and dignitaries, representing the NWT at FPT and other intergovernmental meetings, and attending and presenting at conferences, trade shows, workshops and other events like PDAC, the Geosciences Forum, Opportunities North, Meet the North; and later this year the Anti-Poverty Roundtable and the Alternative Energy Conference. While the GNWT does not track specific results for any particular event, this is part of the ongoing work of promoting the interests of the government and people of the Northwest Territories that is common to all governments. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 16-18(2): CABINET'S NOVEMBER 2016 TRIP TO OTTAWA

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to Written Question 16-18(2) asked by Mr. O'Reilly to the Honourable Bob McLeod, Premier, on January 31, 2017, regarding the Cabinet's November 2016 trip to Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier provide a list of all GNWT Ministers and staff that travelled to Ottawa for the meetings and:

1. Total costs of travel, including transportation showing air travel by executive versus economy class, accommodation expense and associated allowances;
2. Any related contract costs for the trip, particularly costs of lobbyist support, including contracted services, organizational research, presentation preparation and writing services;
3. A description of hospitality events, including the costs and numbers and names of persons attending; and,
4. Procedures in place to track and report on accomplishments resulting from trip activities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise this House that seven Ministers and 15 staff were in Ottawa at the time of the meetings with the Federal government. While attendance at the Federal meetings may not have been the primary reason for travelling to Ottawa, all seven Ministers and 15 staff did attend one or more events at these meetings. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a listing of the Ministers and staff who were in attendance.

Total cost of travel for these 22 participants is \$32,407.68. All travel was economy class, except for eight legs of travel which was on business class,

which is allowable as per directive 4.8.5 c. of the Financial Administration Act.

Participants' accommodations costs varied by lengths of stay, but are estimated at a total \$38,900.03 for the 22 participants. Other expenses for the 22 participants such as meals and incidentals totalled \$13,509.09. No allowances were paid.

There were no lobbyists or consultants engaged in the planning or coordination of this trip.

The hospitality event hosted by the Government of the Northwest Territories was a lunch presentation, totalling \$576.74 for the members of the Liberal Indigenous Caucus on the importance of recognizing the unique and respectful relationship the GNWT is committed to with its NWT Aboriginal government partners.

Promoting awareness of Northwest Territories priorities and advocating for interests on the national and international stage is an ongoing responsibility that Ministers and staff undertake by participating in a range of events, including meetings with other government leaders and dignitaries, representing the NWT at Federal-Provincial-Territorial meetings and other intergovernmental meetings, and attending and presenting at conferences, trade shows, workshops and other events like PDAC, the Geosciences Forum, Opportunities North, Meet the North; and later this year the Anti-Poverty Roundtable and the Alternative Energy Conference.

While the GNWT does not track specific results for any particular event, this is part of the ongoing work of promoting the interests of the Government and people of the Northwest Territories that is common to all governments.

Following our trip to Ottawa the federal government announced \$20 million dollars in funding for the Canyon Creek road, as well as \$60 million dollars for the Whati all-weather road. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 12, petitions. Member for Kam Lake.

Petitions

PETITION 5-18(2):
FUNDING TO AURORA COLLEGE

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of funding to Aurora College.

Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 224 electronic

signatures of Northwest Territories residents, and, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that the Government of the Northwest Territories maintain funding to Aurora College in the 2017-2018 budget year and throughout the life of the current Assembly that is sufficient to allow the college to continue to offer all of its existing programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Petitions. Item 13, reports of committee on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 288-18(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION 26-18(2):
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 26-18(2): Junior kindergarten." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Honourable Premier.

TABLED DOCUMENT 289-18(2):
PACKAGE OF LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR THE
MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP 2017

TABLED DOCUMENT 290-18(2):
LIST OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
MINISTERS AND STAFF WHO ATTENDED ONE
OR MORE EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP IN
VANCOUVER JANUARY 2017

TABLED DOCUMENT 291-18(2):
LIST OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
MINISTERS AND STAFF WHO ATTENDED ONE
OR MORE EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MISSION TO
OTTAWA, NOVEMBER 2016

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Package of Letters of Support for the Mineral Exploration Roundup 2017."

Further to my returns to Written Questions 15-18(2) and 16-18(2), Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents "List of Northwest Territories Ministers and Staff Who Attended One or More Events Associated with the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver January 2017" and "List of Northwest Territories Ministers and Staff Who Attended One or More Events

Associated with the Northwest Territories Mission to Ottawa, November 2016." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Member for Kam Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 292-18(2):
LETTER FROM KAREN LEPINE-MCFEETERS,
REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAM

TABLED DOCUMENT 293-18(2):
LETTER FROM LYNN NAPIER BUCKLEY,
MAYOR, FORT SMITH REGARDING FUNDING
FOR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION PROGRAM

TABLED DOCUMENT 294-18(2):
LETTER FROM CHRIS WESTWELL, REGARDING
PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS TO AURORA
COLLEGE

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three letters I would like to table. One is from Ms. Karen Lapine-McFeeters, a third-year Teacher Education Program student. One from Her Worship Lynn Napier-Buckley, the Mayor of Fort Smith, and a member of the Board of Governors of Aurora College; and a letter from Chris Westwell, an actively engaged and concerned citizen. They are all in reference to the cuts at Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLED DOCUMENT 295-18(2):
ANNUAL REPORT - NWT LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY PENSION PLANS, MARCH 31, 2016

TABLED DOCUMENT 296-18(2):
PENSION ADMINISTRATION REPORT -
RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT AND
SUPPLEMENTARY RETIREMENT ALLOWANCES
ACT, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY, MARCH 31, 2016

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 21(1) of the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowance Act and Section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retirement Allowance Act, I wish to table the Annual Report - NWT Legislative Assembly Pension Plans, March 31, 2016.

In accordance with section 21(1) of the Retirement Allowance Act and Section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retirement Allowance Act, I hereby table the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Pension Administration Report - Retiring Allowances Act and Supplementary Retirement Allowances Act at March 31, 2016.

Item 15, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 31-18(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
FEBRUARY 28, 2017

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 23, 2017, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Great Slave, that, notwithstanding Rule 14, when this House adjourns on February 23, 2017, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, February 28, 2017;

And further, that any time prior to February 28, 2017, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other matters: Bill 7, Bill 13. Committee Report 6-18(2), Tabled Document 261-18(2), with Member for Hay River North in the chair.

By authority given to me as the Speaker by Motion 18-18(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business before the House.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I'll now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Beaulieu?

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018, and we would like to consider the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I call the Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee,

we have agreed to continue our discussion of Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018, and we have agreed to consider the Department of Infrastructure. I would ask the Minister responsible if he has any opening comments. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2017-2018 Main Estimates for the proposed Department of Infrastructure. Overall, the department's estimates, totalling \$240.4 million, propose a decrease of \$4.5 million or 1.9 per cent from the 2016-17 combined estimates of the Departments of Public Works and Services and Transportation.

These estimates continue to support the GNWT's objective of ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the government and its programs by managing expenditures due to limited revenue growth.

The 2017-2018 Main Estimates include an increase of \$2.9 million from the 2017-18 business plan reviewed by standing committee in September. This increase resulted from a \$2.3 million increase in amortization expense for new assets being brought into service; \$350,000 transferred to the department for leases formerly administered by the Department of Executive; and \$253,000 for permafrost research and development activities along various sections of the highway system.

The 2017-2018 Main Estimates also include an increase of \$1.5 million to maintain and enhance our transportation infrastructure through construction and maintenance of the Wekweeti winter road, operation and maintenance of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway, and through various highway and winter road contracts intended to improve transportation infrastructure in the Deh Cho region.

These increases are offset by reductions totalling \$6.5 million resulting from the amalgamation of the Departments of Transportation and Public Works and Services.

The amalgamation will achieve future savings through improved efficiencies, such as eliminating duplicate services in the areas of finance, administration, and management of the vehicle fleet.

A priority for the department is the continuation of a decentralized service delivery model, which will be enhanced with the proposed establishment of a new regional office in the Sahtu to be headquartered in Norman Wells.

The department's 2017-18 estimates will continue to support the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Specific initiatives include increasing the

use of renewable and alternative energy in off-grid communities, engaging with the federal government to access funding for major renewable energy initiatives, like assessing ways to use the surplus power available in the South Slave region, and the ongoing development of the NWT Energy Strategy to support the priorities of this Legislative Assembly by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, reducing the cost of living, and promoting a sustainable future for our land and people. The department will also provide \$2.7 million to the Arctic Energy Alliance to support its work promoting the use of energy efficient technologies for residents, businesses, and communities.

The department will continue its investment in the Deferred Maintenance Program by upgrading and preserving our building assets such as workshops, offices, schools, and health centres. The Deferred Maintenance Program helps the GNWT to better target its capital dollars in support of its priorities by maintaining and extending the useful life of our existing asset base.

The exit of an established northern marine carrier from the Western Arctic shipping business made it necessary for the Government of the Northwest Territories to step in and secure its unique assets and keep them in the North. The decision to purchase the assets was only made within the last few weeks, so marine operations are not reflected in these estimates.

The department is currently researching and evaluating various business models so the government of the Northwest Territories can make the best use of these marine assets. Our residents, businesses, and communities depend on reliable marine transportation services to deliver their household goods and building supplies as well as aviation, diesel, gasoline, and heating fuels. To fund the planning and start-up of operations the department will be seeking supplementary appropriations in 2016-17 and in 2017-18 that will be fully offset by shipping revenues. Providing reliable and affordable marine resupply services to government and residents is one way the Department of Infrastructure is advancing this Legislative Assembly's goals to address the high cost-of-living.

That concludes my opening comments, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Do you have witnesses you would like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Yes, I will, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister Schumann,

would you please introduce your witnesses to committee.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my left is Deputy Minister Russ Neudorf for Transportation. On my right is Deputy Minister Paul Guy of Public Works and Services, and on my far right is Vince McCormick, director of corporate affairs services for Public Works and Services.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. I would like to welcome the witnesses to the Chamber. Thank you for coming well prepared, it looks like. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Department of Infrastructure. Each Member will be given 10 minutes to speak, followed by a 10-minute response from the Minister if he still wishes. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Infrastructure, of course, is a new department formed through amalgamation and, of course, we are aware that amalgamation of the departments is one of the biggest changes to government organization introduced by this government in this budget. This is not to suggest that Regular Members do not recognize some of the efficiencies that are being gained through the proposed amalgamations.

As we just heard from the Minister, there is set to be a regional office in the Sahtu if this budget is approved. We know obviously that our fellow colleague would be very supportive of that, our colleague from the Sahtu, and so we recognize that there certainly are efficiencies to be had, but Members also have difficulty, to some degree, supporting some of the amalgamations and the reductions proposed with it.

Some of the reasons are that we have been clear all along that we see that the amalgamations have been primarily driven by the fiscal strategy and its reduction targets. We have shared concerns with the validity of zero-based review. We have also shared concerns that amalgamations seem to lack clear implementation and change management plans, at least to the degree that they have not been shared.

We are clearly being concerned about risks of disruption to front-line services when it comes to amalgamations. Probably most importantly, however, is we are very concerned with the negative impact on jobs and employment, especially at a time when that could be seen as contributing to the challenges facing our current situation with our economy.

Under the corporate management aspect of this department, as the Minister is probably aware, we have been seeking an increased investment in the

Community Access Program. We have seen a lot of uptake for this program. It has always been a strong program. Communities use these funds to complete projects they determine to be a priority. It has been beneficial in all the regions.

In programs and services, the Minister is also aware that we have wanted to see an increase in funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance. We see the Arctic Energy Alliance is obviously a reliable and proven partner in helping the GNWT achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets, and is a leader in implementing renewable energy sources and has helped a number of the communities over the years identify and work on alternative energy solutions.

Arctic Energy Alliance programs are directly tied to the GNWT's climate change and energy strategies and so clearly, Mr. Chair, their efforts help us meet our own targets and goals as a government. The Arctic Energy Alliance programs will broaden access to programs to improve participation by lower-income residents. This helps reduce the costs of living and certainly reduces the use of diesel fuel.

Mr. Chair, regionally, in the regional operations aspects, as the Minister is aware again, we are seeking for further investment in the Samba K'e winter road. Like all winter roads, it has become a lifeline for the community and reduces the cost of air service. We see it as a very important investment.

As was talked about in the House today, winter ferry services at Peel and Arctic Red Rivers, we are seeking a reinstatement there that I am sure the Minister is clearly aware of. We know that this takes away some of the uncertainty that is created in the region. We see it as unacceptable without a solid contingency plan for a winter road. We heard from our Member from the Mackenzie Delta earlier today that it is obviously a job creator and it keeps the cost of living down.

These are some of the aspects that I wanted to share on behalf of Regular Members as general comments before leading into the department, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Next, I believe I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of things I wanted to comment on. As we all know, there were reductions to the ferry services in the fall, with the Peel and Mackenzie River. It is really unfortunate, as I said in my statement earlier today. Just when the department seemed to have mastered operating during the fall season, they turn around and shut it down. I am not sure what they used those funds for, whether it was to buy NTCL

or give it to transportation for maintenance of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, just looking at all the different numbers that increased.

It could be used for anything that the department wanted, but they cut a lot of jobs, just to let them know that. They might not see that from whether it is here in Yellowknife or Hay River, but back home we really notice a big difference, Mr. Chair. Reducing the cost of living was in his opening statement, and he is actually increasing the cost of living, up in the Mackenzie Delta, with shutting this service down to our residents.

I guarantee you will see the price of fuel increasing in Inuvik, the cost of groceries. Every year, we have the same issue in Tsiigehtchic, running out of groceries in the store there. For sure, you are going to be seeing skidoos running across the rivers now to shuttle people across. That is the only way that you could travel out of Tsiigehtchic and McPherson to keep the costs down. Not everybody could afford choppering out of Tsiigehtchic or flying, travelling to McPherson, jumping on the charter, which only operates during the week. You know, there are no services on the weekends out of Fort McPherson, as well.

So, they are actually not doing what they've stated in their statement, which is reducing the cost of living. Maybe here in the south you pay anywhere from 50 to 60 cents cheaper per litre of gasoline than we do back home, so all of these, the department needs to consider when they are making these sort of decisions. It may seem like a lot to them, but they cut \$1.8 million out of this service that is benefiting the whole region, and then they go and spend a little over \$7 million for a barging company, which the majority of those assets are not able to operate.

We have a graveyard in Hay River that now this government has to clean up. A lot of my constituents and people around the territory are saying, well, now we have to clean up this whole mess. Sure, we have some barges that can operate and some tugs, but that is an added cost that we have taken on. I know we do have to service the communities that need those services, but it is really frustrating here. We see the benefits first-hand. Right out my front window, you could see the operations during the fall, and it is a real shame that the department made those cuts. That is all I have for now. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are two things I want to touch on. I know the Member from Yellowknife North touched on it, but just to add a bit to what he said.

The first one is on the Community Access Roads Program. The Community Access Roads Program is a program that is in place as a program that Regular Members are trying to get government to add money into. I believe that this money that is spent in the communities is very beneficial to the communities and has an element of people who could be doing labour work. It has people who could do slashing, chainsaw work and also people who could run equipment, drive truck, loaders and whatnot, all of the little elements of training individuals.

This program also is a good candidate for other programs, like the community mining program, where individuals are training to get better skills to eventually work at one of the mines. This program is always underfunded. Normally, the community is not asking for a whole lot of money in this program, and this particular time we are asking for this money, I think, for one reason: to put a little bit of money, more than the usual, towards the Willow Lake project in Aklavik. It is something that has been, I think, going on for a long time, and I think it is time to put some money towards it to try to get the project moving forward and, of course, projects of most of the community.

I know that, in the last couple of years, most of the communities have indicated that they have access roads that they would like to see out from their communities, accessing traditional areas. There are a couple of communities where there are lakes just within a few kilometres, and they just don't have the money or the equipment to be able to open those roads up. So it is so beneficial. There are also areas where they can have an opportunity to access gravel. A lot of times, communities don't access gravel. This kind of gives them the possibility that they could buy a crusher or something and generate their own gravel, crush their own gravel.

For me, and I think for most of the Members on this side of the House, we feel that this is a very important program and it should be funded appropriately. Right now, it is not, so a lot of these projects start and have to stop right away because there is not enough funding in place.

The second point I would like to just touch on is the amalgamation of the two departments. Just in general, I am opposed to laying people off. It has just never proven that it is a good strategy. You save the money that you were paying to the individual, that particular individual, but you are losing in all kinds of areas. If individuals have to leave the North, you lose that transfer payment. If individuals put their houses up for sale when they lose their jobs and they have to move somewhere else, then that affects the housing market in those particular communities, wherever they are. Our

markets are very small. Yellowknife has the biggest market, of course, but there are only a few market communities in the NWT, and if these lay-offs affect that, you see the impact of that.

Now, we could get into all of what it is like to have some equity in your home and what you can do with that equity and how you can work with that equity to put money back into the economy. Instead of getting into all that, all we have talked about all of that for a long period of time. The government is moving forward with laying people off. I think it is a mistake, but it is probably going to happen.

Also, one of the things that I have always talked about during the time there are cutbacks is: when the government goes to the process of doing layoffs, are they following the Affirmative Action Policy? That is something that I want to keep an eye on, because the first reaction that I am hearing from people is that they are not.

If there is an amalgamation and there are a couple of people who end up in one job, then those individuals, they don't necessarily follow the Affirmative Action Policy. I don't want to see this department come out the other end and say, "Well, we laid off these people and most of them were Aboriginal people, didn't have the skills or education to retain those jobs." I have seen it. I have gone through it. I have seen it when I was in the government. Things were brought to me, proposing to look at the list of people who were laid off. At one point, they were all Aboriginal, all of the layoffs. We have the very low number of Priority 1 candidates in the GNWT as it is. I don't think we should be targeting those guys when the layoffs are happening as a result of the amalgamation, this amalgamation and other ones. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank my colleagues for addressing some of the concerns. I guess my first one is in regard to the Minister's statement when they are talking about the various highways and winter road contracts to improve transportation infrastructure in the Deh Cho. I thank the Minister and the department for doing that. However, there have been cuts previously that have affected the reductions in this, so I appreciate the department looking forward and trying to get this addressed.

The next thing I want to talk about is the amalgamations, zero-based budgeting. To me, amalgamation, we just pump these together and there was not really a zero-based budgeting. There was a zero-based review and putting them together and seeing what happened. To me, I believe in amalgamation and trying to get it, but it needs to be

done properly. That means to make it a lean, mean, efficient machine.

To become more effective and efficient, we need to look at the jobs, where they are placed, where they are allocated, and where they are going to do the best bang for their dollar. We have positions that are based in Yellowknife that could have been based somewhere else, in the regional centres or maybe even in Providence. If we are looking at the highways and engineers, looking at the ferries, those positions could be brought where the ferries are, in my riding and my colleague from Mackenzie Delta's riding. Those positions should be moved there and looked at to become more efficient. That is my struggle with this amalgamation, is we didn't do it. We did not do a zero-based budget. We did a zero-based review by throwing things together. It has to become more efficient.

The other one we talked about is the winter road in Sambaa K'e. Again, when I first started, I brought this attention to the Department of Transportation that Trout Lake wanted an all-season road. Now, they are asking for some work to be done on their winter road. They had a bunch of vehicles that had elders going in for medical that got stranded for six hours. Six hours that they were there, and they had to get help to get out of there.

The community has brought this to the attention of the department. I have brought this to the attention of the department, saying, "Look, here is an opportunity to fix that winter road. If we are not going to get an all-season road right now, let's fix this winter road, so it is more efficient and effective, so people can get out and get out safely." We looked at it, and this is why my Member colleagues agreed that we would try to put this \$300,000 in there. It is a start to try to get this one section of the road fixed, put some people to work, build capacity within the community, and make it so, at the end of the day, the department has a road that is even that much better for the transportation.

I am trying to be as succinct as possible, Mr. Chair. These are my concerns that have been brought with this department. I thank him for taking the time. You have heard me all say this before in committee, but I am saying it again here. It is important to be more efficient. If we are going to do it, we need to do it right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Next, Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have concerns in this department, but as we move on, we will address them. The concerns are more directed: if you are going to do something, try to put the review, resources, and the time to do it right. Part of doing it right would include review of some

of our activities that took place here in 1995, when the amalgamation and reductions exercise that the government at the time were done. There is a history to reflect on, some of the mistakes and challenges faced at that time. Sure, the economics and the organizations were quite different at the time, but still a principle of engagement could be shown as reviews for improvements.

It is no hidden secret I support this for the purpose of more autonomy and more authority going to our region. We certainly contribute to this government in terms of taxes and royalties; we should see a little return on the withdrawals of those resources. Just an example of autonomy and authority: back in my private life, we used to complain how many potholes were on the winter road between Tulita and Norman Wells. Yet, we had to wait for a phone call from outside the area to dictate whether we had to apply some water or apply some grater time to smooth it out for the seasonal traffic that we enjoyed to use that duration of the road. Now, when I look at the organization chart, it makes me proud to say that we are going to have our Sahtu regional superintendent.

Given those reasons, I look forward to going through the review and seeing how we can make it better. I am also mindful of my previous colleague's presentations on employment, to make sure it is done right with the affirmative action followed. Those are improvements and efficiencies that we can go through the department and see how we can make this transaction good and prosperous. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am not going to try to duplicate what my colleagues have said, but I will just bring out a couple of new points, if I can.

The amalgamation of the two departments, that was not part of the mandate document. This came as news to us. The number of positions that are being cut as a result of this amalgamation is 29, just to get that on the record.

The other item that is in the former transportation budget is the changes to the Yellowknife Airport and getting the operations and maintenance cost of that off our books. That has been described before as low hanging fruit in an effort to just get this out of the department and put those costs on to the users.

The last thing I want to say is that -- or a couple of things here. The funding for Arctic Energy Alliance is actually being reduced this year. Some money is being sunsetted. I will have some questions around

the net metering program, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Thank you for your brevity. Seeing nothing further, I will let the Minister respond if he wishes. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said when I was up here last week for ITI, let's just jump right into it instead of me sitting here, trying to debate things that we are going to get into, line items. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. I apologize, but I left Mr. Nadli off the list. Mr. Nadli, comments.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, wanted to just note some concerns that I have, namely: it was stated by the Minister that NTCL, in terms of the acquisition of the assets, and it is not reflected in the main estimates; I am hoping to at least maybe get an indication from the Minister in terms of how that will be reflected in this budget and maybe look forward to the process that might follow.

Amalgamations, I understand. The exercise was to look at, in the face of government, ensuring that there are efficiencies. In communities, it is always their perception that this is a big government and we have to ensure that this government operates in the highest efficiencies possible. I think, in that spirit, I look forward to the ongoing initiatives just to formalize the department.

Some key initiatives that I notice colleagues have raised are the community access programs in terms of ensuring that there are resources out there for communities, that they choose project initiatives to create employment. I could probably count maybe about two or three projects that could be eligible in terms of job creation, so I encourage the Minister to reconsider the amount that has been allocated for this initiative.

In terms of the Arctic Energy Alliance, I see some good initiatives to try to lessen the cost of living by looking at some energy efficiencies, whether it is helping people with their fuel-fired water heaters or else changing the streetlights within communities. I think that is a very good initiative, and we need to continue to support that. At the same time, I look forward to ongoing initiatives, perhaps that we could have a sharper focus, namely the energy plan in terms of addressing the electricity transmission and, of course, the whole challenge of lessening our dependence on fossil fuels.

I would note that it might be that this department has to tackle the idea of looking at a marine transportation strategy in terms of the realities that we face with climate change, the water levels in the

Mackenzie going down, and looking at perhaps longer shipping seasons, or else shorter seasons. So I look forward to discussions on those fronts in the future. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Seeing nothing further, as we always do, we will defer the departmental total until we consider each activity. The first activity begins on page 224, continues to page 227, infrastructure asset management. I note that marine project management is in this location, so that would be a good time for Mr. Nadli or someone to raise that issue that he just mentioned. I will start with Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Mr. Chair, prior to page 224 is the Department of Infrastructure. From 221 to 223 there are the revenue summaries and active positions and what have you. I have a few questions in and around there. Would we have the opportunity to go there, or will we save that right till the end?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): That will be saved till the end. All the details on those three pages are contained in the subsequent activities. Any information such as revenue that is not contained elsewhere, we can discuss at the end when we are at this departmental total. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: That is fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Further to asset management, on page 224 to 227? I will give committee a moment. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am looking at page 225, and it is the utilities line, the last line in the top section. There is about a \$2 million drop there between last year and this year. I am just wondering whether someone from the department can explain that? If that is as a result of energy retrofits, boy, we are really saving a lot of money, but I don't think that is the case, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to give that one right up to the deputy minister, Mr. Paul Guy, right off the bat. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is a good question. There are about three factors at play in that reduction that you see before you here today. The first one is we have a number of assets that

are sunseting that are coming out of service, so we are lapsing utilities associated with those assets. A significant portion of it is from the energy conservation activities and the investments we have made through the capital asset retrofit programs. We are realizing some savings back through that, as well. The other piece of it is really driven by just the fact that we have had warmer winters and lower fuel costs over the past few years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the response. I guess it is all pretty much good news. In the highway, air, marine project management line, there is about a \$300,000 reduction. Can someone from the department explain that between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 mains? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There were actually some positives and negatives in that line item, where there is some incremental funding related to some permafrost research and development work, some funding that we are getting from Transport Canada, about a quarter of a million dollars, and then there was a reduction there to the budget that we have related to granular crushing and resurfacing. Then, along with that, there are some other program realignments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think that is all I have got for that page. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 226, there is a grant-in-kind, Deh Cho bridge opportunities grant. I am wondering if the Minister can give some detail on this grant? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will give that to the deputy minister of Transportation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we were transitioning the Deh Cho Bridge project from

a project working with the local community, with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation, to taking it over, to becoming a DOT managed project, one of the things we had to do was negotiate with the community to terminate the arrangement that we had with them. One of the things we did was enter into this agreement with the community that we would provide them \$200,000 for -- it was 35 years at that time, which would have been the life of the concession agreement that we were planning to enter into with the bridge corporation. Instead of that, we are giving them a contribution of \$200,000 over that period of time, and it is to promote economic development, find community-related opportunities that are related to the bridge. Essentially, to do the same thing, same type of benefit that the community would have got if they had been able to continue on with the involvement with the Deh Cho Bridge project itself. Thank you, Mr. Chair

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Nothing further? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the response from Mr. Neudorf. Can the department provide us with any detail on the economic benefits that have come from the impact of the grant funding so far? I will just start with that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The community does need to provide us with a report on how they are spending the money every year. We would have that detail available. I don't have it in front of me. You will recall one of the most significant projects, it actually took a couple of years, was to upgrade some community infrastructure, and specifically the arena. They had allocated some of the money to upgrade the arena in the community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate receiving that information. I think of the other kinds of projects we are thinking of developing as far as transportation corridors and how funding like this can make a big difference for the community. I hope we do pursue other relationships like this. I will ask that the Minister make a commitment to providing the most recent report or perhaps a summary of the impacts of the benefits so far. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Deputy Minister.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we will get that information for the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Nothing further. I have Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is what is the name of the new office building on 49th Street in Yellowknife?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: It is called the New Government Building. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't think that that name will stand the test of time. I am wondering whether the department is planning to name that building? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my understanding it is an executive policy for doing that, so it would have to be part of the Executive. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further, Ms. Green? Nothing further from Ms. Green. I have Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of questions. I notice a reduction of \$410,000 for the facilities program, properties planning risk management safety. Can the Minister please explain why we see the reduction in this area? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will defer that question to the deputy of Public Works and Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The net reduction is a number of amounts that went in and out of that particular line item. There were a number of transfers that went in. These were transfers for leases from Executive to Public Works for the single-window service centres, which added money in. Then we had reductions that were really some of the carryover reductions from previous years, the partial funding for the positions that were sunseting from last year's budget. There was \$100,000 for one position there, \$93,000 for a second position.

Sorry. The \$93,000 was for surplus assets that were sent out as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the answer from the deputy minister. In regard to leases, I notice there is a reduction there. Is that just amalgamation with the two departments and we are eliminating some of the spaces? Is that what it is? Or is it vehicles or stuff like that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the leases, it is a couple of things. It is work that was being done for previous initiatives like consulting financial services. We find that when we go through and update the office space for departments and put them into new accommodations, they tend to use the space more efficiently, so we are getting some savings through being able to collapse leased space through some of those initiatives. Also, some of our lease renewals are coming in at a lower cost or at a stable cost. I think the third piece as well is that the O and M increases are less than we had anticipated on some of the leases. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Thompson. Nothing further from Mr. Thompson. Do we have any further questions or comments on asset management on pages 224 to 227? Seeing none, I will call this department. Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$74,981,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We turn now to corporate management starting on pages 228 to 231. I will give committee a moment. If you have comments or questions? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure if this is the place for it, but I have a question: in light of the amalgamation, does an establishment policy exist for this new Department of Infrastructure? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Can the Minister's witnesses advise if this is the correct place and, if so, would they answer the question? Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That has made it through Cabinet already. Normally, we would wait until the budget procedure

was done and we would bring that to committee, but I can make that commitment to sharing that with the Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry. Did the Minister say he will make that commitment or he has made that commitment? I don't think we have heard it until now. If he could clarify. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I said we can make that commitment to sharing it with the Members as soon as we can.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My concern was that we would be reviewing this in the head of such a policy existing, but I am pleased to know that it does, in fact, exist. That eases my concerns procedurally around this process. I am content with that. As soon as the Minister feels he can share that policy, I am sure we are all happy to look at it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister, would you like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, I will share it with the Members as soon as tomorrow even. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart. Nothing further from Mr. Testart. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just quickly to the Community Access Program. For many years I have always said that it is a great program for the communities. I hope there is no plan to make any drastic cuts to this department in the future. It would have been nice to see an increase in this. I know there is money going to the small communities, but a lot of the communities actually make use of this fund. It would have been nice to see an increase in this as well as the other funds under ECE, but I know I received the majority of those funds in the future. It would be nice to see an increase in this department as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I can hear what the Members are saying. This line item is one that has been well-used, as long as I have been the Minister here already. As you have

seen, this government has put money into the Small Community Fund which we were talking today in the House. I think one of the opportunities we can look at moving forward with Members and other departments is how can we access working together with ECE with the Department of Transportation to make the best use of this money moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further from Mr. Blake. I have Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to add to what I said earlier, and what Mr. Blake had just said about the Community Access Road Program. When the Members from this side of the House talked about the Small Community Employment Program, we certainly were not thinking that this was going to subsidize a Community Access Road Program; completely different type of projects in our minds. To try to now jam all of the requests that we have for around the various departments into the Small Community Access Support Program, it is not something that we support.

This Access Road Program, we are asking this department, whether it be the Department of Transportation or Infrastructure, to add money into this program. Money that is needed. Not labour money or employment money. We need money to operate equipment to be able to work on access roads, traditional areas that the community accesses. This makes it possible for the communities to access really good traditional areas, otherwise, like I indicated earlier, only accessible by small vehicles like maybe four-wheelers or snowmobiles and so on. This year, it gives the community full access to these areas.

I don't want the department to think that Department of Education putting small community employment dollars into the budget solves all of our requests. Not at all. This is a completely separate request, and I'm hoping that all of the departments coming up are not going to the Small Community Employment Program, the one provision that was made by the government for us, and now pile everything onto that program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I heard what the Member is saying, and my intention is not to pile onto the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to do that. We are holding our line with our budget line right now. As all the Members know, our expenditures are outpacing our revenues, and the reason we are holding our line on our expenditures is due to that

fact, and we need to get the government's fiscal house in order.

This is a great fund. What I am saying is, if a community comes forward with a business plan that can create jobs in their communities, this is one way that they can use both funds to access more money to employ people in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: We on this side of the House have plans for how difficult it is going to be even to access a Small Community Employment Program under its current rules. We are trying to talk to the government about changing some of the rules so that we can access that program as an employment program, not something where we have made a request somewhere, and if we do not get that request, we are going to take that money and place it in there. This is a separate request.

I think the Minister should keep those requests separately. If this Minister is then going to say, well, this would be a good way for the Small Community Program to leverage something here for employment, well, that is not our intention. We have all kinds of other projects in the communities that need to be done. That money is just barely enough to go around to the 33 communities to get that. Not an opportunity for DOT to then say, oh well, whatever short you are for this road, you can take it out this Small Communities Employment Program. It is not our intention.

The communities that we represent, we have been talking to, they have other plans for this. This is a separate thing. This is where the guys are running equipment. I talked about it earlier in my opening comments. This is something where people learn how to run equipment and things like that. Opportunities for training for them to get other jobs, running equipment, and so on. This is not something that you could use to leverage small community employment dollars with. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I have said, we have our fund. We spend the money in the fund as requested by the communities. We think it is a good program. I made the point that we are not adding any money to this program this year due to our fiscal position that the Northwest Territories is in. I am not saying the fund is any less or any better than the Member, but I believe it is a great fund. All I am saying is, there are other avenues to help leverage this fund to actually bring more possible employment

opportunities and projects to the communities of the Northwest Territories, and that is what this government is willing to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and just as firm as the Minister wants to be on not budging off this and saying that he is not putting any extra money into. This side of the House, it is just as firm also. We are asking the government to put the money in. We are aware of the fiscal situation. We are not going into this blind. We know what we are talking about. This money would go, and then it would be well-used. It will be well-leveraged, and it will have benefits to the government. If we start employing a few more people, it will benefit the government. We are taking people off income support. That is benefitting the government. We are taking people out of social housing. That is benefitting the government. Now, when we talked about the strategic spending that we are asking the government to do, this is a part of it. This is not a portion that can get stuck under another program from another department. This is a separate request. I would like the Minister to keep it separate. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I have said, we have our money allocated here. We are not willing to put any more money into this due to the fiscal situation the Government of the Northwest Territories is in. The Member has his point; I have my point. We will continue to spend the money that we have in the communities as they come and approach us for their projects. Many of them are very valid. Actually, all of them are valid, and we will continue to spend the money to help create these projects in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: No, Mr. Chair, I do not mind the position the government takes. What I am saying is that this should be something that stands alone. Our requests for the additional \$700,000 into this budget as a request into this budget, it is not a request that you can then put under another department. We have our own issues with the other departments, and our request going to other departments. We keep them separate. We keep these issues separate. We are not having discussions with the Minister of Finance in saying, well, if you can combine this, or if you add over here, you can take away from here. All these requests are separate requests. All of these are

strategic spending requests by this side. We looked at all of these, and we look at the strategic value to the NWT. We do not look at this and say, well, we can afford to shove this somewhere, or somewhere else; or if we can get this, we could afford to give up on this budget. We are asking the department to put this, and obviously the Minister is not prepared or cannot make that decision, then we will find another way to try to get that decision made. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Would the Minister like the last 40 seconds to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I have said, I have made the case quite clear and I stand by it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: No, that is good for me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next, Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is on page 229, the CAP program, as well. My suggestion to both departments on the Small Community Program with ECE and this new department here is to reflect the guideline modifications so that you can maximize the expenditure by having joint administration. That is my suggestion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As we have said, we are working with the Department of Education and Culture on how we can maximize the opportunities, using that fund to help complement the Community Access Program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. McNeely. Nothing further from Mr. McNeely. I see no further comments or questions. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my concern is that we are looking at mega projects versus small community-based projects, and so besides this \$1 million for small communities as compared to all these other major projects, has the department looked at putting a better percentage to small projects that will benefit the whole territories instead of the major projects? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: To answer that question, that is the reason we are in the capital planning process, so I believe that is why we are here today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you for the non-answer, Minister. I appreciate that. The problem is, again, reality is, we live in the territories, we have small communities, not all big centres are not doing all major projects; however, if we would invest a little bit more money in this in the smaller communities we would see a better impact on the other departments such as Health and ECE through income support. So, again, since we are all here to work on this, as the Minister has said, will the Minister and the department start looking at this and putting a better percentage to these access roads, these kinds of programs that will benefit the whole territories instead of major projects? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So everyone is focusing on the Community Access Program, but when you look at the broader as a whole, transportation, what have we been doing, you look at the BCP money that we spread out across the Northwest Territories. It is spread out amongst the regions, amongst the communities, and in the particular Member's riding we have just done community access roads Jean Marie and Nahanni Butte. So those are the types of programs where some of this capital money goes, and it is spread across the Northwest Territories, not just some mega projects. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. You used an acronym BCP, I believe. Would you please clarify for committee what that means?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Building Canada Plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. Could you tell me where on this page the BCP is on? Because I mean I am not sure that we are talking about the same program. If it is on this page I apologize. I do not know where it is, so can the Minister please verify that it is on this page or in this section? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was answering the question as to how the department is looking at spending money in the communities versus mega projects and I referred to the Building Canada Plan, but that money comes in the capital projects. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, and I thank the Minister for his answer. I thought I missed something, so I greatly appreciate it. I was not trying to be -- I will just leave it at that. So I understand we have the Building Canada Fund, I totally understand that, but what I am looking at is this Community Access Program, where if we increased it we would be able to give these smaller communities a better opportunity to develop the roads, or the access roads, or access to the recreational opportunities in the smaller communities. So I have heard the Minister, and again he is going to come back and say we are in fiscal restraint and this is where we are. So I would hope that the Minister and the department would actually listen to the small communities and try to increase this pot of money so that we can have some work in our communities and better facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to make it quite clear to the Members that I am not against this program. I love this program. We have distributed all the money for the last two years that I have been here, but right now with the present situation we have there is no extra money. If the opportunity comes in the life of this 18th Legislative Assembly to put more money into this program, I will gladly have a look at it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson, anything further?

MR. THOMPSON: No, I thank the Minister for his answer. We are going to probably disagree on it. I appreciate that they are going to look at it. Too bad it is not going to be in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Anything further? Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity corporate management under the Department of Infrastructure, Main

Estimates 2017-2018, on page 229 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. As a technicality, I have to call the page before a motion is made. One moment. So I will call the page. Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$10,023,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Vanthuyne.

COMMITTEE MOTION 56-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, INFRASTRUCTURE,
DEFERRAL OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT
ACTIVITY,
CARRIED

MR. VANTHUYNE: Once again, Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity corporate management under the Department of Infrastructure, Main Estimates 2017-2018, on page 229 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. There is a motion on the floor and the motion is being distributed. The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): We will defer consideration of this activity. Moving on to infrastructure programs and services beginning on page 233. Do we have comments or questions from committee on page 232 to 237? I remind committee to let us know what page you are talking about so everyone can follow along. Comments, questions, programs and services. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on page 234, I am glad to see the amount for the wind monitoring at Aurora Research Institute has gone up \$50,000. When can the department estimate, you know, that they will actually proceed in putting a wooden generator up in the Storm Hills area? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're doing some detailed engineering work on that project this coming year, but this initiative is going to be tied to our federal initiative and see what the federal government gives us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: That's all I had for now. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Comments or questions. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at page 234, and there's a number of energy programs and policy development that are not being renewed this year; Community LED Swap-out Program, Community Government Solar, Condo Corporation Biomass, Energy Information and Awareness, I could go on. Can someone from the department explain why these programs are being cut or sunsetted? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So a number of those projects are either sunseting because the work is done or that the funding has been rolled into another program going forward. I have some specific examples here that I think were raised. The Community Corporation Biomass Program. There was \$50,000 there and we had initiated that program with Arctic Energy Alliance to see if there were ways for condominium corporations to access biomass funding to do biomass upgrades.

Our understanding from Arctic Energy Alliance is that there was very low uptake on that program, even though they actively promoted it, so that particular line item is sunset. However, the funding criteria has now been expanded under the Commercial Energy Conservation and Efficiency Program so condo corporations in the future can come forward and apply for funding through that program. So that's one example I think that was raised.

The other one I think was raised was the Community LED Swap-out Program. I believe that was the -- bear with me, Mr. Chair. That was the program similar to what was done with the compact fluorescent light bulbs a number of years ago. So this was an initiative to promote deployment and use of LED light bulbs. So the program at the time, this was using that incremental funding that we got through the Low Water to provide Arctic Energy Alliance to do promotional programs. It was to purchase and distribute LED light bulbs to all of the thermal community homeowners and to exchange for incandescent and other energy-efficient light bulbs, and that program has now been completed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So although the programs, some of these may have been completed, I think there's still a big need out there. I know of a condo just literally almost next door to where I live on Forrest Drive that was looking for assistance with putting in a wood-pellet boiler. So it sounds like there's still a need for some of these programs. You know, have we replaced all of the compact fluorescent or old-style light bulbs throughout the Northwest Territories? It just sounds like that there's a number of needs still here to continue these programs.

So can someone from the department confirm that there's still a need for some of these programs and it's just that they're being sunset because we've decided that we don't want to fund them anymore? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister, can we get confirmation? Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's a number of things going on. We've got the Energy Strategy that's going across the Northwest Territories. As most Members know, we have three communities left, with Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Behchoko to go, that are going to feed into all of this. We're trying to pull a whole bunch of information together.

Actually, I guess another comment on the Energy Strategy: going around to the communities, there's been a bunch of feedback from Aboriginal groups, community organizations, and individuals on this particular program, on Arctic Energy Alliance. We want, at some point here, to have a review and have a look at how we're going to try to realign some of that stuff with that program. Some of the program is working; some isn't working. As the deputy just said, some of the programs have been completed. So we want to have a look at how we're going to enhance and streamline that to make it a more efficient organization going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I'm glad to hear that the departments or department, whatever, is getting some feedback on Arctic Energy Alliance. That's great, but it sounds like this is Aurora College all over again, where we're making a bunch of cuts to programs without having a strategy in place. Is that the case here? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These aren't cuts, these are sunsets. This was a

one-time funding from the Low Water Initiative in the previous Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I understand from what the Minister said that these programs are being sunset. There's still a need for funding, and that's why the Regular MLAs have asked for additional funding for Arctic Energy Alliance. Unfortunately, we're not going to get it from the current position of Cabinet and the Minister, but there's obviously still a need for these programs.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I've stated, we have the Energy Strategy that's going around; they're feeding information back to the department, not just on climate change and carbon tax but also Arctic Energy Alliance. We've committed that we want to do a review of Arctic Energy Alliance. As I said, some programs have fulfilled themselves and been quite successful. Things like the condo one that the Member has brought up, it's been actually moved to another line item there where people can still access that. If his particular neighbour is interested in doing something there, there is actually money left in this year's budget if they wanted to get on it right away to access that fund, but other condo people can still apply under a different section. We want to do a review of this and make sure that we are spending our money wisely and into programs and services that will benefit residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm not going to debate any further the need for more money for Arctic Energy Alliance, but I had one other question: what is our government doing about net metering? This is not the first time I've asked this question, and there's a number of people I know in Yellowknife who have put in renewable energy into their own homes and they're looking for a better break when it comes to net metering. So what is the department doing about net metering? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So currently there is an approved net metering policy in place through the Public Utility Board where residents can net meter, I believe it's up to 5,000 Watts, 5 kilowatts, available in Yellowknife, and also in any other thermal communities.

Part of the Energy Strategy, we did hold regulatory and utilities workshop with the regulator and the other utilities, and that was one of the things that was discussed at that workshop, and that will feed in to the work that we're going to be consolidating in the Energy Strategy and hopefully updating the net metering policy based on the feedback we've gotten from the regulator and the utilities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I'm glad to hear that. The problem with the current policy is you get to accumulate credits but if you don't use them up by April 1st they're gone, and that's not the kind of net metering system we should have in place if we want to promote household energy self-sufficiency. So that policy has got to be changed. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I don't have anything further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Chair, thank you for that. I appreciate the Member bringing it up. That is one of the things that was identified, and we are having a look at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Next, we have Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is on page 236. On the NWT generator efficiency allowance, there is \$300,000. As I read the explanation on the back, I am just wondering: why is PWS budgeting \$300,000 for the Power Corporation when maybe the Power Corporation could sustain their own? So maybe a little explanation on that allowance? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will have to confirm it, but I believe that is the investment that we have in Aklavik for the variable-speed drive on the solar power plant project that the Power Corporation has. This is an energy efficiency element to that project, and it is incremental to the cost associated with the generation, so it is essentially a subsidy to keep power rates the same for the energy efficiency project, similar to what we have done on similar other projects where we have solar, in places like Wrigley or Fort Simpson, for example. The energy policy that we have is that the power corporation will not increase rates for renewables, that portion. Particularly when it is an R and D type project like this, it is generally funded by the government or the shareholder. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Yes, I am satisfied with the response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On page 234, we talk about wood stove purchases. Was this part of the low-rising money, or was this another thing that was sunsetted? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is, again, one of those projects that we boosted up or enhanced through the Low Water funding, so we had a targeted program for wood stoves in specific communities. The wood stove program is still available through biomass. It is another form of biomass, so folks who want to do wood stove replacements or upgrades can apply to the Arctic Energy Alliance through the biomass program. It is being promoted that way, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the deputy minister for that answer. It is actually good to hear. I have been talking to a lot of people, and they are talking about making their homes more energy efficient and trying to get wood stoves in place. It also helps with when we have power shortages or fuel running out, so that is great to hear.

In regard to the energy plan, is the department willing to look at coming back for a supplemental after they have investigated alternative energy, renewable energy sources out there? Is there the potential that, after they have come up with this plan, they could come back looking for a supplemental? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once we have done our engagement on this, we would have to have a look at what we are doing. Then we would have to look, moving forward, what we were going to do. If we needed any extra money, we would have to probably have that discussion on our side of the House. If there was even money available to do it; it might be too early to tell. We have got to wait until we have finished the initiative. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. When will they know when this energy plan or these consultations are going to be done? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe we are coming to give committee an update as early as next week and then, hopefully, in May/June looking forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I think the Minister was thinking, or the deputy minister was thinking or both of them were thinking, that that was my next question, so I thank them that they are going to make that commitment next week and look forward to that presentation as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Any further questions? Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe not so much a question but just a comment at this point. I think some of the previous speakers have pointed out a little bit of what the concern I am going to raise, and that is: we are clearly a government that has mandated ourselves to make investment in energy and alternative energy. We recognize that we have a dire situation as it relates to our reliance on fossil fuels and diesel.

We are, time and time again, challenged with trying to find ways to get off that reliance, and so, if I am just to look at page 234 in the broader perspective, it is troubling to see that we have reduced or lost investment in energy commitments here to the tune of over a million dollars in the last two fiscal years.

Although some of these programs might be seen as sunsetted or you can get them, apply for them, through other NGOs or what have you, what we should be doing as a government is making sure that we are making constant, steady investment in this area because we know, once again, that this is an investment that has a much larger return on investment. So I think, I am hoping, that I am capturing my colleagues' general concern with regard to seeing these programs kind of go by the wayside.

There is never no opportunity that we can't find to make investments into alternative energy sources and alternative energy programs. It is a mission of

ours to try to get our communities, in particular, off their reliance on fossil fuels. I mean, we could put a hundred wood stoves if not a thousand wood stoves into homes tomorrow; we could invest in more solar energy like we have in Colville and other areas tomorrow, so it is troubling to see this pot depleting over the last couple of years when we have made clear commitments to invest in alternative energy sources.

We have got a potential carbon tax coming down the pipe that is going to be another heavy weight for us to bear as residents of the Northwest Territories, for the cost of living. It is many of these little, small investments that we see here that make a big difference. It does not always have to be about trying to reinvent the wheel and the big picture. A lot of these small, little, tiny investments are the ones that actually go further, so I just share that comment so that the department and the Minister are aware. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to sum up a little bit of everything that we are doing on this file. As we know, this is important to everybody in the Northwest Territories. It is a true fact of life that is coming down the pipe for the whole country.

First of all, we are working with the federal government on a number of initiatives. We have some people working directly to get remote communities off diesel fuel, which is important to all northern communities right across Canada. The Department of Finance is working with the carbon tax file. There are two things right off the bat.

When we were down in Ottawa, we were pushing all our renewable initiatives, the Taltson project, the windmill project, renewables file. That is another initiative, and we are waiting to see what the federal government gives us money for in the coming budget in the next couple of months.

The department also does a number of initiatives internally already that we hope address a number of these things. We are working on the capital refit program. We have the new construction where we apply all the new energy strategies and legislation to make them the most efficient new building construction. We work with ENR on the biomass file to push that forward for the residents of the Northwest Territories. There are a number of initiatives besides just this page.

As all Members know, I have said the reductions on this page is due to a sunset due to a one-time Low Water initiative that was put forward in the last Assembly. That is where we sit right now. The

department is working very hard to address these issues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Any further questions, committee? Seeing none, we will now return to page 233, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$28,420,000. Mr. Vanthuyne.

COMMITTEE MOTION 57-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, INFRASTRUCTURE,
DEFERRAL OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
ACTIVITY,
CARRIED

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity programs and services, under the Department of Infrastructure, Main Estimates 2017-2018 on page 233 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. The motion is on the floor and is being distributed. The motion is in order and is non-debatable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

We have deferred consideration of this activity. Committee will now proceed to the next activity, found on page 239. Regional operations, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$126,995,000. This includes activity distribution on page 238 and information items on page 240. Before returning to the departmental total -- Mr. Testart.

Thank you, committee. We will try this again. Regional operations, operation expenditure summary, total activity, \$126,995,000. This includes activity description on page 238 and information items on page 240. Any questions? Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the winter roads, you have heard my brief comments at the very beginning, the importance of helping the communities and especially Samba K'e with their winter road. Can the Minister please advise us what they have been doing to make sure this winter road is safe and efficient? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I need to know which road he is talking about. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: I will try this again. Samba K'e winter road. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We make sure that all winter roads are safe for travel for the general public. There have been a number of initiatives done on this road in the last five years. If we go back to our stats, we spent roughly \$1.6 million on the Samba K'e road in the last five years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Minister for that answer. In this section of road, there is a hill that the community has been trying to renovate or fix up in the last year or so. What has the department been doing with the community to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As far as I am aware, the community has never approached us about this issue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually I did send an e-mail, but maybe I will have to pull that out. The community has brought it to my attention. I did forward it from the development corporation and they have asked for work to be done on this section of road. I am trying to get that message out there to the department to work with it.

It is a safety factor. Just recently, they had six elders or six individuals being shipped to Fort Simpson for medical appointments and they got stuck there for six hours. This is the section of road that they are talking about. Can the Minister look into this with the department, and then maybe I will look into my files as well and bring this e-mail forward again? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I ask the Member if he can send that e-

mail again to me. We will double check and make sure that we never got it, but we don't recall anything. We will bring that concern forward. We will have a look at it. One of the things we can consider, depending on the issue, and we have a look at it with the Member or the community, there is a possibility we have money in the Highway Safety Improvement Capital Fund that we can look at maybe doing something on that road. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the answer to the Minister. I will make that commitment that I will make sure that I get that letter to you guys. I will have to phone my office there because I got a response back from the department saying that it was going to be looked at and that was -- again I apologize, but I will make sure that we get this e-mail forwarded and I appreciate the Minister's commitment to look into it and work with the community to address this issue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Next, I have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that in 2015-16 the Department of Transportation or DOT had developed a transportation model strategy. I wanted to understand what perhaps could have been included in terms of the long-term plans for community airports, especially small communities? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will turn that over to Deputy of Transportation, Mr. Neudorf. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We did release our updated transportation strategy about a year and a half or so ago. It talks about various priorities. The first priority would be to continue to maintain and look at the existing infrastructure that we have. In terms of community airports, for the most part, the infrastructure at the airports does serve the needs of the various communities.

From time to time, we request for air terminal upgrading, for example, so we are working on a plan for Inuvik ATV now. We recently upgraded terminals in Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Tuktoyaktuk. Another thing that occurs from time to time is the need to relocate an airport because the community is starting to infringe on an airport, so in

the past few years, five years or so, we have relocated Trout Lake airport and the airport in Colville Lake.

We will continue to monitor needs in all of our airports and community airports, and address the needs as they come up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have noticed recently in the community of Fort Providence that there have been some activities in terms of brushing, especially at the treetops. I understand, in that instance, it was done because of the priority of navigation equipment allowing the air traffic to safely land in the airport. What is the extend of the involvement in this department, and how were those decisions made to go ahead and create a project like that? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those decisions are made by the department. We need to ensure that all of our airports are operated in accordance with the regulations. Transport Canada regulates airport operations, and I am sure that we work underneath the rules that they provide; one of which is to maintain obstacle limitation surfaces, they are called.

We have to have clear airspace for takeoff and landing related to aircraft. One of the things, obviously, trees can grow into that airspace. We do survey at airports from time to time, and if required, we will go in and harvest or cut down trees to make sure that we can continue to operate the airport safely. We have recently done that with Fort Providence. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It seems that the department, as part of their operations, is ensuring the safety and the access to small community airports. I just wanted to make a point, Mr. Chair: there is a presumption that there is a Community Access Program that is specifically for roads only. In this instance, a project of this nature that could affect airports, would perhaps the Community Access Program be expanded to include airports? Perhaps the Minister maybe could reply in terms of the idea to ensure that it is not only roads but airports included in the initiative. Perhaps there had been maybe, historically, projects to include airports access. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The airport operations, the brushing, gravel resurfacing, maintaining air terminal buildings, various electrical lighting upgrades, O and M activities, are all funded from the airport operations line item. We have an acceptable level of funding there. Obviously, you have to operate these airports safely, and so we always prioritize the funding. We have a four-scope process in order to deal with any issues where funding might start to become deficient. All of our airports, the operations in the airport are well-funded. We are not looking at this time at taking some of the Community Access Program funding and allocating for airports. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just have a few questions for the Minister. Under Marine Operations, I see the reduction for the \$1.8 million which was to operate both the Peel River and Mackenzie River ferry at Tsiigehtchic. Was this reduction for cost-saving measures? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it was. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, during our briefings, the Minister was planning to make this reduction and actually put it in the highway operations. Is that actually what happened? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We put this as a savings moving forward, but we want to look at using some of this money for the savings for ice bridge accelerations, so some of the money would be spent there; and then, the remainder of the money would be looked at spending on O and M moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is really, actually, not a cost-saving measure. It is just you

are shuffling around these funds into other departments. Really, you are not saving any money. You are just moving it to highway operations and winter roads. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are following a process. We are asked to come with some reductions, and this is one of the ones that we thought warranted bringing forward. As I have said in the House many times, we did a cost-benefit analysis on this, and we believe that doing this is outweighing the benefits. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Outweighing the benefits for who? If you ask the people up in the Beaufort Delta, they are the ones benefitting from it. Now, other highway operations or winter roads, who is going to benefitting from of this now? That is the clear fact, and it is a shame that you have to cut one department to add a little more to a couple of different departments. It is pretty clear that that is what is happening. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister, would you like to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member is well aware, this issue was put in place to help offset the concerns around Ikhil, Norman Wells, and Inuvik. We believe that moving forward, as the Member has alluded to in his comments in the House there, that we have learned how to operate this thing efficiently. The other thing that we have done at the same time is gather information, and we do not see that it warrants having this in place.

We believe that the accelerated ice road could be done with limited disruption, as the ferry was closed 40 per cent of the time, as I have said a number of times due to the weather factors. There are a number of things that have come to make this decision for us to bring this forward, and we believe it is the right one. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know a lot of the information that the department is using is from a couple of years back. This 40 per cent closure he is referring to, I know in my discussions in the House, that was highway closures is what he is referring to. That might have been a couple of years back, but this year, it was

very limited. Like I said, if you take the numbers that were used on the ferry this year, we have had in the neighbourhood of 200 tractor trailers, if not more. In the month of November alone, we had over 120. The reason I know this is because I communicate pretty well with the people who work on this ferry. I was given pretty accurate numbers. It is a shame that we have to cut the service. That is not to mention all the public traffic that was using this. There are a lot of tourists, and a lot of my residents and residents from Inuvik as well who made use of this ferry operation. It is a real shame that we have to cut this department, just to give more to a couple of different departments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I have said before, I don't want to get into a big debate with Members on some of these initiatives that we have had on the floor already. This is something that was put in place to help mitigate the offset of the keel well. We believe that there are measures put in place to remedy that, to make sure the residence of Inuvik have an ample supply of liquefied natural gas and propane. We do not believe that pulling this winter ferry service, along with accelerating the ice bridge, will affect any of those things. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Yes. You know, I hope I don't have to say, "I told you so," in the next year or two, but let's just hope that Inuvik is not put in danger with this decision that was made by the department. You never know how long freeze-ups can last, especially with climate change right now. The average is two months from the time they pull out the ferry until the heavy traffic can move through the ice road, so that is a lot of time. That is over 60 days that something tragic could happen with the situation that they have in Inuvik with the natural gas and LNG. We will just have to see what happens here. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Anything further from the Minister?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify that it is actually 36 days that cost us \$1.8 million. I stand behind, as I have said on a number of initiatives, that we warrant that this initiative being put forward as a cost-saving measure is justifiable, and we will stand behind it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the Minister is referring to light traffic. Light traffic can transfer LNG, just for his information. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Anything further, Minister? Nothing further from the Minister. Next on my list I have Mr. Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am just looking at bullet number three, highway operations. I see there is an increase. Can the Minister elaborate on that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nakimayak. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The majority of the increase there is actually just an amortization adjustment, so it is not actual cash. \$2.3 million of that is amortization adjustment, mainly because we anticipate the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway to come into service and so we will start amortizing it.

There is also an increase of about \$300,000 related to operating and maintaining the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, so we will begin to do that next fiscal year. Then there is a reduction that we had started last year. We were reorganizing some of the highway operations in the South Slave region, so there is a \$250,000 reduction associated with that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Mr. Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Getting back to the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway on this, has the department started looking at tendering for the maintenance of the highway? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nakimayak. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As we get closer to completion, we are actually still reviewing that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: No further questions right now. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Next, I have Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just looking at operations on page 239, the program detail. I understand my colleague in the Delta's

concerns. As you all know, we had a near miss last year where a tanker actually partially did go through the ice on Bear Lake. If it had in fact gone through, it could have created a catastrophe for downstream communities.

I am glad to see the operations as it is covering some extra allowances for the winter roads, whether it is north of Yellowknife. Hopefully, some of those monies might be increased for additional flooding requirement to minimize the risk and ensuring that the heavy traffic destined for Deline does not interfere into high risk factoring in.

As we speak right now, the community of Deline sees on the average of 60 to 70 truckloads of fuel come in for the Power Corporation, community demands, and the home heating fuel. To date, we have not seen one load of fuel go on that road yet or go across the bay to the community, so with this extra funding, I am hoping that some of that would be directed to providing assurances on flooding the bay going across to the community of Deline. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member is well aware, we have sent our staff in there along with the operator. Last year's incident, they met with the community along with our staff to discuss what happened last year and how we can best move forward. We are doing our due diligence. We have met with the operator last year.

We met with the department, as well, to discuss what happened and what we can learn from that moving forward. As far as the resupply of Deline, itself, we tend to do the other communities first to help the contractor build up the ice thickness to what it needs to be to access the community for the fuel trucks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. McNeely, anything further?

MR. MCNEELY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am glad that it is being addressed and being considered, I would say. Just moving up the ladder to regional projects here, on the same page, is there any money destined for my new office in the Sahtu for regional projects, Mr. Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there are two positions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further from Mr. McNeely. Next, I have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to get a sense in terms of the Department of Transportation's plans for the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I wanted to ask the Minister: what is the status of the Mackenzie Valley Highway?

I understand with the winding down of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, and then there are other initiatives at play, too, namely just recently the announcement of the Whati road initiative, as well, but I just wanted to get at least an understanding of where is that road to the Mackenzie Valley? I think the last discussion was that there is maybe some consideration of extending the road from Wrigley to Tulita, or else perhaps from Tulita right to Good Hope to Inuvik. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, on the Mackenzie Highway, as all Members are aware, we announced the Canyon Creek project. Hopefully, that is getting kicked off here in the next month or so, with that initiative moving forward, employing a number of people and training them in the Sahtu region.

As far as the Mackenzie Valley Highway ask with the federal government, as I have stated in the House, the federal government put that program on pause. We have submitted a business case for that project moving forward, and we are waiting to see what the federal government does, coming in their budget address. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to get a sense in terms of the priorities scale. I understand there are other initiatives, including, as I stated, the Whati road that will be in progress here fairly soon. What priority scale would be the extension of the Mackenzie Valley Highway? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As all Members know, it's in our mandate, all three parties, and the department is chasing all opportunities for all three sections of the highways, the Slave Geological Province, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and the Whati one. The Whati highway, the federal government has made their commitment and, as I've stated in the House, it's going through its regulatory environmental process,

and we will continue to work on that as it gains more traction and we continue to promote both the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the Slave Geological Province and focus on the ones that seem to get the federal attention. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli, anything further?

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My final question on this is: the Minister stated that the federal government has put the pause on the initiative of the Mackenzie Valley Highway; similarly, has his department put this project on pause, too? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, we have not put this project on pause. While the federal government is trying to figure out how they're going to allocate their infrastructure money, we continue to look at other opportunities moving forward, be it the department or CanNor's funding or other opportunities moving this initiative forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Seeing nothing further from committee, I will call this activity. Infrastructure, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$126,995,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Vanthuyne.

COMMITTEE MOTION 58-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, INFRASTRUCTURE,
DEFERRAL OF REGIONAL OPERATIONS
ACTIVITY,
CARRIED

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity regional operations under the Department of Infrastructure, Main Estimates 2017-2018 on page 239 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. There is a motion on the floor and it is being distributed. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Committee, we will move on to the series of information items beginning at page 241 and continuing on to page 248. This includes information items on the Technology Service Centre, Public Stores Revolving Fund, Petroleum Products Revolving Fund, lease commitments, and work performed on behalf of others. We can tackle these all at once. If committee has comments or questions on a particular activity, please let us know which page you are speaking to. Comments or questions on any of the information items, pages 241 to 248. I'll give committee a moment. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at page 244, which is the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund. I see that there will be a deficit in this revolving fund at the end of 2017-18. Can someone from the department explain how we're going from a surplus of \$115,000 in the current year to a deficit of \$100,000 in this year or the year to come? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the Stabilization Fund is really the positive or negative revenue we get through the sales of fuel. So once we determine our pricing and sell the fuel to the residents and consumers that we buy it from, we have to offset that with our operating costs. Our costs are based on the salary, the transportation costs, the cost of purchasing the fuel, and all those things. In any given particular year we could have lower than anticipated costs, so we'll end up with an excess in the Stabilization Fund, so that would be that we collected more money from our customers than we needed to deliver the program. Conversely, if we have a situation where our winter roads are in poor condition so we have to take lighter loads and we have higher transportation costs, we may be selling fuel at a loss until such time we get the price change in effect. The Stabilization Fund... We're permitted by legislation to be plus or minus \$1 million. We like to keep that fund at around plus \$500,000. As you can see it's been creeping up a little bit, so the proposed deficit is really just to bring it back down into a range that's more comfortable for us, around that \$500,000 range. Again, that's a forecast; it's based on how much we think we're going to sell the fuel, how much we think it's going to cost to buy it. It's also forecast based on what our operating costs will be and a number of other factors. So it's a very conceptual number, if you like, when you get that far down. The only actual number in there, I think, is the closing balance of 2015-16. We have not yet finished this fiscal year so we don't even know what the 2016-17 closing balance in the fund will be. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, deputy minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair; it's a helpful explanation. So with the GNWT taking on the operations of former NTCL, will that have any impact on the revolving fund? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The thinking right now is no. If we were to set up that service through a revolving fund it would likely be a separate revolving fund. So the marine transportation that was purchased from the private sector is shown in here in this fund, that would then just be a purchase out of the other revolving fund. We're not proposing at this time to combine them into this fund. So the short answer to that question is no, there's no impact on this revolving fund; we would be just be purchasing from another internal service. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Maybe I'm not quite understanding the response there. I understand that we're going to do the shipping or try to contract the shipping of petroleum products to at least four communities. The fact that we're doing it now rather than NTCL, can we expect to see any impact on this revolving fund as a result of us doing the work in terms of the shipping? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Because we'll be operating a marine transportation service on a cost-recover basis, we're hoping that we'll keep costs consistent with what they have been prior to the service going out of business. If you turn back to what we were paying two or three years ago, that's the range we're looking to be in. The purchase of marine transportation services would fall under "costs of goods sold" on this page. I think last year was in the \$3 to \$4 million range; it can be as high as \$5 or \$6 million depending on how much particular fuel we're transporting. We don't see any impact for this fiscal year going on that part of this page. We think it will be business as usual for the Petroleum Products Fund. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay, I'll continue to watch the balance in this fund closely. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Do we have anything further on these information items? Technology Service Centre, Public Stores Revolving Fund, Petroleum Products Revolving Fund, these commitments and work performed on behalf of others.

I see no further comments or questions. Committee, please return back to the departmental total found on page 221. Feel free to discuss any of the items on pages starting at 216 to 223. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we go over to page 222 in the revenue summary under the general lease, airports lease rental revenues. Can the department explain how much of the \$3,229,000 is Yellowknife Airport, please? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will turn it over to the deputy of Transportation, Mr. Neudorf.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The majority of the money reported underneath that line item is actually from the Yellowknife Airport, so about \$2.5 million of the \$3.2 million would be generated at Yellowknife Airport. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the department for the answer. I noticed that in the previous category that we just discussed, work on behalf of others, there is the baggage handling, I think, that we did for a certain amount of money, \$93,000 or what have you. We have it here as well, Yellowknife Airport hold baggage system for \$127,000. Can we get an explanation from the department what that is, please?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On page 247, the whole baggage system there, that is money that we get from the airlines themselves and it is to facilitate the operation of the baggage system. So sometimes that baggage system will jam up and we will need to send some people in to get that unjammed, and so we have a contract with our janitorial staff in order to do that. So that is on 248; and on 222, the \$127,000 is actually the

operating cost to run the NAV Canada portion of that baggage system, so all of the bags that are picked up at the counter, go behind the system, go through the various security checks of CATSA, and they pay a portion of the operating costs for that baggage system; that is what is reported on this page. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under airports landing and other fees, of course we see what I am going to assume is the proposed revenue generated from a user fee that makes this pot increase by \$10 million this year. Maybe I will start first by getting clarification: is my assumption correct? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Yes, that is correct. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Okay, thank you. Previous to that, in 2016-17 on the same line item, we show a considerable jump from \$3.6 million into 2016-17 to \$6 million and then, of course, back down to \$3 million last year. Can I get some explanation from the department on what the up-and-down is there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Historically the number in that line item has been between \$3 million and \$3.5 million, so assume a base of \$3.1 million in 2016-17. So when we brought forward the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund Initiative we were planning on \$3 million incremental revenue in 2016-17 and then \$7 million in 2017-18, an additional \$7 million to get to \$10 million. With deferral of the start of that, you will see the revised main estimate go down to \$3.1 million.

So we took that \$3 million out of 2016-17 and added all the \$10 million into 2017-18. I would note that we will carry forward this session, we will have the discussion of the revolving fund, and if we are going ahead with that then we will need to come back to FMB with an adjustment. There will be a number of adjustments that are required to the main estimates in order to properly reflect what is going to be the accounting for the revolving fund and the Yellowknife Airport. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the explanation. Thank you. Permits and registrations, we see an increase of nearly \$1 million from the year previous. I would just like to ask: how do we generate this kind of revenue? What is permits and registrations -- and a broad answer is fine -- and for what reasons did it jump by \$1 million? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Permits and registrations are the revenues that we would collect from individuals and from commercial carriers to register vehicles and then to issue permits for commercial vehicles in particular to operate on the highway system.

The number is going up by \$900,000 because we are undertaking an initiative now to look at our fees and bring some of those fees, particularly related to commercial carriers, more in line with southern Canada, and Alberta in particular. Our numbers when we did the analysis here show that by doing that we could generate an additional \$900,000 a year in revenue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think those are all the questions I have at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Anything further to total department or the revenue summary, active position summary? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that committee defer further consideration.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): As a technicality, I will call this department and then you may proceed with your motion. Department of Infrastructure, total department, \$240,419,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Beaulieu.

COMMITTEE MOTION 59-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, INFRASTRUCTURE,
DEFERRAL OF FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF
THE ESTIMATES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
INFRASTRUCTURE,
CARRIED

MR. BEAULIEU: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is being distributed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Question has been called. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

We will defer the consideration of this department. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Beaulieu?

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. I will excuse the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Thank you for appearing. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Hay River North?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018 and would like to report progress with four motions adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do I have a seconder? Member for Hay River South.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 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. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
 - Bill 13, Marriage Act
 - Committee Report 6-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 7: An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
 - Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 22, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.