



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2<sup>nd</sup> Session

Day 1

16<sup>th</sup> Assembly

HANSARD

**Wednesday, February 6, 2008**

Pages 161 to 182

**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

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**Hon. Paul Delorey**  
(Hay River North)

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(Great Slave)

**Mr. Tom Beaulieu**  
(Tu Nedhe)

**Ms. Wendy Bisaro**  
(Frame Lake)

**Mr. Bob Bromley**  
(Weledeh)

**Mrs. Jane Groenewegen**  
(Hay River South)

**Mr. Robert Hawkins**  
(Yellowknife Centre)

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. David Krutko**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

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(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Kevin Menicoche**  
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**Mr. David Ramsay**  
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**Hon. Floyd Roland**  
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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Wednesday, February 6, 2008**

**Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Singing of O Canada.

**Prayer**

**Bishop Chatlain:** May Your spirit and guidance be in us as we work for the benefit of all our people for peace and justice in our land and for the constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Please be seated.

Mr. Clerk, would you ascertain if the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Hon. Anthony W.J. Whitford, is prepared to enter the Chamber to open the second session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

**Opening Address**

**Commissioner of the Northwest Territories (Hon. Tony Whitford):** Please be seated.

Monsieur le président, messieurs et mesdames les députés, mesdames et messieurs, et amis. It is once again a pleasure and honour for me to welcome you to the second session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. I do hope it is not too late to wish you all a Happy New Year and the very best wishes for the month ahead.

In the past few months the North has seen the passing of several of its residents — far, far too many. We are saddened and offer the families and friends our deepest sympathies and sincere condolences. The deaths of our youths are always especially sad and leave a hole in our future. The deaths of our elders leave a hole in our past. Their lifetimes of value, wisdom and contributions have made us stronger and prosperous, and their legacies will not be forgotten.

I wish to mention just a few names of our elders who have passed: Agnes Williams, Cy Cummings, James Burke, Laurie Hobart, Irvin Norn, Mary Pope, James McPherson, Ernest Michel, Freda Denayah and Andrew Tetso. And lastly, although not from the Northwest Territories but from Nunavut, Willie Laserich, who was well loved and respected across the North, especially here in the west, for his medevacs, his air services and his many search and rescue missions.

But as people who have worked to shape our territories leave us, younger generations take their place. An important part of the growth and development of our youth is their participation in such events as the Arctic Winter Games. In just over a month the N.W.T. will be hosting the 20<sup>th</sup> Arctic Winter Games. I look forward to meeting and greeting not only the 2008 athletes and their coaches, but also the officials of the day who were responsible for the creation of the first Arctic Winter Games some 40 years ago.

Although the Games are taking place in Yellowknife, the Arctic Winter Games Host Society has worked tirelessly to involve all N.W.T. communities and people of all ages in the planning, promotion and hosting of the Games. From the youth of most N.W.T. communities acting as ambassadors to welcome and to assist our visitors, to the number of seniors who have modelled game-wear in a fashion show, there have been lots and lots of ways for people to be involved. I encourage you all to join in the spirit of the Arctic Winter Games 2008, enjoy the competition, enjoy the cultural performances and support everyone who has contributed to the Games' success over the years.

Members, I look forward to visiting with you in your constituencies as the opportunities arise, as I have in the past. It is always an honour and a personal pleasure to meet our Northern peoples in their home communities and at special events.

And now, during this session, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be introducing the following bills for consideration by this House: Interim Appropriation Act, 2008–2009, and Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2007–2008. The government considers these bills

essential to the good conduct of government business, and as such, I recommend their passage.

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I now declare open the second session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, merci, qnanami and mahsi cho.

### Speaker's Opening Comments

**Mr. Speaker:** Good afternoon, colleagues.

I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of all Members to the Hon. Anthony W.J. Whitford, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, for opening this second session of the 16th Legislative Assembly, and to Doris Rogers and the Most Reverend Murray Chatlain, Bishop of the Dioceses of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, for assisting us today. Our appreciation is also extended to our guests and visitors who have joined us here in the gallery today.

I would also like to take this opportunity, belatedly but most sincerely, to send my very best wishes to my colleagues in the House and to all the residents in the N.W.T. for a peaceful and healthy new year.

We are starting the year with much work to do and very busy schedules. I wish to commend all the Members, who I know have been working very hard to familiarize themselves with and prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend the condolences of the House to those who have lost loved ones in recent weeks. They will be missed, and our thoughts and prayers are with their friends, families and communities.

As we begin today, may I remind everyone that we are here to make decisions and discuss issues that affect all who live in the N.W.T. We do our best when we treat each other with respect and dignity. I will do my best to assist each of you to achieve this goal. The Rules of the House are your rules, and I will apply them fairly.

Thank you for your attention, colleagues. With that, item 3, Ministers' statements.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 1-16(2) SESSIONAL STATEMENT

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** It is my honour today to begin this session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly with a clear discussion about where our Territory is heading, the opportunities and challenges we will face and the actions we must take.

### Starting with Vision

As Members of this Assembly we have identified six key goals that are crucial for the N.W.T.'s future:

- 1) A strong and independent North, where Northerners make their own decisions and chart their own course;
- 2) An environment that sustains Northerners today and in the future;
- 3) Healthy and well-educated people with bright futures and the skills they need to benefit from all the opportunities our Territory will provide;
- 4) A diversified economy providing jobs, business opportunities and prosperity for families and communities;
- 5) Sustainable, vibrant and safe communities where people can build their futures; and
- 6) An effective and efficient government that sets the right priorities and gets the job done.

Put those six goals together, and we are describing the N.W.T. as a place for all Northerners: a compassionate North, where people live with dignity and participate fully in their Territory and their communities; a North where all residents enjoy safety, security and an opportunity to realize their dreams; a place where Northerners can reach their full potential, not limited by social conditions or where they live but able to benefit fully from all the opportunities our Territory provides. able to find and keep a job, take advantage of education opportunities, stay healthy and afford to live in their communities.

We want to build a unified, strong and independent Territory — a Territory that is the master of its own destiny, a Territory recognized across Canada as a unique and contributing member of Canada's federation.

### Making Difficult Choices

The vision we have for the Northwest Territories is not just an elusive dream. It can become our reality and the reality for future generations of Northerners. The six goals we have set can be achieved, but it will take discipline and focus. It will take deliberate actions and tough choices to keep us on track.

Let me make one point abundantly clear. If we are to achieve what Members of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly have set as our vision, as a government, we cannot continue to do business in the same old way. Some people may be disappointed, but we cannot continue to spend our children's future.

I have heard concerns about how we can be faced with a situation that requires refocusing our

spending. It is true: surpluses were forecast for the last several years. But that has only been possible with extra one-time funds received from the federal government.

For the last several years our spending has increased twice as fast as our revenues. Our Formula Financing Agreement with Canada will not generate sudden pockets of tens of millions of dollars to keep us out of trouble. And trouble is what we would have later in this government — potentially over \$500 million in debt if we did not act now. I will provide details of our current and future fiscal situation in a statement to this Assembly tomorrow.

This session we will present an interim budget that will allow us the time to deliberately and methodically set a clear course correction to our spending patterns. As we begin to shift our spending to areas that are most vital to the six goals we have set for our Territory, we will reduce our overall spending so we avoid the risk of crippling deficits in years to come.

We accept that responsibility because, Mr. Speaker, leadership is not about taking the easy course. Leadership is not just about saying yes to the countless good ideas that come our way. Leadership is about making the right choices to keep our eyes fixed on a prize. And that prize is a better future for our children, our communities and our Territory.

In many ways the work we are doing now is like our elders planning for a hunting trip. We have to pack wisely for the journey. We can load down our packs with everything we'd want to have with us, but the result would be a load that's too heavy to haul, that weighs us down and slows our journey. Choosing what not to take is difficult and may involve some compromises and hardships. But in the end it allows us to make the journey and reach our destination.

We're at that same point today. We have loaded too much into our government's pack, more than we can afford to haul. Keeping this heavy load is simply not an option. Instead, we need to choose wisely, select the things we must really do that will produce the results and allow us to continue on this journey and achieve the vision we have set.

#### Setting Priorities

In the past few months members of cabinet have identified a set of five initiatives based on caucus priorities that will be the focus of our actions in the coming months.

The first is building our future. That starts with better programming for our children and youth. It means promoting healthy choices and tackling addictions that have stolen lives from far too many

people in the North. It means taking action on family violence, supporting families and continuing to work on changing attitudes towards violence and the terrible toll it takes on them. It means looking after seniors and supporting those who volunteer their time and energy to help others. It means making sure our families and communities are safe by enhancing police services, especially in small communities.

Taken together, these actions will tackle the social problems that affect far too many people in communities across the Northwest Territories, make sure our children and youth get the strong beginning they need, and improve the overall health of our residents and keep our people safe.

The second initiative is to reduce the cost of living. The stark reality is that the cost of living in the Northwest Territories is too high. Most costs make it difficult for many families to pay their basic bills. They stand in the way of achieving a better quality of life. They stand in the way of people getting jobs and supporting their families. And those same high costs affect our ability to grow and diversify our economy and attract new businesses and investment.

Two important areas that can help reduce the cost of living are improved transportation infrastructure between communities and alternative energy solutions, like natural gas and hydroelectric power. We need to pursue the necessary partnerships and funding to finally make the dream of a Mackenzie Valley Highway and expanded hydroelectric power use a reality.

The third initiative includes managing this land. Northerners have a deep attachment to our land, and while leaders in countries around the world are just starting to wake up to the impact of climate change, we have a front-row seat to witness its dramatic impacts. Warmer winters significantly decrease the length of the ice-road season, making it more difficult and costly to resupply communities and industry. Ice roads are becoming more expensive to build and harder to maintain. Operating seasons are decreasing to the point that some roads may not be viable in the future. Melting permafrost is weakening and shifting the foundation of our roads and buildings. Hunters can no longer rely on weather conditions and an abundance of animals to feed their families and fill their traps.

It's crucial that we consider a comprehensive approach to find the right balance between development and protection of our existing landscapes, forests and water resources, in order to deal with the cumulative effects of climate change on our air, land and water; to collect the necessary data to monitor impacts on our environment; and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The key part of this initiative will involve

steps to develop a framework around land use in the N.W.T. We will continue our work on land, resource and self-government agreements, including a devolution agreement with the federal government.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, steps will be taken to maximize opportunities in the N.W.T. There are days when I think about the challenges our elders face — elders like Sam Raddi of Tuktoyaktuk, who had a vision of pulling the aboriginal people of the Beaufort together to form COPE, the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement, which eventually led to the settling of land claims in that region; elders like Agnes Semmler of Inuvik, who spoke for and challenged her own people to be better examples; elders like former Grand Chief Joe Rabesca, who had the vision and foresight to conclude the first combined land claim and self-government agreement in our Territory.

Like them we have to see through the challenges before us and recognize the opportunities in these challenges — opportunities that are no longer vague promises of what the future could bring but real developments that are right on our doorstep.

It's time to open the door to new developments that contribute to the North, to our communities and to the future of our children. It's time to continue improving the quality of education and training so that the best jobs don't go to people who fly in and fly out each week, but to our own people. It's time to bring the entrepreneurial spirit of business people in smaller communities together with investors and developers who can provide the advice and support they need to get started. It's time to promote the N.W.T. as a great place to live, work, invest in, and visit.

Mr. Speaker, we can do all of this with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. While we spend over \$1 billion a year as a government, it would be difficult to match the opportunities from the pipeline and all related activities it will bring.

It's time to see the promise of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline become a reality. We can do this right. We can proceed in a way that protects our environment. We can proceed in a way that builds and sustains strong communities. We can proceed in a way that the people who benefit the most are right here in the Northwest Territories. But we must proceed. After years of discussions and delays, we must take the next step to help this become a reality.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the actions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly will fundamentally refocus all aspects of government, from how we set priorities to how we deliver services and how we make sure we're getting the best value for every dollar we spend.

One of the priorities that emerged from our discussions with caucus was the need to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiencies, providing more focus on clients in the services we provide, and improving our efforts to plan, coordinate and communicate actions among government departments. We'll follow through on that direction by reviewing the programs we currently deliver, our approach to infrastructure, our efforts to attract and retain the most capable people to our public service, and innovative ways of delivering essential services, especially in smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, these five initiatives — building our future, reducing the cost of living, managing the land, maximizing opportunity and refocusing government — provide their own map for our journey to come. The journey will have its peaks and valleys, its good days and its difficult ones, but the destination will be worth it: a destination where our children, and their children to come, can look forward with hope and confidence to a better future.

As Members of this Assembly, we must not waver from this roadmap. We must not lose our way or get distracted by the issues of the day. The course is clear, and we must see it through to the end.

Looking South

Mr. Speaker, I have laid out the approach developed by our cabinet, with input from all members of caucus. More details of the initial actions to be taken will be outlined later this spring.

As Premier, my role is to make sure that we keep our focus, keep our eyes on the vision we want for our Territory, and work with all Members of this Assembly and all Northerners to make sure the work gets done. But as Premier, I also intend to play a strong role on the national stage, to set our own course and be masters of our own destiny. We must continue to push our federal partners and bring people across Canada onto our side of the issues that are vital to our future.

In recent months our hopes have been lifted by Prime Minister Harper's focus on the North and his commitment to strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty. We were inspired by the last throne speech, when the Governor General said: "Canadians see in our North an expression of our deepest aspirations, our sense of exploration, the beauty and bounty of our land, and our limitless potential."

My job as Premier is to make sure those words are not forgotten in the midst of countless other pressures for action, to make sure that the promise of an integrated Northern strategy is realized, and to make sure that Northern strategy responds to the issues that are critical to our Territory's future.



In order for me to do this, as Premier, my discussions with the Prime Minister and my colleagues across Canada will focus on four priorities:

- 1) Making real progress on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline;
- 2) Achieving the promise of a devolution agreement — but not just any agreement: an agreement that's right for the Northwest Territories and lays the foundation for future self-sufficiency;
- 3) Getting the right partners on board so we can lay out a plan and move forward with infrastructure projects of national significance, like the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the further development of our world-class hydroelectric resources at the Taltson and Bear Rivers; and
- 4) Telling the story of our environment, so we can not only protect our own environment here in the N.W.T. but awaken the rest of Canada and the world to the fact that their actions affect us. They affect our communities, our families, our way of life and everything across our Territory.

#### Concluding Comments

Mr. Speaker, the vision is clear. The priorities have been set, and the difficult work has begun.

Like the elders who have walked this land before us, we believe our work puts us on the right path to success. We've worked together to identify issues and set priorities. We've shared our hopes and dreams for the N.W.T., and we have agreed that this is the course we must follow.

There comes a time in the history of our people, our government and our Territory when decisions must be made. Those decisions will make us better than we are today. Instead of maintaining the status quo, those decisions will build a stronger foundation for a healthier future — a more sustainable future — for our Territory, and for a day when our Territory will take its place as one of the undisputed leaders in Canada.

My cabinet colleagues and I are ready for the journey. We are ready to build a stronger foundation, and we are confident the result will be an even better future for our children and grandchildren.

Quanami, mahsi.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Minister's Statement 1-16(2) be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration.

Motion carried.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 2-16(2) MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I wish to advise Members that the Hon. Michael Miltenberger will be absent from the House today to attend a provincial and territorial housing ministers' meeting in Vancouver.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 4, Members' statements.

#### Members' Statements

##### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELECTRICAL POWER RATE INCREASES

**Mr. Krutko:** In regard to the challenges we face in the Northwest Territories, one of the most vibrant problems we see is sustainability of small communities, but more importantly, the high cost of the power rates in a lot of our communities. Electrical power is an essential service to all people of the Northwest Territories. It's mostly felt by these communities where the high cost of living, the high cost of groceries and, more importantly, the high cost just to maintain a lifestyle is driving a lot of our residents to leave a lot of our small communities for the larger centres, at a cost to the sustainability of our communities. But that is one of the priorities of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

It's fundamental that this government, this 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly, take this issue seriously and ensure that we take a close look at power rates across the Northwest Territories to get away from the community-by-community-based rates that we presently have in place. The high cost of subsidizing those rates is in the area of some \$8 million, and we are looking at the possibility of spending \$11 million just to sustain this program.

We have to do as other jurisdictions and territories have across Canada. Yukon and Nunavut have looked at this issue. It's fundamental, as a Legislature, that we ensure the people of the Northwest Territories can sustain a vibrant lifestyle but, more importantly, make it affordable and achievable for all people in the Northwest Territories.

I know it's important that we look at the budget issue we have in the Northwest Territories, but we also have to look at how we spend our subsidies for different things, such as power subsidies, housing subsidies, programs and services. This is an essential service. It's crucial that we do take this issue on at the earliest date possible, so we can provide direction from this government to the PUB to ensure that they will act with the direction that's going to be needed.

This issue has been out there for some time. In my former leadership of the Ministry Responsible for Power Corp., this issue came up in every visit we

made to the communities. One of the things that floored me, Mr. Speaker....

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Krutko, your time for Members' Statements has expired.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mr. Speaker:** You may conclude your statement, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The thing that really got me, looking at this issue, is I made a visit to Colville Lake, where I ran into an elder who was having problems paying her power bill. She had a bill for \$1,600 for one month in Colville Lake, and yet she is a pensioner who has to depend on her pension. It was because programs and services weren't being provided to her in Colville Lake. She had to heat her home with her electric range because she had no diesel fuel. This is the reality of what we are facing in a lot of our small communities.

I think we have to face the reality, which is to ensure subsidized programs and services. If it's not working, I believe we have to take a closer look at it. So, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be asking questions of the Premier on this matter.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELECTRICAL POWER RATE INCREASES

**Mr. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the high cost of living in the N.W.T. is a fact of life, and it is a fact that unfortunately we all accept, because we choose to live up here. If we have to pay the high prices of living in the North, then that's what we continue to do. I, too, would like to speak on the power rate increase, along with my colleague for Mackenzie Delta.

The residents of Inuvik are getting increasingly frustrated with the rate increases that continue to happen. They are allowed to happen because the Public Utilities Board is just rubber-stamping everything that comes before them, and we can't have that. Just listening to a statement from a guy I know, who said that we have to be able to afford to live in our community.... And this is a good example of being able to afford to live in our communities.

Are they trying to price us out of the N.W.T.? Because that is the route we are going. The residents of Inuvik and the Beaufort Delta continually face high increases in everything. Not only does it affect their cost of living, but it also

affects the community businesses who have to raise their rates to make up for the difference. This is something that we as a government.... We have to protect the residents, because they are going to price us out of the N.W.T. I don't know if that is their attitude or that is their plan. We may have people starting to do two weeks in and two weeks out, working in the N.W.T. for two weeks and going to live in Alberta for two weeks where the cost of living is cheaper.

That is the reality, Mr. Speaker — that we are constantly faced with increase after increase in everything. We have the fuel increases that are going on up in Inuvik, and that is a subject I will be speaking about tomorrow. There are a lot of things that we have absolutely no control over, yet we are the ones that continually have to pay. We have to pay for a \$2 million shortfall. We have our bills on top of our bills. We get our shortfall rider and our fuel rider. If they believe so much that they need to make some savings, why don't they cut into their bonuses? That will save a lot of money. They continually pass their expenses on to the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, this is getting frustrating. Enough is enough. It's time that we started having a serious look at this and protecting the people that we say we are obligated to protect from situations like this.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENHANCEMENTS TO HAY RIVER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about a number of things related to education in Hay River. During the last session I raised concerns about the situation of Diamond Jenness Secondary School and how the deficiencies were impacting on a quality environment for the delivery of education at the high school. I am very pleased to report that Minister McLeod, with Public Works and Services, and Minister Lafferty, with Education, Culture and Employment, came to Hay River last week with Mr. Speaker and myself, and their officials. We did tour the Diamond Jenness Secondary School, among other facilities. But that one in particular I want to talk about.

A revised, summarized and updated technical review has been completed, and it appears that work to address the condition of the high school has been put in motion. I thank the Ministers for their attention to this matter, and I look forward to the timely delivery of the work that needs to be undertaken.

In view of the recent indication that our government is looking to reduce expenditures, our local education authority, through participation in the district education council, has begun to position

itself to respond to targets for reduction that may be forthcoming in the future. I do have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker. We do need program review in education, but it should be to the end of enhancing our investment in education, not reducing it.

We talk about early intervention and investment at the front end, which will save us money down the road. We are just starting to see some of the rewards of some of those investments right now. It's not time to start randomly or recklessly introducing cutting initiatives to satisfy across-the-board-style reduction targets. I know that is not the intent of this government. It appears there may be a disconnect between what Members envision in supporting strategic reductions in areas of low impact in government waste, and the message that was received by departments, boards and agencies.

I won't be supporting turning our backs on commitments to such things as reducing the pupil-teacher ratio and improving literacy, just to name a couple. We need, in fact, to look further for enhancements to our education system that would see adequate funding for special needs students in our schools and greater options for learning streams in our high schools. Again, that is just to name a couple.

In education the needs are great and the priority must stay high. Any reductions in funding to education at this time could prove to be detrimental to a system that's already under considerable pressure.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED TU NEDHE RESIDENTS

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Today I would like to mention some of the people in the Tu Nedhe riding that have passed away since we last sat. There were people from Tu Nedhe and also people that currently were living in Tu Nedhe.

First, there is the late Judith Buggins, who was in her 90s, who passed away here in Yellowknife. Judith was a well-known elder from Fort Resolution who lived there for the majority of her life and spent about the last 20 to 25 to 30 years here in Yellowknife. She was the mother-in-law to former Premier Antoine and grandmother to my constituency assistant right now.

There is Alfred Hilaire, a former Rocher River resident who lived in Fort Resolution for the past 40 years, who passed away in the elders' facility in Fort Resolution.

Here in Yellowknife, Celine Conrad, who is formerly from Lutselk'e. Her maiden name was Desjarlais.

She was a well-known elder in the city of Yellowknife.

And also the untimely passing of the late Irvin Norn, who passed away in a terrible highway accident just outside of Fort Smith. Irvin Norn was a very well-known individual, one of the leaders of the community of Fort Resolution. Between Irvin's father and his mother, who are both living in Fort Resolution, Irvin had 20 siblings. So you can imagine the impact that has had on the community of Fort Resolution. Many people from around the Territories came to pay their last respects to Mr. Norn.

With that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR TERRITORIAL DEMENTIA FACILITY

**Ms. Bisaro:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity today to highlight a pressing need in our health care system.

It's well known that more and more of our residents are choosing to stay in the N.W.T. as they age instead of moving down south. It's no surprise, then, that the elder segment of our population is increasing — actually, it's three times the national rate.

Health issues associated with aging are surfacing and stressing our health care programs, our facilities and our residents. Unfortunately, our health care system more and more must manage geriatric illnesses. Perhaps the most challenging of these are dementia and Alzheimer's.

Family members must watch helplessly as the parent or a sibling recedes from them and from reality. As the patient becomes lost to the real world, concerns for their safety and security move to the forefront. Patients wander away without knowledge of where they are or where they're going, not knowing the time of day or night, with no awareness of weather conditions as they go out the door at minus 40. Without realizing it, they're violent towards their caregivers.

There are no proper care facilities for dementia patients in the N.W.T. So it falls to the patients' families to struggle with how to provide good and adequate care for them. The choices are few: care for the patient at home, which means constant care 24 hours a day, seven days a week — a daunting task for any family member, no matter how much they love the patient; second, admit the patient to a hospital to be cared for there, a facility neither designed for long-term care nor secure for these patients; or, last, send the loved one out to a dementia facility in the south, a heart-wrenching decision.

None of these choices is the right choice. This House has an opportunity to make inroads on the dilemma currently facing families and caregivers of dementia patients. Planning is underway for a badly needed Territorial dementia centre, the culmination of much dedication and hard work on the part of the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors in conjunction with the Government of the Northwest Territories and with assistance from a community-minded Yellowknife business.

A completed centre will meet the unique needs of dementia patients, afford them a good quality of life and give peace to their families. Our Northern elders deserve the best we can provide for them. This facility will do that. Over the next few weeks Members can ensure that the building of this centre becomes a reality. I urge all Members to think of our elders and support this project.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
NUMBER OF N.W.T.  
HEALTH CARE CARDS

**Mr. Menicoche:** Mahsi. [English translation not provided.]

According to the information I have obtained from the Department of Health and Social Services, as of December 2007 there are 46,000 N.W.T. health care cards in circulation. This is interesting, in that N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics estimates that we only have 42,000 residents. That means 4,000 people who do not live in the N.W.T. may carry this valid form of government ID as well as the right to access our N.W.T. medical services at our expense.

We have all heard stories of how an N.W.T. health care card is a valuable resource in securing employment with the diamond mines. However, my concern today is related to the potential impact on the financial bottom line of our health care system.

The Department of Health and Social Services, to their credit, have acknowledged that there is indeed a problem and have indicated that they will be working with the Audit Bureau in the coming months to review and improve registration procedures. That is a good start, and I look forward to this House being kept informed of the department's progress in refining the registration process.

The department's response also indicated it would take significant effort and resources to validate residencies on an ongoing basis. I can accept that it may not be the best use of our resources to establish a dedicated unit to determine whether 4,000-or-so phantom residents are impacting our N.W.T. health care costs. However, there are steps the department can take to ensure our system is not being taken advantage of by non-residents. For

example, persons accessing our generous supplementary health benefits and having the costs of prescriptions and chronic conditions covered should be required to provide proof of residency.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mr. Menicoche:** A person being referred south for non-life-threatening treatment could also be required to prove residency before being sent. These are just a couple of examples of small measures that could be taken to ensure our health care system is not being taken advantage of. We should not be carrying more patients than necessary.

Finally, I would hope the majority of the 4,000 extra health care cards we have belong to persons who have transferred to other jurisdictions, and there is nothing more sinister going on than poor paperwork. With that being said, I strongly believe we need to take steps to ensure costs are contained and non-resident abusers of our health care systems are identified and prosecuted.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mr. Ramsay:** During our last session in November I asked a number of questions pertaining to the Deh Cho Bridge project and how it was that the Government of the Northwest Territories signed off on a concession agreement three days prior to the last Territorial election.

Mr. Speaker, just today, Members received a letter from the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation in response to questions that have been asked about the project. I'd like to thank them very much for their letter and, once again, state for the record that I'm not opposed to a bridge being built across the Mackenzie River. I respect and admire the conviction and the courage shown by the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation and the people in Fort Providence to get the project to where it is today.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is about the process, the government's involvement, and the lack of accountability and transparency in that process. During the life of the last government I sat through numerous briefings on the Deh Cho Bridge and was told many different things by the former government and Premier that today just are not factual. Someone has to be held accountable to the residents here in the Northwest Territories on the level of misinformation that was provided.

First off, the last government consistently told Members that the project was not proceeding without substantial federal dollars. The loan guarantee was increased many times while we

waited for the feds to come up with the infrastructure dollars. And then came the day that the former Premier told Members that the project was proceeding, even though it was now \$160 million and without any investment from Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, we needed to come up with an additional \$2 million per year for the project, indexed for the next 35 years. The 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly never approved the additional spending, nor were we given an opportunity to debate and vote on the money required for the project. That has always been my fundamental issue with the process.

In regard to the equity of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation, I do remember the former government selling the Members of the former Assembly on the merit of the project, as it would put a guaranteed rate of return revenue back into the community of Fort Providence.

Today this is just not a reality. The Government of the Northwest Territories signed a concession agreement with a corporation it knew was not fulfilling one of its primary objectives. Again, a process issue for the G.N.W.T.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the question of where the information is on the project. The updated detailed cost-benefit analysis continues to be as hard to find as accountability and transparency in the process. Also, the concession agreement continues to be elusive. We need to ensure the public has confidence in us to make decisions in the best interests of the Territory.

No one Premier or cabinet should ever be able to commit the G.N.W.T. to this type of expenditure without the approval of the Members of this Legislative Assembly. Mahsi.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mr. Abernethy:** During my campaign and in follow-up discussions with Members of this 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, it's clear that residents of the Northwest Territories expect a transparent and accountable government — no, actually, they demand an open, transparent and accountable government.

During this Assembly's strategic planning session, it was further reinforced by the Members that accountability and transparency should be a priority for all of us, as well as the public service as a whole.

Unfortunately, the government doesn't seem to be doing a good job of living up to this expectation. The lack of information and continual surprises arising out of the construction of the Deh Cho Bridge is a primary example of how government is not living up to the ideals of an open, transparent and accountable government.

Members of this Assembly, as well as of the previous Assembly, have continually asked the government to come forward with information that will help Northerners understand the benefits of the bridge and the impact it will have on all residents. They have also asked for clarity and transparency on the process that has moved the development of this bridge forward. Yet answers are often vague, often muddied and sometimes of no real substance. Further new wrinkles and surprises seem to come up on a fairly regular basis, often at the last minute. This is unreasonable.

If we as MLAs can't get the information, how can the government expect the people of the N.W.T. to have confidence in the G.N.W.T. and believe that we are open, accountable and transparent on any issue, including but not limited to things like the \$135 million in budget reductions currently being faced by the G.N.W.T.

As a Member of this Assembly and a long-term resident of Yellowknife and the N.W.T., I look forward to the day I can actually drive my fuel-efficient automobile across the bridge. As an MLA I would like to be proud of the Deh Cho Bridge, one of the largest infrastructure projects we have ever had. But without transparency and a reasonable distribution of information and facts from the government, it's going to be hard to be proud of it when I do drive across it.

Later this afternoon I will be asking the Premier some questions concerning the Deh Cho Bridge, and specifically about the lack of public information, transparency and accountability related to the project. The residents of N.W.T. deserve to know how we got here and what the true impact of the bridge will be. For better or for worse, honesty and transparency are important.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED NUNAKPUT RESIDENTS

**Mr. Jacobson:** The community of Tuktoyaktuk has lost four members since January. Today I would like to give the following condolences:

To Angus and Evelyn Cockney, mother Stella, great-grandparents Adam and Annie Emock for the loss of their great-granddaughter Hailey Cockney.

To Ivy Mangelanu and grandparents Charine and Clarence for the loss of Carmela Jade Mangelanu.

To Willie and Dora, Cathy and family for the passing of Rodney Kangeana.

To Tuktoyaktuk's Inavaliq elder, Joseph Sumic Pokiak, who passed away this week at age 94 years old. Condolences to Marie, Johnny, Pearl and family.

Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

In closing, I would like to wish my wife's grandmother, Dela Bourke, all the best. She is in hospital in Fort Smith. Our thoughts and our prayers are with her.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STRATEGIC LITERACY INVESTMENTS

**Mr. Bromley:** The 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly identifies a preventative approach and a focus on tackling fundamental causes of problems as an effective and efficient way to support our people. Based on some emerging statistics and understanding, we have a huge opportunity to improve both our economic and social health by simply improving basic skill levels in our population.

In fact, many of us recently met with a national specialist who estimated that a strategic investment of \$9 million to \$10 million towards improving literacy levels of groups in the N.W.T. could expect a return of the same amount within a year. That's right: one year. Improved functional literacy skills create jobs, increase work time and wage levels, and yield improved health of families. In return, these new skills pay dividends to government through increased taxation revenues and through reduced unemployment costs, health costs and income support payments.

It has been shown that those people with good basic skills accumulate many advantages, while those without skills accumulate disadvantages — often a downward spiral from generation to generation. With the delivery of literacy education, this cycle of accumulating disadvantages can be interrupted, leading to improvements in people's lives and the reversal of that downward spiral.

For every job today, workers need increasing skill levels to do their work, to solve problems and to be productive. This is due to trends in economic globalization, competition with developing countries, technology advances and other reasons. From trapping to operation of equipment and communication technologies, in our homes and in our communities, people need to have good literacy skills.

Our challenge — our opportunity — is clear. Focused and coordinated leadership to strategically invest in literacy can lead to improved lives for Northerners, greater economic development, increased revenues and reduced social and

employment costs. With good leadership on our part, program delivery and costs can be shared with important partners like the Government of Canada and industry.

Let's ensure this government provides that leadership and wise investment.

Mahsi. Thank you.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON N.W.T POWER CORPORATION COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, residents of Yellowknife have had a very concerning experience recently. With the air temperature below minus 40 Celsius, a total power outage happened. The city sat in total darkness for over an hour in many areas before it was restored. Yellowknife continues to get blackouts from time to time, and it's a topic that has been raised in this House before. This case was extreme, because it was caused at a very serious time of our year, and it bothered many constituents in my riding. In these temperatures that are so cold, it doesn't take long before the cold sweeps into your home and starts to cause problems with pipes that begin to freeze. I heard from some very concerned seniors that they didn't know what to do, because if there were a problem, who would they call or where would they go?

That brings me to my point, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to touch on the topic of communications and the lack thereof on that issue. During prolonged power outages, information must be made available to the public. There are ways to ensure that the public is informed properly. A power outage hotline could be established and promoted. That way, our people would know that power is being turned on or being dealt with and that they don't have long to wait. Or if there are problems, they can give them ideas and suggestions of where to go and what to do. This could provide some up-to-date information that's very needed.

The facts are simple: power outages happen. But we do have distribution already in place. We have the NWT Power Corp and we have the Northland Utilities system here in Yellowknife. They could send out information pamphlets within their bills.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is a public campaign needs to be held, and we can do something very simple that means a lot to our residents. In times of crisis we don't want to be hearing about the nasty stories; we want to be prepared in advance before they begin.

I will have questions for the Minister Responsible for the Power Corp to see if he will be willing to take on this initiative to make sure our constituents are informed properly if they need help.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**Mr. McLeod:** I would like to recognize my Constituency Assistant, Billie Lennie. I would also like to recognize, from Inuvik Twin Lakes, Doris Rogers, who did a fine job singing the national anthem.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I would like to recognize my beautiful wife, the one that holds the family together in our household.

**Mr. Bromley:** There are many people I would like to recognize today, starting with some elders: Ed Jeske from Yellowknife, and sitting beside him is Vivian Squires. Welcome to the gallery. And a couple of constituents: Loretta and Dick Abernethy. I think they are here; they were a minute ago. And the Alternatives North crew, the very active and amazing volunteer bunch. I see some members here: Suzette Montrieul, Ben McDonald and Steve Peterson. There are many others. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a number of people — my constituents, staff and family: Dr. Ken Woodley, Ms. Roxanna Baisi, Chaka Rukobo, Sonja Boucher, Ken Howie from UNW; and also some of my staff and family members who make it possible for me to do the job here: Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Greg Cummings; my Executive Assistant, Suzanne Desfosses; my Executive Secretary, Gail McCurdy; my Constituency Assistant, Carla Hanvold-Walker; and the best mom in the world, Mrs. Taejeong Lee.

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people I would like to recognize. First of all, I'd like to recognize Mr. Ed Jeske, a long-time Yellowknifer and hockey enthusiast; Mrs. Vivian Squires from Avens Centre; Mr. Todd Parsons, the president of the Union of Northern Workers; Lydia Bardak, a Yellowknife city councillor; Paul Reddy; and Dave Matheson.

**Mr. Abernethy:** I too want to recognize Todd Parsons, president of the Union of Northern Workers, and a resident of the Great Slave riding; as well as Vivian Squires, a resident of the Great Slave riding; and Lydia Bardak from city council.

**Ms. Bisaro:** I can't see Mr. Jeske, but I am very pleased that he's here. I once was a colleague of his, and it was a great time to work with him for me.

I would like to recognize a couple of my constituents, Barb Wyness and Matthew Smillie, from the Union of Northern Workers.

**Mr. Jacobson:** I would like to recognize my sister, Judy Payne.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** I would like to recognize and welcome the representatives of the Union of Northern Workers, and in particular — I don't have my glasses on today — I'm sure that's Roy Courtoreille up there, who does good work on behalf of the UNW in Hay River.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Like many of my colleagues here today, I would like to make a special mention of Mr. Jeske and his presence here. He makes every effort to show up at the start of each session. So, Mr. Jeske, thank you for coming.

**Mr. Speaker:** If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1-16(2) IMPACT OF POWER RATES ON THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

**Mr. Krutko:** My question is directed to the Premier in regard to my statement considering the rate structure we have in the Northwest Territories, which is very unfair. In some communities you pay 15 cents; in other communities you pay \$2.85. Because there are such vast differences in prices, we in the Territory have to seriously look at some sort of a system that's fair, equitable and affordable.

I would like to ask the Premier if he would consider the possibility of looking at levelized rates. It's been done in other jurisdictions across Canada. It's been looked at in the Yukon, Nunavut, Labrador and Newfoundland, and other places where we have isolated communities. It's important that we tackle this issue in light of the financial situation we find ourselves in. This is something that we have to seriously look at.

I would like to ask the Premier if he, as Premier of the Northwest Territories, is willing, along with his cabinet colleagues, to seriously take a close look at this matter and try to find a solution to this problem.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** The cost of living is an important factor in the Northwest Territories, as I stated earlier. We do have to look at how we try to either slow the cost drivers that are involved in delivering energy in the Northwest Territories or, in fact, change the way we develop power.

There are a number of things we can look at, as I talked about: a continued expansion of hydroelectricity in the Northwest Territories; or, for example, when the Mackenzie pipeline is built, we can run gas in the communities and displace the diesel fuel that's being used, as a potential option.

One of the other areas, which the Member touched base on, is looking at how the rate structure is done. I know that was discussed in previous Assemblies, but we as the government of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly would have to look at how we address that in the Northwest Territories, knowing that the costs continue to climb in that area.

**Mr. Krutko:** As we know, there have been efforts in the past to look at this issue. There was talk about a one-rate zone, but the government of the time fired the whole board of the Power Corporation, so I don't think you'll want to try that again.

I would like to ask the Minister: will he look at an alternative, a one-rate-zone system, and consider looking at a levelized rate system in the Northwest Territories so that it's fair, it's transparent and everyone knows exactly what the real cost is? More importantly, how we can afford power in our communities instead of continuing to subsidize this power arrangement where it's going to cost the government in the next two years \$11 million a year by way of a subsidy?

I think we have to find a better use of that subsidy than simply continuing to subsidize people's power and bring down the rates. So will the Premier and his cabinet seriously consider levelized power rates?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct that we do have to look at that rate structure. We do have an energy committee amongst cabinet. They're looking at the whole area of energy and how it's produced and delivered, and that can be one of the areas they look into. Ultimately, it will come to this Assembly for a decision if we're to make any changes, so it would have to be this Assembly that would make a decision for any actual changes.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, as a Member I'm willing to bring a motion forward if that's what it's going to take to get this government to move. So I'd just like to put the Premier on notice that I will be bringing a motion forward, preferably next week, on this matter, and we can at that time debate it in this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for question period is not to make statements. I didn't hear a question there.

QUESTION 2-16(2)  
N.W.T POWER CORPORATION  
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I referred in my Member's statement about one of the problems with the NWT Power Corp as I see it. We know there are consistently three problems, which are rates, as just highlighted by the other Member; reliability, as I suggested in my statement; and certainly communication, which has come out quite clearly in the riding in the last week.

To the third issue I'd like to ask the Minister Responsible for the NWT Power Corporation: would he look into setting up a communication strategy and plan so we can ensure that our residents can get timely information if there is a power outage, and if there is some need of urgency and they need to know what to do or where to go, they'll have access to that information? Would the Minister look into that issue?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, the Power Corporation operates in one of the most difficult environments with the cold weather, especially in this day and age. The Power Corporation also has emergency plans and policies. I would gladly look into this issue in terms of determining a type of emergency plan to have in place for long-term power outages in the communities.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I'll accept that offer of following through on that potential communication plan.

To follow up on the real liability issues I highlighted in my Member's statement, some days we can see that after minus 40, just like Air Canada, they don't seem to fly. I'm curious that the pressures of the southern-built power stations.... Maybe that's the issue.

What is the reliability problem after minus 40 that our power stations seem to suffer from? And what is the Minister doing about that?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, the Power Corporation has a very good reliability system here. In all situations the corporation takes it seriously to review its operations, what happened, what went wrong. I'll be happy to work with the Member and possibly the City of Yellowknife and the other departments he thinks would serve the people of Yellowknife in terms of letting them know, in terms of the power outage, where they can get hold of the appropriate type of people to advise them on the length of the power outages.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Just one last question, Mr. Speaker. As far as the communications regarding the reliability of the programs we offer — our power program, that is — can I get some feedback as to when the Minister can provide this communication



strategy? Would he be willing to see if he could provide it before the end of this session, which is almost three weeks?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, I'll provide it to the Member as soon as possible.

QUESTION 3-16(2)  
IMPROVEMENTS TO HIGHWAY NO. 6

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mahsi cho. [English translation not provided.]

Today I would like to ask questions of the Minister of Transportation regarding Highway 6. With the government's recent announcement of cutbacks, I am concerned a much-needed improvement to Highway 6 will now be set back to a much further future date. Currently, Highway 6 is not scheduled to receive any major improvements in the next 20 years, according to a capital needs assessment report. Twenty-plus years is much too long for this highway. The section of road that I'm concerned about is a 54-kilometre stretch from almost Pine Point leading to a highway all the way to Fort Resolution.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: with the recent cutbacks, will the Minister commit to looking at placing a higher priority on the major work for the much-needed improvement to the 54-kilometre unpaved section of highway between Pine Point and Fort Resolution?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, I understand there's a longstanding need to convene construction and improve the road between Fort Resolution and Pine Point, the one the Member referenced, and the section of highway to Fort Resolution. This section of highway is very close to lake level, and that can be quite unstable, especially during the springtime.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation estimates that the total job would cost up to \$56 million. I'm continually looking to see how my department can begin the priority work required to improve the road safety on Highway 6 to ensure Fort Resolution residents have good access to potential future mining and other employment opportunities in the South Slave.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mr. Speaker, would the Minister seriously look at increasing the current capital amounts scheduled for Highway 6 so the job can be completed?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** All capital projects went through the planning process. I am looking at all areas across the Northwest Territories to see about investment in our infrastructures in transportation. I would be happy to work with any Member of the House to see where we can provide safe, reliable

transportation needs in terms of providing for our people to transport goods in the North.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware if the Minister has had an opportunity recently to drive the 54 kilometres of unpaved highway between Fort Resolution and Pine Point. But I'd like to ask the Minister if he would commit to driving the unpaved section of the highway to Fort Resolution on Highway 6 with me in May so he can see firsthand the condition of that highway.

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** I thank the Member from Tu Nedhe for the invitation. I look forward to driving with the Member in the springtime or the summer. I propose that we drive when it's a convenient time for both of us and when it seems most beneficial to the people of Fort Resolution. I'll be happy to also meet with the people in Fort Resolution and the contractors and to discuss some of the issues of Highway 6 with the Member once we've finished driving that section of the road.

QUESTION 4-16(2)  
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wade in on the bridge again today. I have questions.

How can a piece of legislation passed two Assemblies ago, which envisioned a self-financing \$50 million capital project, possibly still be a go — with a green light — today in the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly, having more than tripled in price? Almost all the parameters of the project have changed, and never once has an opportunity been given back to the Members to confirm that they actually support this project. In a public government, in 2008, with Members duly elected to run the Northwest Territories, how can such a thing have been allowed to happen?

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what's driving the bridge anymore. I could tell you some people in governments long past who might have been driving the bridge. But I don't know what's driving the bridge anymore. I don't know who wants the bridge. I don't know who supports it. I don't know who wants to pay for it.

Interjection.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Well, I see we have one supporter.

You know, when we talk about government cuts.... CBC went out to the street, and people heard about reductions in government spending. They said, "Why are we building a Deh Cho Bridge, then?" The Union of Northern Workers have said, "Why are we building a Deh Cho Bridge?" The people who are going to be paying the tolls have said, "Why are we building a Deh Cho Bridge?" I'd like to ask the

Premier, or anybody who wants to answer over there: what is now driving this project?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, first let's take care of one of the rumours that are out there. The reduction scenario that we're planning to work around and targeting is not the funded Deh Cho Bridge project. Some have heard rumours out there, so let's clear that out of the way.

The fact is that the legislation that was developed and passed through this House defined the parameters of the project. The parameters talked about a number of factors. Those factors have been made public, as we've heard already. Members have been briefed on a number of those areas.

There is a provision that would come back, for example, to a vote. But it would be after the fact to establish the funding to flow through O&M payments through the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. But nothing stopped even the previous Assembly, because at this point there is an agreement in place that is driving this project. It is a concession agreement that is in place, a funding agreement. Lending institutions have signed letters. So that project is moving along as long as it meets those parameters of decisions made by a previous government.

Nothing stopped Members of the past government from removing that piece of legislation. That's what it would have required. But that wasn't done at that time. We are now in the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly where that agreement is in place, and it's moving along.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier is absolutely right: this project is going to require a vote after the fact to appropriate the funds. And it is way after the fact, because the facts have completely changed.

You know, this is about government expenditure. This project is going to call for \$2 million a year, at least, indexed over 35 years, plus \$750,000 a year for administration to collect the toll. Can we put a motion in the House, here, to kill this legislation today? You said we could have done it in the last government — remove this legislation from the books. What about a vote now?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly making a motion to get rid of that act would place us in a higher liability or risk mode, because agreements are out there. A concession agreement is in place. They're meeting their targets. The liability would go beyond our loan guarantee of \$9 million at this point.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if we could have gotten a copy of that concession agreement, we might have sought our own legal opinion about whether or not our liability would

have been extended with the signing of the concession agreement.

The Premier is asserting that for us now to kill the legislation, to kill the project, would expose us to some liability. He's obviously privy to information that we are not privy to, because we haven't even seen the concession agreement yet, never mind voted on it or supported it.

Anyway, I'd like to know what the Auditor General thinks of this whole process. There must be, someplace out there, an independent opinion that could look at what has transpired here and give us an opinion about it.

Would the Premier please give us a copy of the concession agreement so we can get an independent legal opinion? Please give us a copy of all the other documentation to go to the Auditor General, so that we can say, "Does this meet the standard of transparency and accountability for a public government?"

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that during the normal review of our public accounts, the Auditor General looks at the accounts of this government and requests information from time to time when they see something they'd like to pay some attention to. The loan guarantee in this amount has been looked at and information has been requested, and we're working with her office to provide that information.

I've also committed to Members to provide information around this project and am getting that together so that I can provide that information to Members.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Unfortunately, it's too little, too late, in my opinion. Unlike my colleague Mr. Ramsay, who keeps saying he supports the bridge, I don't support the bridge anymore. I want to have been given a chance to decide how I wanted to spend \$2 million indexed over the next 35 years, and I was not given the opportunity to vote on that expenditure and that commitment.

I would like to ask the Premier if he will please make available to the Members the legal opinion that was solicited by cabinet which says that our liability has been extended by the signing of that concession agreement.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, number one, I haven't asked the department to provide a legal opinion. We know the facts that are on the table. We've been around this Assembly, this floor — a number of us, at least — for a lot of years and know the process.

Looking at the information available, I've made the comment.... The fact is that if we were to make a move now, we are increasing our liability in that

area. Do I need a legal opinion? I think we could go get one, but I didn't seek that. I did look at our risk position on this whole project, as this topic has been around for quite a number of years.

QUESTION 5-16(2)  
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up where my colleague Mrs. Groenewegen left in questioning the Premier on the Deh Cho Bridge project.

Now I want to talk about process, if I could. I want to go back to something the Premier said the last time we met in November, and that was that he was going to commit to a review of the process that allowed the Government of the Northwest Territories to sign a concession agreement committing it to a \$160 million project three days prior to the Territorial election. As we know, during a transition period, when governments are in transition and there's an election ongoing, governments are not supposed to do anything substantial and commit funds. They did, three days prior to the election.

I'd like to ask the Premier where exactly is that process, and how is he going to involve Regular Members of this House in that process so that this type of thing never happens again?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, one simple way of doing it is never to enact another piece of legislation that drives one particular project. That is an avenue, so that would always come before Members of the House. But like every act we've put in place, that act, once passed, becomes a living document of the Assembly, and Assemblies to come, until it's removed from the books.

The review that I committed to.... We will have it done very soon, and I'll be able to share that with Members and sit down with them at that point.

**Mr. Ramsay:** I would like to thank the Premier for that. I would like to ask the Premier about the review that he's undertaking. Who is involved in that review? I wonder if the Audit Bureau is involved in that type of review, or is it the Premier's Office that's doing that review? Who are the players that are involved in trying to come up with recommendations on that process?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the process starts off within the Executive and working with the appropriate departments to get the information, and at that point deciding where we proceed and what avenues we go through.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me that it's a review of the process to review the process, so we're actually going to think about how to do things so that we can try to do something. Maybe I'm a little bit mistaken in that analysis, but I'd like to

again ask the Premier: who is going to do the review of the process, and when are we going to get some information on that work that's been done? I just don't want a high-level analysis done by the Department of Executive. I want something substantial, and I think the Audit Bureau should be involved.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, when I talked about looking at the process, I was looking at the project timelines, information that flowed between particular departments to committees, to this Assembly — whether it was through supplementary process — and decisions made right to the point of the concession agreement being signed.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, we have to state that but for the fact that this concession agreement was signed as late as it was, it is politically one that is being debated. The fact is that the numbers being used today were shared with Members of the past Assembly prior to that concession agreement being signed.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about numbers being provided to Members of the last government. That brings me to my next question. Where is the detailed, updated cost-benefit analysis of the project, which Members have never seen? We saw one five years ago when the project was \$60 million, but the government has yet to provide this House with a detailed, updated cost-benefit analysis. Where is that?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, I did receive a letter from the committee regarding this project. They requested a number of pieces of information, and we are very close to having that all together and providing it to the committee. We'll have that before this session is done.

QUESTION 6-16(2)  
G.N.W.T. FISCAL STRATEGY

**Ms. Bisaro:** My question is for the Minister of Finance.

There have been many backroom and many front-room discussions in the week since the Minister announced the government's new fiscal strategy. They've been held by Members of this House, members of the public service, members of service organizations, members of the general public and members of the media. We all have an opinion on the announcement. Some are approving and some are not. Unfortunately, many opinions are based on hearsay and minimal information.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance about the proposed \$135 million budget reduction. Is that over a two-year period, and is there a second element in the fiscal strategy to reinvest some of the money found in the budget reduction?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I thank Ms. Bisaro for that question. The fact is that it is targeted for a two-year time frame. There is a portion of it that we are looking to reinvest back into those priorities we set as the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. As we've found out, I guess one could say, from past practice, even though we may target for a two-year window, some of the actual results may not prove themselves up for even the time beyond that. But the target is that we have a two-year window to operate in to try to find enough savings as well as the reinvestment portion.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Minister.

Can the Minister provide an overview of the reinvestment segment of this fiscal strategy? How and when will the money be put back in?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, earlier today, in my sessional statement, I highlighted the number of areas that we are going to use as strategic initiatives that align themselves with the goals of this Assembly. As we find the revenues to reinvest, that would be combined through reducing overall expenditures of government — identifying dollars within departments that could be reinvested — our goal was to try to invest, starting this year, and building up over the life of this Assembly.

I'll have to put a caveat on that. Depending on the choices we make and the quality or quantity of the overall number that we do get in our first year of reductions, that will give us the amount we can look at reinvesting. So if we find less in the first year, there'll be less for reinvestment.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you for that, Minister.

With the implementation of that fiscal strategy, I am wondering if the Minister can advise whether or not there will be a reduction in the number of public service employees.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, our goal in this area is to look at how we spend our dollars on programs, the value for the investments we are making and the results we are actually producing. We have to look at that type of investment.

When you look at the total overall number and our compensation benefits package and the people we have working for us, it looks to be almost half the overall budget that we have in the Northwest Territories. There will be some impact.

Our work is not to target a number of people; our work is focused on programs. As we make decisions on how we proceed, we will be working through the channels to inform all those affected, in a timely manner, so they have a lot of time to look at what options may be available to them.

QUESTION 7-16(2)  
SINGLE-RATE  
ELECTRICAL POWER ZONES

**Mr. Menicoche:** I want to lend support to the Member for Mackenzie Delta with respect to the one-rate zone. That's a topic that's near and dear to myself and all the people in Nahendeh. We've been struggling a lot in the last couple of years, particularly the residents and the businesses. I don't know if the government is going to include this in part of their evaluation of cost savings and assisting us with the cost of living.

I want to know, perhaps from the Minister of PUB, where they're at with evaluating the one-rate zone, or levelized rate zones, for the Northern residents.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question was to the Minister Responsible for the Public Utilities Board, but I.... Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** The question is best put to ourselves, or at least myself, at this point.

The Public Utilities Board will review under existing conditions and operations. At one point, questions were asked about the PUB and a one-rate zone. The PUB has put it on record that they're working with the existing rate structure that's in place. If we're to change that, it would have to be directed from this level, this Assembly. That is something that would be looked at.

We have a number of factors. One of those is the strategic initiatives committee on reducing the cost of living. That will be looking at a number of factors across the North — energy and how we deal with that. The refocusing piece is another piece. We also have an Energy Ministers committee that will look at a number of factors. There are a number of opportunities there that we can review as to how we direct the next stage.

**Mr. Menicoche:** I'd like to thank the Premier for answering that question. That's a very important one. We should examine that, because I do believe there is enough support from Members on this side of the House to be moving forward to some kind of revitalized electricity rate structure out there. We are living with an old, archaic system that I believe needs changes and needs reviewing, and I hope this government can look at that.

Once again, does the Premier commit to having a good look at our rate structure and reviewing it for this year?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** In the process we would look at for doing that, there are potentially two areas: our energy committee of Ministers, as well as reducing the cost of living, which is an initiative underneath the plans. We would like to go with that plan. Those processes would involve Members. As well,

recommendations from Members of this House back to us could help us in adding that to the work that's going to be reviewed.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Absolutely, you will get lots of support. As well, the Member for Mackenzie Delta did mention that we'll be moving a motion in this sitting of the House to help direct the government in that direction. Once again, it is hurting our communities; it's hurting our businesses. In fact, in one of my smaller communities, Wrigley, a store shut down in the fall because they couldn't sustain the O&M from power rates. That's something that needs immediate attention. Once again, I ask the government to have a serious review and look at this important issue. Mahsi.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** The high cost of energy is a serious issue in the North for a lot of our communities, smaller communities, as well as the forced growth costs of the government that we deal with. It is an area where we will have to do a review. We'll have to look at options, and options will be presented, whether it is in rate structure or structure of our power support program — all of those factors would have to be reviewed and the options presented to Members to see where we go in this area.

#### QUESTION 8-16(2) STRATEGIC LITERACY INVESTMENTS

**Mr. Bromley:** My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Given the clear opportunity for improving lives, increasing revenues and reducing costs that improved literacy skills provide, and given cabinet's recent meeting with literacy specialist Mr. Scott Murray, brought in by the N.W.T. Literacy Council, what changes are you proposing to support and enhance literacy education in the Northwest Territories so we can enjoy these returns?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mahsi. I appreciate the Member's question on this specific topic. It is very important to our government system and also to the N.W.T. as a whole.

I have met with Mr. Scott Murray doing data analysis and also a survey that has been conducted. There is really a lot of helpful information within the package. This is all preliminary. I just met with him last week. Certainly, this is a document that we as a department can work with, along with Mr. Bromley and other Members, to just move forward on this. We do provide various literacy programs and funding in the 33 communities we serve. We are looking into this.

Thank you for the question. Mahsi.

**Mr. Bromley:** I am aware of the adult literacy and basic education programs in the communities. I

understand that most of those positions are currently filled, which is great. That's progress.

I'm also interested in what role this department will take in leading a coordinated response, which seems to be a core kernel of this opportunity. Coordination of both federal and industry roles has the benefits of sharing costs and program delivery, but again, I would like to see this government take a leadership role. We know our people. We know their needs.

What role is this department taking to ensure that that leadership is provided as well as the direct support for the programs?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** We do have a strategy in place that's been conducted since last year: the N.W.T. Literacy Strategy summative evaluation. It consists of our department — Education, Culture and Employment — and also Health and Social Services, Aurora College, N.W.T. Literacy Council, non-government organizations, literacy service providers, aboriginal organizations, and industries. There is a strategy in place that our department is pursuing, and recommendations are being brought forward. The target date for completion of the draft N.W.T. Literacy Strategy is April 2008. Mahsi.

**Mr. Bromley:** I'm looking forward to that strategy. I realize it has been a five-year program review. This apparently is a huge opportunity for economic development and should catch the ear of this government.

What role will the Members on this side of the House have for input into that strategy?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** As other Members would indicate, we value input from Regular Members on any initiative that we pursue as a government, because we are doing this for Northwest Territories. This strategy, as I stated, is in a draft format, and it will be coming through our department to review. Prior to that happening, this information will certainly be shared with Members, because we would like to share in the feedback they receive from the communities they represent. Mahsi.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** I understand that literacy programs can be most effective when they are targeted for particular groups of people. There are something like five or six different groups of people that have quite different needs. I want some assurance that the program will recognize those needs. It is sort of a new insight in the last few years, so I am looking for some assurance from the Minister that that sort of detail will be addressed in that strategy. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Surely. That information will certainly be taken into consideration, as we do have different sectors on the committee. They provide various inputs from different jurisdictions, so certainly that will be available.

Mahsi.

QUESTION 9-16(2)  
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mr. Abernethy:** During my Member's statement, I talked about transparency and accountability, particularly related to the Deh Cho Bridge project. My question is directed to the Premier.

I am glad to hear that information related to the cost-of-living analysis is going to be coming our way — hopefully, by the end of this session — and I think that is a great first step, but it's just a first step. I hear people in the community, residents, whether they support the bridge or whether they are opposed to the bridge, asking questions. They don't even understand what is going on. And they are looking for the cost-benefit analysis as well.

In addition to getting it to the Regular Members, I would like the Premier to commit to sharing that information and communicating information around the bridge and the process that has been followed to date to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the information will be coming. It will be before the end of session. Hopefully within the next few days we will be able to get that into the hands of Members.

The other piece of information going out with it... I am aware that the bridge corporation is planning to do some information sessions. I'm not sure just how they have structured that, but I am aware they are looking to get information out there about the project as well. We can have a discussion about the cost-benefit analysis that we provide to Members and see if we want to distribute that further.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Once again, to the Premier, it's great that the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation is planning to do some of those information releases, but the government is still on the dime for this to a tune of \$160 million. I think we have a responsibility as a government to share some of the information with the public, because they are asking us as well.

So once again, I'd like to get the Premier to commit to developing some sort of communications plan about our role in the bridge and the costs to the residents of the Northwest Territories and Yellowknife.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, we can provide, from our side, the information and get it out there. It would be those communities that are affected by a decision like this — Providence, Yellowknife and

some of the other communities. We can share that information.

When we talk about the overall project of \$165 million, when you look at the government's piece of it outside of the O&M cost.... When you look at that additional cost, at the end of 35 years the additional investment would be more in the area of \$70 million, and tolls would be paying for the rest.

QUESTION 10-16(2)  
DECISION OF THE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

**Mr. McLeod:** I do support the concept of a one-rate zone. I spoke before on the power rate increases in Inuvik again. Luckily we have a subsidy from the government that helps to offset some of these costs; otherwise, we'd all have to move out of the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to direct my line of questioning today to the Minister Responsible for the Public Utilities Board, who oversees the applications that come in for rate increases. I'd like to ask the Minister: once the decisions are made, does the Minister have to sign off these decisions?

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board is an arm's-length board from the Government of the Northwest Territories. As the Minister Responsible for the PUB, I can appoint board members to the board, but I don't sign off on any decisions the board makes.

**Mr. McLeod:** That's where I would like to go next. These are decisions affecting people that we represent, so I think we should have a say in the decisions that are made.

I'd like to ask the Minister what we would have to do to have decisions that are made by the Public Utilities Board endorsed by the Legislative Assembly, because it does affect all the people that we represent. I believe we need to have a say in the decisions that are made from now on.

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** I think it's important for the public to understand the role the Public Utilities Board plays. The board reviews all applications for rate increases by a regulated power body. If the Public Utilities Board were not there, there would be no opportunity for review and for input by the public, and by affected sectors, to examine rates that have been put forward by utilities and corporations. Over the years the Public Utilities Board decisions have probably resulted in savings to the average consumer of a significant amount.

**Mr. McLeod:** If there were savings to the average consumer, then I wouldn't be asking these questions. There is a frustration out there that too many of these applications are rubber-stamped by

the Public Utilities Board. I understand the need to operate at an arm's length, like I said.

The Public Utilities Board seeks public input into the applications. Are they required to hold public hearings so the public can put their input into these decisions? I am sure they would hear the exact opposite of everything else that is out there. They'll give them their feedback into the proposed rates and how it is going to affect them. So is there a requirement to hold a public hearing, and if there is, is there a cost to it?

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** The Public Utilities Board, once it has received an application for rate increases, holds a public hearing and also provides for intervener funding. The hearings play a large part in the rulings by the Public Utilities Board.

My experience is that the Public Utilities Board doesn't take the applications and rubber-stamp the approval; it takes its responsibilities very seriously. In its most recent applications, the Public Utilities Board has in fact ruled to reduce the amount that had been applied for. So I think the Public Utilities Board is a part of the regulatory function of the Northwest Territories.

I should also point out that with the approval and acceptance of the 2007 N.W.T. energy plan, we do have an electricity rate review that is undertaken that is provided for through the energy plan. One of the key principles that we are working towards with the energy plan is affordable power for all residents. This review will look at the regulation of energy, the provision of subsidy and the way in which rates are determined.

**Mr. Speaker:** Final supplementary, Mr. Robert McLeod.

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for that.

The significant savings that he may be speaking about here.... There was a \$2 million shortfall that the NWTPC asked for three and a half months to recover. The Public Utilities Board said, "We'll give you 12 months." They are still going to recover the shortfall, so really, in my opinion, it isn't a significant savings to the general public.

I would like to ask the Minister again. This is something that is affecting people that we represent, so I think we as an Assembly should have some say into some of these decisions. So I'd like to ask the Minister again: is it possible for this Assembly to have approval over the final decisions that are made or recommended by the Public Utilities Board?

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** Part of the review that is being undertaken.... My expectation is that we would come up with options which would entertain exactly

what the Member is putting forward. And that would be one of the options that we would look at.

QUESTION 11-16(2)  
IMPACT OF FISCAL STRATEGY  
ON COMMUNITY FUNDING LEVELS

**Mr. Jacobson:** Mr. Speaker, this is concerned with all the media regarding the cutbacks. Local community government seldom errs, but they have been asking me to ask: is this going to affect the new deal with these cutbacks?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, as we're aware, there's been a lot of work done by the department and Department of Community Affairs in building that program and giving more authority and increasing budgets to communities. We haven't made a decision as to the full impact of decisions we'll accept as areas of reduction or areas of reinvestment. So at this time it's difficult to say what impact would be felt in any department at this point. Departments have started their work, started evaluating, have been submitting that back. That review is ongoing at this point.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Mr. Speaker, to the Minister, just to let you know.... I mean, for the riding of Nunakput, we say tough love, but we have it tough enough. Really consider that in your deliberations with your caucus, and remember, not everybody lives in Yellowknife. We live on the Beaufort Sea. And the people.... This is a shortfall to my people, and it's going to affect everybody.

**Mr. Speaker:** I didn't hear a question there. It's a statement.

QUESTION 12-16(2)  
NORTHERN RESIDENCY TAX DEDUCTION

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I think some of my constituents in the last little while, over the Christmas season.... The issue of the Northern residency tax deduction has come up a couple of times now.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, when you're in the opposition party and when you're proposing a new idea or a new initiative to the party that's in government, we know that they respond to you like you're a little mosquito, even if it is a good idea. They sort of say, "Good idea, but shoo!" You know, Mr. Speaker.

So instead of taking up this issue with our MP, who's actually in the fourth party — or, I should say, our third opposition party — would the Premier consider taking this issue up with the other Northern Premiers, Premier Fentie and Premier Okalik? The fact is we're going to get a much stronger, clearer voice from a non-partisan perspective brought forward to Ottawa. I wonder if it

would be received much more efficiently and effectively if it were done in that type of proposal.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, that work has been done. In my role as Finance Minister I've contacted Northern Premiers and then went beyond to other Finance Ministers across the country. At the meeting we had before Christmas with the Minister of Finance for Canada, Minister Flaherty, I put that on the table as well as followed up with a letter to him, and I'm waiting for a response.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, it's pleasant news to finally hear it live, here in the flesh, for the first time. I'd encourage the Premier to make sure he articulates these groundbreaking movements on subjects like this to all Members.

Mr. Speaker, is he also seeking other support from maybe our Senators and other MPs like this? The fact is the Premiers are the big issue. What type of information and support is he really getting from them? Is it one of those "Good idea, but we'll just sign on so it looks good on the letterhead"? Or is he getting real support, whereas then they'll break some real ground on this issue?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is.... To focus, we need to put our energy where we're going to get the results and then working with other Finance Ministers — territorial, provincial — and bringing it to the table of the federal Finance Minister, seeking his input and, hopefully, his support. We're waiting for his response at that point. It's my understanding they're looking at their budget process now.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Well, I'm just going to leave it at that, but I want to highlight the fact that it's being brought up by a lone opposition member again, in a party that's not recognized as the Official Opposition, so it's going to be treated as a far-down priority.

The fact is that we all know there's a looming potential election coming up, and even if the Conservatives return, it's a good time to start putting a full-court press on this issue. Maybe we can get some serious commitments in advance of a potential election. It's good to continue citing or screening this issue toward southern candidates so they realize the difficulty. How many times have we heard about the power rates, the cost of food and whatnot being raised in this House? Would the Premier be willing to crank up the pressure on this issue so it's on the national agenda?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** As I stated earlier, I already approached my Territorial colleagues, and I approached the provincial Finance Ministers. We addressed it at the Finance Ministers' meeting before Christmas, and I followed up with a letter, so we're waiting for their response. I've been to the

federal Finance department to see if they would be looking at it.

As well, for the record, as is pointed out by the Member, we've had our MP in Ottawa make mention of this, address it in Parliament. Unfortunately, the result from that process was not a positive one, and I'm not sure if that will have an impact on our approach.

QUESTION 13-16(2)  
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask some more questions of the Premier in regard to the Deh Cho Bridge process and project. It gets back to what I believe is a fundamental foundation for the reason for the project going forward during the life of the last government.

On a continual basis the Members of the last Assembly were told that benefits would accrue to the community of Fort Providence via the \$5 million equity stake that the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation would have in the project. It was a guaranteed rate of return, Mr. Speaker. That money was going to do some good things in Fort Providence, so the last government told us. That situation has changed, and I'm wondering if the Premier could elaborate a little bit today on what the current disposition of that equity arrangement is with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** The concession agreement talks about a maximum \$5 million equity portion. The Deh Cho Bridge Corporation has informed us that they do have their equity in place. It's not up to the \$5 million mark. That has an effect on the rate of return, of course.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Premier would be able to tell the Members of the House and the public here in the Northwest Territories: who are the partners in the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation today? Mahsi.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I'm aware, because of our discussions around the concession agreement, that they do have their equity in place — again, not to the \$5 million. I believe they're right around the \$4 million mark. They have a partner that's partnered up with them, along with themselves and another corporation within, I believe, Fort Providence. I would have to work with them to ensure I can sit down and provide the information to Members. I'm not sure if I can make it public at this point.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, it's a substantial amount of government public dollars going into a project, and we can't find out who the partners are. That's par for the course with the project and with the process, and I think that's something, again, that's flawed.



I'm wondering if the Premier could commit to making some type of announcement on who the partners are in that project. I've said it before and I'll say it again: perhaps the government should take a look, if there's a guaranteed rate of return there.... And I don't want to come out and say who that partner is, either. But maybe the Government of the Northwest Territories should put in that equity if they're going to get a guaranteed rate of return, rather than see it go somewhere else.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I'm sure the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation, once they get a record of what is stated here, will maybe have that discussion. They have put in place, right now, their equity piece. They forwarded it. That doesn't mean that can't change or shares can't be bought out in the future, or a number of factors fall in place. The fact is the lower their equity, the lower the guaranteed rate of return. In a sense, that helps us as a government, but it doesn't help them out. I will look to putting the information together and providing Members with the information we can get to them.

**Mr. Ramsay:** I'm just wondering if the Premier could comment on the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. I know they've had some struggles, and they've gotten to where they are today through a lot of hard work, but why has it taken so long for the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation to come up with the \$5 million in equity? The foundation of the project, and the benefits, were going to come out of that \$5 million, and if it's not there today, it's not the same story we were told during the life of the last government.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** This project has definitely spanned a number of governments. And the processes that were established.... As I am aware, the bridge corporation is looking at doing a public information process in the very near future. I think this may be an opportunity to have a discussion with them to see how much information they would be able to provide and respond to that area and go forward on that basis. As the Government of the Northwest Territories, there is an impact, as I stated, on the amount of equity that's put forward and the rate of return that would go back to the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation.

I have to apologize. I didn't catch the last bit.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 8, written questions.

### Written Questions

QUESTION 1-16(2)  
G.N.W.T. PUBLIC SERVICE/  
NWT POWER CORPORATION  
SALARIES AND BONUSES

**Mr. Abernethy:** I have written questions here on the G.N.W.T. public service and the N.W.T. Power

Corp salaries and bonuses. My questions are for the Minister of Human Resources.

- 1) What is the average current salary of deputy ministers in the G.N.W.T. public service?
- 2) What is the average current salary of senior managers in the G.N.W.T. public service?
- 3) What is the total amount of bonuses paid to deputy ministers, senior managers and excluded employees in each of the last three fiscal years?
- 4) What is the average current salary of senior managers in the NWT Power Corporation?
- 5) What was the total amount of bonuses paid to staff and senior managers of the NWT Power Corporation in the last three fiscal years?

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 9, petitions. Item 10, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 11, tabling of documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**Ms. Bisaro:** I would like to table a document entitled *Empowering Our Children's Futures: The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife and N'dilo*.

The Yellowknife and N'dilo Aboriginal Head Start program has become a model for the rest of Canada and is celebrating their ten-year anniversary. The *Empowering Our Children's Futures* report includes results collected from monitoring the program quality, school readiness, social skills and parental feedback. Aboriginal Head Start is an early-intervention program for aboriginal children and their families that includes programming in culture, language, school readiness, health, promotion of nutrition, parental involvement and social support.

Document 1-16(2), *Empowering Our Children's Futures: The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife and N'dilo*, tabled.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 12, notices of motion. Item 13, notices of motion for first reading of bills.

### Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 1  
INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT,  
2008-2009

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I give notice that on Friday, February 8, 2008, I will move that Bill 1, Interim Appropriation Act, 2008-2009, be read for the first time.

BILL 2  
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT,  
NO. 3, 2007-2008

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I give notice that on Friday, February 8, 2008, I will move that Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2007-2008, be read for the first time.

BILL 3  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE  
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, February 8, 2008, I will move that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, be read for the first time. Mahsi.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 14, motions. Item 15, first reading of bills. Item 16, second reading of bills. Item 17, Orders of the Day. Mr. Clerk.

**Orders of the Day**

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the Day for Thursday, February 7, 2008, 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 5) Returns to Oral Questions
- 6) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

- 7) Acknowledgements
- 8) Oral Questions
- 9) Written Questions
- 10) Return to Written Questions
- 11) Replies to Opening Address
- 12) Petitions
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
- 21) Report of Committee as a Whole
- 22) Third Reading of Bills
- 23) Orders of the Day

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 7, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 3:42 p.m.