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The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 2001

Members Present

Honourable Roger Allen, Honourable Jim Antoine, Mr. Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Dent, Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Nitah, Honourable Jake Ootes, Mr. Roland, Honourable Vince Steen, Honourable Tony Whitford.

ITEM 1: PRAYER

-- Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Please be seated. Good morning, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 12-14(4): Signing of the Deh Cho Framework and Interim Measures Agreements

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that on May 23rd in Fort Simpson, Grand Chief Michael Nadli of the Deh Cho First Nations, the Honourable Robert Nault, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and I signed the Deh Cho Framework Agreement and the Deh Cho Interim Measures Agreement. The signing of these two agreements signaled the conclusion of 18 months of hard work by all three parties.

The Framework Agreement sets out the purpose, process, and timetable for main table negotiations and identifies 43 subject matters for negotiation.

The Interim Measures Agreement, which will be in effect until a Final Agreement is in place, provides that the GNWT will seek the support of affected Deh Cho First Nations with respect to:

- new leases on undeveloped Commissioner's land in and around communities;
- the issuing of new forest management authorizations; and
- the issuing of new outfitters, outpost camp and lodge licences.

Mr. Speaker, more work lies ahead for negotiators who will begin in early July to implement provisions of the Deh Cho Interim Measures Agreement and begin negotiation of an agreement-in-principle on lands, resources and self-government. I wish them well in these negotiations and urge them to work together to build a consensus and keep the Deh Cho process moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, over 500 people attended the signing ceremony at the Papal Grounds in Fort Simpson on May 23rd. The weather could not have been better and a feast and drum dance followed the signing of these two important agreements.

I want to thank the organizers who did such a wonderful job hosting the event, everyone involved with preparing the delicious feast, the young people who performed so well for

dignitaries and guests and lastly, the talented drummers who kept people dancing until midnight. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Minister Antoine. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Minister's Statement 13-14(3): Progress on the Health and Social Services System Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that the review of the health and social services system is nearing completion. This comprehensive review considered all previous health and social services reports and reviews and in addition, over 350 personal interviews with stakeholders were held. I want to publicly thank all those individuals who took the time to offer their insights, comments and recommendations for change.

We will soon receive a detailed report that will deliver practical, tangible recommendations about how to improve our current system, including how the department needs to change its structure and operations to effectively support the system. This report will be released to Members of this Assembly and the public on June 25, 2001, which is the date that I expect to receive it from our consultant, Cuff and Associates. I now want to outline the steps we will follow after the release and explain how we will respond to the recommendations in the report.

Mr. Speaker, we will first make the report publicly available to all interested parties. We will mail it to key stakeholders and additional copies will be available at all health and social services centres and from the Department of Health and Social Services. The report will also be posted to the department's website for those wishing to access it through the Internet.

Interested parties will have an opportunity to read the recommendations and provide any final comments until August 1, 2001. At that time, the department will prepare its formal response to the recommendations and a detailed system action plan for implementation.

Mr. Speaker, I am committed to tabling the response and the system action plan during the fall session of this Assembly in October. The plan will include specific action items in response to the report's recommendations, with timelines and anticipated outcomes. The action plan will provide the basis for regular reporting to Members of this Assembly and to the public about our progress in implementing improvements.

With the changing dynamics of health care delivery, pharmaceuticals and medical technology, we must be proactive to ensure the sustainability of a high quality health and social

service system to meet the needs of all residents of the Northwest Territories. As I stated to Members of this Assembly in February, we all have the same objective -- to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that our health and social services programs deliver the best possible care to all residents in every community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 14-14(4): Human Resource Management Initiatives

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you and my colleagues with an update and information on initiatives that have been taken on the human resource management front. Over the last year or so, I believe that significant progress has been made in several areas.

Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Union of Northern Workers and Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, who represent most GNWT employees, faced their most difficult challenges during collective bargaining negotiations in 1995-96. It was at this time that the GNWT was taking difficult steps to reduce its spending. These steps included changes to the compensation package of public service employees. Division of the NWT also created some tension and strain within the public service by causing uncertainty for employees. However, the current environment has become more positive and allowed for a more proactive approach to issues.

Several positive steps have recently been taken to provide a better working environment and more certainty for the public service. Last year, a Staff Retention Policy was implemented. Mr. Speaker, this policy focuses time and energy on how the GNWT can retain its staff in situations where a function is being changed and jobs are eliminated.

A Code of Conduct has been approved and is in the process of being communicated to all employees. Mr. Speaker, this code will ensure that there is public awareness of the high standard of conduct they can count on from public service employees.

Several joint initiatives have also been undertaken with the unions. A working committee that included both the NWT Teachers' Association and the Union of Northern Workers, as well as GNWT human resource managers, finalized a new Workplace Conflict Resolution Policy. This policy has now been provided to employees. Information sessions and training are being provided on the policy. The Union of Northern Workers continues to be involved in planning the communication of the policy.

Mr. Speaker, during the last round of collective bargaining with the Union of Northern Workers, several issues were raised that required greater discussion than could be devoted to them at the bargaining table. Therefore, memoranda of understanding were signed off that allowed for further discussions and exploration of solutions on these items. They included establishing joint union-management committees to discuss casual employees, development of a monitoring process for

exclusions from the bargaining unit, reviewing what kinds of issues employees may have with children, and how to deal with violence in the workplace.

Committees have been established and discussions begun on all of these items. In addition, a joint committee was struck about two years ago to examine safety issues in the health care field. Discussions on these issues are proving to be productive and are allowing the parties to build a solid base of understanding on these issues.

There has also been considerable discussion and the involvement of the Union of Northern Workers on job evaluation matters. The union has participated in training on the Hay Job Evaluation method. This cooperative approach has resulted in some progress being made on more detailed procedures for the handling of job evaluation appeals. Over the summer, the union and the GNWT intend to begin to resolve more job evaluation appeal issues.

Mr. Speaker, significant progress has also been made recently in developing a northern workforce. I spoke earlier of working towards creating more stability within the NWT Public Service. Initiatives like Maximizing Northern Employment are critical to this goal. The enhanced Summer Student Program, Graduate Student Hiring Program, and the Guaranteed Employment for Graduates of the Northern Nursing, Social Work and Teaching Programs will serve to ensure that more Northerners obtain experience and jobs in the North. These initiatives also recognize that the GNWT must take active steps to encourage Northerners to further their education. Mr. Speaker, over the long term, this will serve to improve the NWT labour market and reduce reliance on imported labour.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to providing you with further updates in the future. We will continue to build on the progress made to date. I know the result will be an improved public service and continued work with our employees' unions to proactively address issues. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement on Tribute to Seniors of the Northwest Territories

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of the week to celebrate the commitment, the dedication and the recognition of the value we place on seniors in our society. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all that the people who have gone before us, have done for us and the measurable debt we owe them. There is a need to work very hard and long as a government to make sure we do not neglect or betray the trust that has been placed in us by seniors.

We all have seniors in our communities, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. We would not be here today if it was not for what they have done on our behalf, the sacrifices they have made and the price they have paid to raise the families, us as their children, as they expect us to raise our children.

As I pay tribute to the seniors in the Northwest Territories in my constituency, I would like to single out, if I may, Mr. Speaker, a special occasion in my constituency that is occurring today. That is the 65th wedding anniversary of John and Saraphine Evans. That is a tremendous milestone. I am sure the Speaker will concur, as the nephew of this fine couple, that these people are role models for us all. They have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They are a part of the fabric and history of the Northwest Territories and I wish them every blessing and all of the continued happiness and good health that is possible to bestow on them.

I would also ask my colleagues to recognize that particular accomplishment, especially given the regrettable trend for many marriages to barely last ten years. Here we have a couple who has put in a long, very productive life together. I wish to pay tribute to that accomplishment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Indeed, congratulations are certainly well-deserved on 65 years. Item 3, Members' statements. The Chair will now recognize the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

Member's Statement on Samuel Hearne High School Graduation Ceremonies

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague, the MLA for Inuvik Boot Lake and myself, on behalf of the constituency of Inuvik Twin Lakes, wish to extend our congratulations to the Samuel Hearne Secondary School class of 2001.

Last week, 19 students marched through the gate into the gym of Samuel Hearne Secondary School, listening to the words of congratulation and advice to receive their grade 12 diplomas.

The class of 2001 includes Benjamin Anderson, Evelyn Bernhardt, Katherine Charlie, Diane Day, Mary-Anne Kasook, Cheryl Kirby, Meeka Kisoun, Lana Lokos, Jenna MacNeal, Kevin McKie, Kristine McLeod, Mike Orbell, Sherry Rioux, Fred Seabrook, Danette Smith and Rachel St. Amand.

Another graduate is Shawna Roland, who is completing her studies through home school correspondence.

Some of these students walked away with more than their diplomas. Kristine McLeod received a bursary for being the top female student from the Royal Canadian Legion 220 McInnes Branch and also won the RCMP All Ranks Mess Bursary.

Diane Day won the Pat Petrie award for consistent effort. Kevin McKie and Fred Seabrook shared the legion's bursary for the top male student. Evelyn Bernhardt won the George Irlbacher award.

I wish all the graduates the very best, and I encourage them to further their education and to become our future leaders and professionals for the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Member's Statement on Parental Involvement and Student Success

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All week long I have been talking about education, and today I would like to talk further about the education of our children. I have been talking up to this point about how we need to put more money into the student support. We need to put more money into PTR, and we need to make sure that more money gets into the education system.

There is another critical factor that will have a profound effect, Mr. Speaker, and that is parental involvement and interest in the success of our children. I had a constituent stop me this week, Mr. Speaker, and tell me what an affect they felt the teacher was having on their child's education this year. We talked for some time about their child and how well he was doing this year, but what struck me was the parent's interest and involvement in their child. I think that really, more than anything, is one of the most critical factors. I think parents have to realize that without a quiet place to study, without nutritional meals, without early bedtimes, without taking an interest and reading to children and helping them with their homework, their children are really up against it, Mr. Speaker.

I think, in fact, children and teachers are fighting a losing battle if they do not have this parental involvement.

I know that in my life as a child, certainly without my parents having a strong influence, I would have been playing road hockey with my brother and friends late into the evening and would have been eating candy four meals a day, Mr. Speaker. I think we have to consider exactly how important parents are in their children's education.

None of us are happy with the graduation and success rate of the kids in the Northwest Territories to this point. We can do better and we know that. In fairness, Mr. Speaker, in the south, we are oftentimes talking about third and fourth generation of high school graduates. In the Northwest Territories, often we are working on first and second. In southern Canada, parents clearly have a different experience with the education system and with graduation themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is one of the reasons a program like the Aboriginal Head Start Program has been so successful, and continues to be. It requires the involvement of parents. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage parents...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bell, your time has expired.

MR. BELL: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Bell, you may conclude.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, in conclusion, I would just like to take this opportunity to encourage parents to take an active interest in the education of their children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

Member's Statement on Thomas Simpson High School Graduation Ceremonies

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, June 2nd, I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremony at Thomas Simpson High School in my home community of Fort Simpson. Families, friends and teachers gathered to celebrate the achievement of ten outstanding students from Nahendeh. At this time, I would like to publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of Catherine Blondin, Kathryn-Lee Brown, Gabriel Byatt, James Erasmus, Jermaine Gargan, Carsen Hardisty, Felix Isaiah, Denny Moses and Ericson Sanguiez.

I am encouraged, Mr. Speaker, that these young people, like all graduates across the Northwest Territories, will continue to develop their skills, will pursue their career goals, and will make a lasting contribution to their communities, to the Territory, and to Canada.

I was very honoured to be asked to speak to the graduating class and to pass on our heartfelt congratulations on behalf of us here at the Legislative Assembly.

This year, the grad slogan at the Thomas Simpson School was "growing from strong roots." Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed at how these graduates chose to honour the strong role played by their families, by their elders and by their communities in preparing and supporting their quest to complete their secondary education. No matter how these grads choose to contribute to the growth of the Northwest Territories, I am confident they will always remember their roots, respect their culture and be proud of where they come from.

On behalf of the people of Nahendeh, I would like to wish the 2001 graduates the very best life has to offer. They have demonstrated an ability to succeed, and I am confident they have the means to tackle whatever challenges and opportunities lie ahead of them in their lives. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Antoine. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement on Long-Term Value of a Road Connecting the Dogrib Communities

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, my colleague for Tu Nedhe raised concerns that the construction of a deep-sea port in the Bathurst Inlet will affect our territorial economy. If and when this port is built, it could have the capacity to service our mines and the people of the Northwest Territories will not benefit economically.

In response to Mr. Nitah's concerns, the Minister of Finance stated that he felt the best defence was a good offence, and that the government's best response would be to build up our highway system as quickly as possible. This would encourage industry to serve the whole mining area in the Northwest Territories. I agree with the Minister. However, it is a matter of

debate as to which roads should be built. The millions of dollars being spent on improving the Ingraham Trail and Lupin winter road do not make good sense. This aspect of the Highway Strategy is shortsighted and overlooks alternate routes that would better serve the people of the North and the mines.

With the many opportunities opening up to residents, because of the national and international interest in our resources, we need to make long-term investments and plans that will benefit both industry and the residents of the Northwest Territories. One way to do this is to ensure that when the diamonds are no longer in the ground, the infrastructure that we have built to access these areas is still of use to residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. LAFFERTY: A road linking the Dogrib communities and mines has countless spin-offs. The vision is economically, environmentally and socially feasible. I have raised this issue countless times. I have asked that hydropower, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a road connecting the communities be considered a priority of this government. This idea has community, territorial and global benefits. As Mr. Handley says, the best defence is a good offence. Let us get going on this issue now for a better tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement on Employment Opportunities for Nursing Program Students

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I received a letter from a constituent of mine who is currently attending the nursing program at the University of Alberta. She has completed her third year of a four-year degree program, but she is finding it difficult, Mr. Speaker, to find employment in the Northwest Territories, especially in the field of nursing.

Her frustration lies with the hiring policies of the health boards with regard to undergraduate nurses. Under the hiring practices, each health board may choose to hire nursing staff with degrees rather than hiring staff who are working towards degrees. The student feels that she competes with nurses of similar education in regard to this field, and she feels penalized for wanting to attain a higher education program with regard to the University of Alberta than in the Northwest Territories.

She can retain work in Alberta as an undergraduate nurse with the province of Alberta, yet in the Northwest Territories, we complain about the shortage of nurses and the problem of attracting aboriginal people in that field.

Mr. Speaker, this government has to restructure its policies and goals to ensure that those students who want to continue on to become registered nurses will have the opportunity for employment in the Northwest Territories and to be able to help us resolve the problem of shortages of nurses in our communities.

We need to have jobs for those students once they have completed their programs and are working towards completing

their programs so that they can come home to work in that field.

Mr. Speaker, there are programs in other areas, such as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and also the Calgary Regional Health Centre, which allow for the hiring of undergraduate nurses in the hospitals in Alberta. Yet, Mr. Speaker, that is not being practiced in the Northwest Territories. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, what is the policy of this government when it comes to undergraduate students? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement on Recognition of Hay River Volunteers and Community Organizations

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize some very deserving organizations and individuals in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the efforts of the Hay River Cooperative Play School, which has been operating in Hay River for some 27 years.

The Hay River Cooperative Play School just held its eighth annual talent auction and managed to raise approximately \$20,000 that will go towards purchasing a building for the play school in the future.

Another organization, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to recognize is the Hay River Community Health Board Foundation. Mr. Speaker, this foundation has gone out and raised some \$60,000 and purchased a hematology analyzer for the Hay River Hospital. Both of these organizations, Mr. Speaker, should be able to access much more money from this government to put infrastructure in place that they need, such as in the hospital and looking after early childhood development.

It continually amazes me, Mr. Speaker, that a community the size of Hay River is capable of raising the types of funds that they do. I would like to commend all of the businesses, individuals and service organizations for their generosity.

Another organization, Mr. Speaker, that deserves recognition today is the Hay River Track and Field Organization. As we speak, there is a track meet going on in Hay River that has attracted some 1150 athletes, coaches and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, it is with the foresight of a man by the name of Mr. Guy Turvey that this whole track meet in Hay River came into being. Mr. Turvey could be looking at one of his last years at the track meet in Hay River, but his legacy will live on for a long time. I would like to commend all of the workers, the volunteers, the organization and the athletes that are taking part in Hay River in this very worthwhile event. I was very gratified to see some 900 athletes assembled in the floor of the arena in Hay River the other night when we went over for the opening. Our future leaders, our future workforce, they are all taking part in a fantastic territorial event. I would like to wish all of the athletes the very best when they wrap up today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement on Acknowledgement of the Efforts and Successes of Deh Cho Graduates

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 2000-2001 school year is coming to an end, and today, on behalf of my constituents of the Deh Cho and myself, I would like to say congratulations to the youth who have succeeded in furthering their education in high school and in college. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the graduates from my riding. However, I would like to add a disclaimer that many of these students are still writing their exams, but I am confident that they will pass.

This year from the Hay River Reserve, we had:

- Clifford Fabien graduated from high school;
- Lori Fabien from Fairview College;
- Alana Lamalice from Acordia College;
- Victoria Martel from Grand Prairie College;
- Andy Cardinal from Grand Prairie College;
- Wanda Salopree from Grant McEwan College;
- Derek Fabien from NAIT;
- William Fabien from NAIT;
- Jennifer Lafleur from Lac La Biche College;
- Kathleen Graham from the Indigenous Environmental Resources Program in Manitoba;
- Rosemary Martel, Deborah Chambaud, Denise Sabourin, Jona Sabourin, and Kathy McArthur from the Adult Education Program in Hay River; and
- From Fort Providence, the students are:
 - Carl Squirrel, who went through the leadership program in Fort Smith;
 - Scotty McLeod, who also went through the Western Arctic Leadership Program in Fort Smith;
 - Kari Hergott from Brentwood College;
 - Louie Mckenzie from Deh Gah School;
 - Georgette Bouvier from Deh Gah School;
 - Curtis Sapp from Deh Gah School; and
 - Neil Bonnetrouge, also from Deh Gah School in Fort Providence.
- From Enterprise, we have:
 - Tracey Napatchie from high school in Hay River; and

- Andy Cadieux from the Information Management and Library Technology Program at Grant McEwan College.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pay special recognition to one of the graduates from the Reserve. Lorie Fabien took her second year at Fairview College this year. She took the transitional vocational program and she was presented with the Fairview District Association Award for People with Special Needs. I want to thank the Department of Health, the Deh Cho First Nations and the people from the Hay River Reserve who provided the assistance that enabled her to take this program.

Mr. Speaker, all of these graduates have generated a great sense of pride in their communities. They have demonstrated to their communities that receiving a diploma is something special. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Deh Cho are very proud of all of them. I wish them much success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Options to Address the High Cost of Living

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the high cost of living and what the government wants to do to help the citizens of the Northwest Territories with this. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance mentioned a tax credit yesterday in one of his statements to help with the high cost of living.

I agree with anything that will put money back into the pockets of the people of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker. I have to question the method the Minister would like to use to give money back to the people, to assist them with the cost of living.

When you introduce a tax that is based on salaries, I think it is discriminatory between low-income earners and people who make a fairly good wage. What he is introducing will give \$177 to every member of the community, or a person in the Northwest Territories who makes \$66,000 or more. It is staggered as the salary goes down. Not to mention the fact that it does not help an individual who has four or five kids and one income earner in the home. It does not address the fact that the cost of living affects all people in the Northwest Territories.

It does not address the fact that there are two reserves in the Northwest Territories who do not pay taxes and do not file claims. There are some aboriginal communities in my constituency, Treaty 8, which believe that they should not have to pay taxes. That is an arrangement between them and the federal government. They will not qualify for it. People on income support may not qualify for it.

There are too many outstanding questions. I do not understand why we have to rush this tax. The argument that Mr. Handley uses is to be able to implement with the federal government so that we can qualify for this year and next year's tax return. The road toll, if it is approved, does not kick in until January.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should rush this. I think we should give it a little more thought and possibly look at other methods of putting money back into people's pockets that are

fair to everyone, that recognizes the different living conditions, the different political initiatives, and is basically a fair system. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Nitah. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement on Arsenic Remediation Efforts

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a legacy of Yellowknife's gold mining history over the last six decades has been the production of arsenic trioxide and the adverse health risks that accompany this industry. Yellowknife residents have had concerns about arsenic levels in the city for many years, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to note that progress is being made on how to manage this serious issue.

I would like to recognize the ongoing work of the Yellowknife Arsenic Soil Remediation Committee, sometimes known as YASRC. It is a coalition, Mr. Speaker, of all levels of government, community, aboriginal and mining groups whose task is to determine at what point arsenic levels pose real threats to our public health and environment.

The other day in this House, the Minister for RWED noted that the improvement in air quality in the city has greatly improved now that the Giant roaster has ceased operation. This is good news. In fact, at the May public meeting hosted by YASRC, it was underlined that in regard to arsenic levels, the drinking water in the city of Yellowknife is not a problem, and ambient air levels are also not a problem.

This committee has retained Canada's leading expert in the field to determine the health risks from arsenic around the city and develop soil remediation guidelines for use for residential, recreational and industrial land uses. In fact, according to the committee, guidelines will be presented to the public in September, Mr. Speaker.

Yellowknife MLAs have continued to draw to the attention of the federal government its obligation at the Giant Mine for the immense problem of some 265,000 tons of arsenic trioxide stored underground there. There is still a long way to go in this process. The federal government has identified resources to advance the planning and this is a positive step, not only for Giant, but for dealing with the environmental issues at Colomac as well.

Next week, stakeholders will be meeting to consider the approach for managing the arsenic problem at Giant Mine. Stakeholders and the public have a vital interest in what is going on. I compliment the governments and the stakeholders for opening the process to the general public.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the efforts of these officials. We must keep in mind the federal government has been the major beneficiary of the development of our resources. It is their obligation to ultimately manage this environmental hazard. We must consider continuing to seek long-term commitment of federal resources to implement a permanent solution that addresses the arsenic problem to the satisfaction of residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement on Appreciation for the Contributions of Departing Inuvik Citizens

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to speak on an issue that we see happening on a yearly basis in many communities in the North. This morning, I want to speak about the changing faces in Inuvik.

Mr. Speaker, with the increased activity, we have seen many new people come into the community and the region, new people who have taken the opportunity to come work in the North. Some have moved from other places in the Northwest Territories, some from southern Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as well at this time of year, we see some people leaving the Northwest Territories, whether it is individuals who have come up to teach our children, to work in our hospitals and health centres, or to work in the trades area. There is a whole field, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in touch with my wife back home. She has informed me that we are losing some of the people who have been involved in teaching our children. I am aware of a long-term resident who is leaving Inuvik. It is a difficult time, Mr. Speaker, when you have long-term residents who have put in time and have put much of their livelihood into the North, trying to help us to be better in our communities, to help our children, to be more involved and take control of the communities we live in.

Mr. Speaker, there are too many to name and I know we will have difficulty replacing some of these individuals, whether it is in the hospitals or in the schools, or in the trades areas. I would just like to say to them that their input into our community, into our children, has not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, they have helped us out. They have helped us make our children more productive in school, as well as taking care of our children in the hospitals and health centres. I think it is important that we recognize their input in the North. Sometimes people get overlooked because of the fast pace of activity in communities. I think there is a time and opportunity to thank all of these people who have come north, who have challenged the seasons, who have lived through the winter and the darkness and lived through the 24 hours of sunlight. I wish them all the best in their travels and hope that they return to visit us once again. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement on Absence from the House to Attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to advise the House and my constituents that I will be away from the House for the rest of the session. This is because I have accepted a personal invitation from the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to take part in the 640th Wilton Park Conference,

entitled Democracy, Parliament and Electoral Systems, which will be held between June 11th to 15th in the United Kingdom.

Arranged by the CPA in conjunction with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, this conference will be attended by approximately 50 invited delegates from 41 countries around the world. There will be politicians, diplomats and academics from every continent and from countries such as Nigeria, Spain, Russia, Israel, Switzerland, and the United States, as well as the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, not only as a parliamentarian but as co-chair of the Special Committee on the Implementation of Self-Government and the Sunset Clause, I know I will learn a lot from this experience. More importantly, it is my strong belief that we live in one of the most unique places in the world in terms of our geographical, political and constitutional landscape. I would not hesitate to say that we have a lot to tell and teach the rest of the world about how we work out issues here. I will tell them of how proud we are of the fact that we handle, on a daily basis, world-class challenges and opportunities. We have a unique form of consensus government. With a peaceful division of our Territory only two years behind us, we are working through land claims and self-government negotiations at seven tables. All of this for 42,000 people in 33 communities, while at the same time, we work through a number of megaprojects in diamond mining and oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, may I add that this is the first time the NWT branch has been invited to this conference, which is steeped in history and convention. It is my understanding that the discussions from the Wilton Park conferences are well-documented and referenced around the world. I look forward to making them available on my website once they are finalized following the conference.

For the record, I would also like to note that the expenses of my travel and accommodations will be covered by the CPA.

Finally, I...

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues. I would just like to advise the House that I will make my position known on any important decision items arising out of this House for the benefit of my constituents and my colleagues, through my website. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I would like to wish you a safe and pleasant journey. I am sure we will hear about your meeting when you return. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, I have the privilege of recognizing June Putz, who is ably replacing Betty Low this week, due to compassion leave. Welcome to the gallery.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would like to welcome all the people present in the gallery who have come here today. I understand there are people from the transportation industry and from the advertising industry here in Yellowknife for a series of meetings. Thank you for taking the time to come see the Legislative Assembly at work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize our pages, who have been here over the past week. This is their final day. They are the NWT Cadets. They are from several different communities in the Northwest Territories, Richie Campbell from Norman Wells, Jack Miller from Inuvik, Raeanne Bourque from Fort Smith, Michael Rowe from Fort Simpson, Mathew Scarborough from Hay River, Jean Marc Arsenault from Hay River, Jackson Mantla from Rae-Edzo, and Ms. Crous from Yellowknife. Thank you for the service you have given us this past week.

-- Applause

I also hope that it has been a learning experience. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Transportation, the Honourable Vince Steen. Last November, I tabled a band council resolution that indicated support for an all-weather road connecting the Dogrib communities and the mines. The Finance Minister has stated that Nunavut is getting federal dollars into building a port in Nunavut.

What is the Minister doing to access federal dollars for our road to resources in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past year, the department has had some discussions and meetings with federal officials on what programs they have available to us to access funding for an all-weather road over and above the existing highway systems.

As Members know, we have had some success with the federal government in putting some funding forward to upgrade our winter roads in the Sahtu. We have also had some discussions

with the federal government on possibly joint venturing or cost sharing for a road in the Beaufort area as well.

Beyond that, we have not had any discussions with the federal government towards any other all-weather roads. I would presume that the Member is referring to a road in the Dogrib area. We have not had any discussions with the federal government on this at all. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are elected by the people to work for the people. I think there is a real need to ensure any money we spend and any strategy we develop as a government ensures long-term benefits for all northern residents, not just certain ones.

Will the Minister commit to have his department examine how existing infrastructure in the Dogrib region could be developed into an all-weather road linking the communities as part of his strategy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past year, the Member has been raising this issue in this House. As a result, he has made us aware that there is the potential for an all-weather road route following the old seasonal winter road into Lac La Martre. As a result of this, I had the opportunity to take a helicopter trip with the department and review this route some time this winter, and there is potential for an all-weather route using that particular road.

However, taking it further from there into Wekweti or into Rae would require quite a bit more engineering. We are just doing preliminary looks at this time. The department is thankful for the Member for bringing these routes to our attention and the potential for them to become all-weather roads.

At this point in time -- I do not want to stir up any false hopes here -- but we are looking at what the Member is suggesting. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister stated that there may be a joint venture to do an all-weather road in the Beaufort region. I would like to ask the Minister if he could initiate a joint venture with the Alberta government to finance some of the roads that lead to our resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from one department to another, this territorial department versus the Alberta department, we have not carried out any official discussions on this. I am aware that the other departments within this government have been approaching and had some discussions with Alberta on sharing. I believe the Minister of Finance mentioned in the last day or so that there was some discussions on possibly sharing costs on an all-weather road. The end result was that there is nothing firm coming out of this at this point in time.

The Member is asking if I would commit to this. I have no problem committing to this. We have a committee with Alberta right now which discusses this, and we have a meeting planned for sometime in mid-summer with the Alberta government as to the possible sharing of ways that we can both share costs to enjoy more benefits from the resource development. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the past, I have stood in this House and stated what I thought of the department's Highway Strategy. I would like to ask the Minister if he is going to be looking at changing part of that strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 33-14(4): Funding for Road to Resources

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I presume the Member is referring to the comment where he actually thought the strategy had some merits. Based on that, I am paying attention to what the Member is saying about the strategy and we are proceeding on that basis.

However, I would like to point out, as I said in the last day or two to the Member for Deh Cho, the strategy is not written in stone and it is there to be amended. It is subject to the aspirations and priorities of this Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services and it is regarding the policies of this government when it comes to hiring, especially in the area of hiring undergraduate nurses.

Realizing that these nurses have almost completed their course to be permanent nurses, registered nurses, yet our undergraduate nurses, some of whom have completed up to three years, cannot even get summer employment with a lot of our health boards in the Northwest Territories so that they can continue in that field and conclude their courses.

Mr. Speaker, I think this government has to adopt a policy that clearly allows for the ability to allow for undergraduate nurses to be employed in our health care system. It is happening in other jurisdictions across Canada where they allow for undergraduate nurses, and have guidelines and policies that they use regarding the responsibilities of those undergraduate nurses in the health care centres and hospitals across Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: I am going to interrupt the honourable Member. I would like to remind Members that question period is question period. Member's statements are Member's statements. Honourable Members, your rules are that you would like questions to be short and answers to be short because of the time limit.

I will ask you to please abide by those rules that you have established. Keep your questions short and to the point, and we will get as many in during the hour as we can. Mr. Krutko, your question.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am leading up to the question. I am just trying to get the information out to the Minister so she is aware of the policies that are out there.

I would like to ask the Minister, what is the policy of the government of the Northwest Territories when it comes to undergraduate nurses?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our department has quite a number of initiatives that speak to retention and recruitment. I believe what the Member is referring to would fall under that category.

All health boards hire students during the summer. Although the government and the department is not the direct employer, we do encourage the health boards to hire summer students. We assist the students in health-related fields to find work during the summer, either with the department or with the boards. We are very aware of the need of many of the students to work during the summer and we do everything we can to facilitate that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it sounds great, but I would like to ask the Minister the question I asked earlier, what is the policy of this government when it comes to undergraduate nurses? Do we have a policy in place

to force the health boards to ensure there are opportunities for undergraduate nurses to be employed in our health centres?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of our department to provide funding to health boards to supplement the salaries of summer students to offset the cost to the board. We also provide assistance to the students to get to their place of employment. In the instance of the student from Mr. Krutko's riding that he refers to, we would be pleased to work with her to help her identify a work placement for the summer and then provide the necessary support to see that she can get there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister consider drafting a policy similar to the one regarding undergraduate nurses at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, so that we can have a policy of our own?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, without the advantage of having the document Mr. Krutko refers to, it is difficult to say whether such a policy would be suitable in the North. One of the challenges in the North and one of the things that makes us different is that we do not have the same volume of nurses working in any one location. Sometimes undergraduates and student nurses need mentorship and a different type of supervision during the course of their work. Whether or not a policy that is available in Edmonton or Calgary could be applied to the North, I am not sure. I certainly will commit to the Member to look at this policy and see if it is something that could be adapted for use in the North. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do share our health care system with Alberta. We transfer our patients to Alberta. They are treated in Alberta. Undergraduate nurses are taking care of them in Alberta. When will the Minister adopt a policy similar to Alberta and implement it in the Northwest Territories so we have a health care system that is consistent with other jurisdictions we share a health care program with?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 34-14(4): Hiring of Undergraduate Nurses

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a department, I want to say that we are very committed to removing obstacles to northern-trained -- not just northern-trained, but nurses who are from the North. Any way we can see to improve our ability to attract, recruit and retain northern nurses, we will seriously look at. If our policies could be updated and changed based on precedents set in other jurisdictions, we would be pleased to look at that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment some questions regarding the seniors' fuel subsidy. I would like to resume that line of questioning today. I was not satisfied with the answers I received. Judging by the number of phone calls I received yesterday, the people of the North are also not satisfied with his answers.

I would like to repeat a question I asked him yesterday. In November of 2000, he indicated that he would review the threshold limits for the seniors' fuel subsidy. I would like to ask him if he has done that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return to Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, no, we have not reviewed that, but we are looking at the whole area of seniors' needs and requirements. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary to Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for that answer. I would like to ask the Minister what kind of time frame can we expect some results from his investigation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we are also looking at areas of persons with disabilities at the same time. I think we probably will need several months in order to gather appropriate information. We are probably looking at some time late fall. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary to Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I thank the Minister for his answers. I would like to ask the Minister if he would consider including a mechanism that would allow for automatic adjustment for the threshold limits for the fuel subsidy, rather than having to go through this process every time there is a problem with that program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 35-14(4): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we can certainly undertake to look at that possibility. We are looking at that for income support, the food basket area, doing an annual adjustment and an annual survey. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Question 36-14(4): Impact of Proposed Tax Credit

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance. It is about the tax credit he announced would be coming forward. I am concerned about the highway toll and the actual cost of it. Some groups are now starting to come out in support of it, thinking that the cost will be offset by the tax credit. I tabled a document the other day in which Mr. Handley says, "The net increase for average citizens in the North should be nil." I am worried the department will move to a position of, we recognize the credit will not entirely offset the cost, but it is reasonable to ask residents to contribute to this highway infrastructure because they will get the benefits. Will the Minister confirm that the net should be no increase for the average citizens of the North?

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bell, I regret to inform you that the question you are asking may be out of order because of the nature of it. It is apparently on the order paper for today. We will disregard that question. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my statement, I addressed the concern citizens have about the arsenic situation in and around Yellowknife, specific to the Giant Mine work. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development what involvement and what initiatives this government is taking in terms of that long-term management process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the arsenic situation at Giant Mine rests with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, with the federal government, as a condition of the sale of the mine. They hold the responsibility. The Government of the Northwest Territories participates primarily because as a government for this Territory, we have great concerns about what the department may or may not be doing, what their plans are, what they may be in the future and so on. We do not have an official role or responsibility. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A point of clarification. My understanding is that indeed it is the federal government's responsibility for the underground areas, but this government does have some involvement for managing things on surface and for reclamation there. This is where I would like to find out specifically what involvement and what processes this government has responsibility for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, this government's responsibility is for clean up and reclamation on the lands that are not covered by the water licence. There is still some debate between our department and DIAND on exactly where that begins and where it ends. We argue that, at minimum, DIAND is responsible for everything from the mill and its impact to everything that flows down from there, including the tailings ponds and reservoirs and so on. Our responsibility is for other structures that may be sitting on the mine property, but not directly connected with the water licence. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the mine, my understanding is that the Miramar Giant company still plans to continue mining until some time later this year, when the plans are that mining at that property will stop for good and then we can go into a reclamation process. I am wondering, at this stage, are there any specific moves that the GNWT has in relation to the complete stoppage of work at Giant Mine later this year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 37-14(4): Giant Mine Reclamation Plan

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the arrangement between Miramar Giant Mine Limited and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs expires at the end of December this year. At that time, Miramar Giant Mine Limited has the option of either negotiating an extension -- and determining what the terms of that extension might be is something between them and DIAND -- or simply saying no, we do not intend to continue mining from that site anymore.

I have spoken to the manager and he has told me that they have not yet firmly made up their mind exactly what they will do. Until we know that, it is very difficult for us to do more than simply continue to monitor what they and DIAND are doing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Education and it is with regard to the class size in our schools. Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from a concerned parent whose child attends the Range Lake North School, who is saying that next year's class size could be up to about 30 students per class. Most of the classrooms at the Range Lake North School are built for 24 students, not 31, suggesting possible problems regarding safety. My question to the Minister is, what is the department's responsibility in making sure that there are not too many kids in the classrooms? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I should take a moment to explain the process of funding that we provide to education boards. We fund the district education councils throughout the Northwest Territories and the two DEAs in Yellowknife, the district education authorities, the board, in other words. We do that on a pupil-teacher ratio. The boards themselves decide how to allocate that within the school system and create the classes. The principals of the schools then make up the class sizes. If there is a safety concern within a class and it is overcrowded, then of course we will look at that issue. I have a concern about this. This is an issue that Ms. Lee is bringing forward, and we will certainly look at seeing if there is an issue here with regard to safety. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the basic principles behind the way school boards are funded. My question is how much room does the department and Minister have to make sure that class size or the money is

spent in general, corresponding ways as it was meant to be? For example, special...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee, we have the question. Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We as a department provide a block funding to the various organizations. We expect the money that we provide will be allocated into the areas. We have an accountability framework through the budget process to ensure that it is applied in the fashion in which the money is meant to be used. If we take the Yellowknife school boards, there is an overall PTR that they report back to us. That is our area of control, Mr. Speaker. The school boards themselves decide on the allocation per classes. I believe in Yellowknife, for example, the two boards are averaging 16 to one. That is a blended rate with the money they get from us and from the city. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the fact that the boards get the block funding and they make decisions on what they are going to do with that. That is fine with me. The board is entitled to independent decision-making. My question is at what point does the department intervene? Theoretically, is it possible for a school board to decide to have 50 kids in one classroom and one in another, and have a blended average of 25 or something? When do we step in? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we have to recognize that these are responsible individuals administering the various programs in the school system. There may be cases, and there are cases, where classrooms are larger, but there are also cases where classrooms are much smaller. We have to leave that autonomy to the school boards to take.

Of course, if it gets totally out of hand and you have a classroom with 50 people in it, if there are concerns with safety and other reasons, naturally we would express a concern about that. However, we do have to leave some judgment of that to the school boards to administer. In the case of Yellowknife, they are independently elected boards. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that we have to care about the class size before it gets to a safety question. My information is that most classes at Range Lake will be more than 30 students per class. Could the Minister make a commitment to look at the class size and take some action where needed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 38-14(4): Class Size in Territorial Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the enrolment figures in the Yellowknife, in the YK No. 1 district, I believe it is 80 percent of the school capacity. In the Catholic school board, I believe it is 90 percent. There is a lot of room for movement of students to other schools. We cannot just take that one incident, if we have one classroom overcrowded in isolation. We have to look at the fact that the board has the ability to reallocate students to other possible schools or to other classrooms. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since Mr. Krutko and I seem to be painted with the same brush lately, I would like to follow up on his question to the Minister of Health and Social Services. The Northwest Territories is a unique place and poses unique challenges, as indicated by the Minister. These days we talk about partnerships. Can the Minister and her department look and maybe work with the Alberta government to see if the hospitals and the facilities in Alberta can be used to train the people that graduate from our nursing programs in the Northwest Territories, so that they can qualify to work in the communities that need a higher level of experience? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as more and more northern nurses enrol in nursing education here through Aurora College and also in southern institutions, there may very well come a time in the near future where, for practicums and mentorships and certain types of training, it may be that we would reach a capacity, given the small size of our institutions.

Certainly where we do have a contract with the Capital Health Authority, and whereby northern patients are quite often referred to southern institutions, it may well be possible to approach them with the idea of absorbing and working with graduates who would ultimately return to the North.

One of the risks to us in that is that nurses may receive practical training at southern hospitals and find that they really like it there, which may lead to a placement in the future. Certainly it is an interesting concept and it can be explored. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose not hiring them here and having them get hired down south is already a challenge. It is a risk I think the department should be willing to take.

If you really think about it, Yellowknife and Hay River and some of the regional centres do have qualified nurses and doctors that can be used to train nurses from our communities. We all know that keeping nurses in our communities is a lot cheaper on this government and the people of the Northwest Territories.

Can the government commit to us in this House that she will look at maybe training people in our regional institutions within the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we already do provide practicums to nursing students in the hospitals here, through Yellowknife, I know in Hay River, Inuvik. There is work that is done with students. It is part of their training to serve a practicum in a hospital setting. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In mostly isolated, small aboriginal communities, the nurses have to be almost like doctors. Can the Minister tell me if the practicum offered at the regional institutions is enough to qualify the nurses graduating from our institutions to work at that high level in our smaller, predominately aboriginal communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The training that the students receive, just in and of itself, is not enough to launch them into a small community where there may only be two or three health care professionals. What we have in place is a mentorship program where an experienced

nurse would go with the student and would work with them for a number of months. I am not sure if it is three or four months.

That would not necessarily give them the nurse practitioner credentials. It would not. That is another level of training and another level of education. It would hopefully give them enough support for those first several months that they would be able then to work in a small community setting. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not think a few months of practicum in the regional institutions working with a qualified nurse qualifies an individual to work with the health of our people in the small, isolated communities.

I have been in situations where I have had to help and assist these health care professionals in extremely difficult situations. You do need experience. Can the Minister commit to us in this House that maybe we can stretch out the practicum longer so that we can teach and make sure that the nurses graduating and doing practicums within our institutions are really qualified? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 39-14(4): Training Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is really no shortcut to the kind of experience that may prepare a nurse to deal with the inevitable situations that might arise in a small community. Some of it is learned as you go.

The practicum is something which is attached to the actual nurse training. The mentorship is where they would work one-on-one with an experienced nurse for a period of time. After that, there is still a necessity for nurses to get a certain amount of experience to give them the kind of competencies and kind of background that would probably enable them to meet any situation. There is no way of shortcutting the experience that would lead to that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Transportation regarding questions I raised earlier in the week about the bridge that is being constructed on Campbell Hill Creek.

I would like to ask the Minister, have you received any information back on exactly where this project is being constructed? Is it in the Member for Boot Lake's riding, or is it in my riding? The information was tabled in this House, so I would like to ask the Minister, has he heard anything back from his department on that issue?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department has information that has confirmed that Campbell Creek is in the Inuvik Boot Lake riding.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in light of the information that has just been revealed by the Minister on this particular project, does the Minister agree that I should have been notified in writing, knowing that two projects in my riding were deferred because there were not enough resources to construct this bridge in Mr. Roland's riding?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is no requirement that the department advise the Member simply because the money is going from one riding to another. There are other conditions to this that have to come into play under the FAA.

In particular, the FAA requires notice to the Member and to the appropriate standing committees if the money is being moved from one budgeted project to another budgeted project. In this particular case, the budgeted project, which is the Dempster Highway, is budgeted for \$5 million.

Within that budgeted project, there are 13 subprojects, which include the two projects the Member is talking about. There is no requirement to inform the Member of this because it is not a budgeted project. Therefore, we are not changing anything that is not in the budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that is where the disagreement is between myself and the Minister. Under the guidelines, under directive 4.3, regarding consultation guidelines on capital projects, adjustments, under (b):

"When the department makes any adjustment to capital projects that significantly affects the scope of the project, \$100,000 or 20 percent of the project, whichever is greater..."

And it goes on to talk about:

"The appropriate MLA and standing committee shall be consulted on this matter."

The scope of the project, which I understand was \$1.1 million when it was put out to bid, that was the adjustment. Now the project is almost \$1,500,000. The scope of the project has increased...

MR. SPEAKER: Question, please.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of an increase over the 20 percent, I believe that gives me a directive where you have to notify me. Will you notify me in regard to that project?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the only budgeted project is the Dempster Highway for \$5 million. The bridge is included within the \$5 million. It is one of the 13 projects. However, it is not a budgeted project. The budgeted project that is listed in the main estimates is the Dempster Highway for \$5 million. That is the one we are referring to at this time. Although there is no requirement to do this, I had the department inform the Member after he requested us. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the House that there was no written request, it was simply a verbal request. We responded. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister supply a list of all adjustments made to all capital projects on the Dempster Highway in regard to monies that have moved from my riding to someone else's riding, where capital projects have been deferred out of my riding to, in this case, the Inuvik Boot Lake riding? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 40-14(4): Bridge Construction at Campbell Creek

HON. VINCE STEEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the department will do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, the Honourable Vince Steen. I would like to clarify a point with the Minister. He stated that I thought the Highway Strategy had merit. I think he must have me confused with someone else. As I have said before, if we go ahead with this strategy the way it is written, I think it will be the biggest mistake of the 14th Assembly. I would like to ask the Minister if he was part of the lobby group for the Beaufort region for the federal financing that was given to them? Was he part of the lobby group? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. I just want to remind Members that I have a long list of people who want to ask questions, so keep them short. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not clear what the Member is requesting.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Lafferty, I would caution you a bit, but be careful on the type of question you are asking, but please restate it for the Minister.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he had any part in lobbying for the federal funding for the Beaufort region roads? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. In your role as a Minister of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through my duties as a Minister, yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister which roads in the Beaufort region are being funded by the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. We were following up on the committee's request to have a road constructed from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk. The last decision from that committee was that the department approach the federal government for some funding for this, since we did not have the mandate to do the job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I tabled a band council resolution indicating regional support for an all-weather road in the Dogrib region in November. I have continuously raised this issue. Why was this issue not raised with the federal government when you were lobbying for federal dollars? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have never indicated that this issue was never raised with the federal government. We raise all these issues with the federal government. We then put forward what we have as to possibilities of complying with federal programs. The federal program, the only one that was available to the department to construct new roads is joint venture partnerships with aboriginal. We took that route. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Mr. Lafferty, your final, short supplementary.

Supplementary to Question 41-14(4): Role in Obtaining Federal Highway Funding

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My staff and I take a lot of time to research our questions. I hope to get answers. I do not seem to be getting answers every time I ask a question. I just wanted to make that comment.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. No question there. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is also for the Minister of Transportation. I am concerned about the true impact of the truck toll. I am wondering if his department has done any impact review and could let me know what they think the actual impact on an average Yellowknife family might be from this commercial toll? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

-- Interjection

MR. SPEAKER: I thought I heard the Minister of Finance. Mr. Bell, would you just give the House a bit of assistance here?

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For clarification, I was directing the question to the Minister of Transportation. I may have erred. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department has been working with the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, and there was some analysis done. Yes, there is some information as to what we hope is close to what the actual impact would be on the average community. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, I am well aware that the research has been done. I am really asking what the impact would be on a household in Yellowknife. The number, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. That borders pretty close to an opinion. I will leave the Minister his discretion in answering that. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have some figures on that, but I do not have them on hand. I will be happy to supply the Member with that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can accept that the Minister would not have that exact information, but would he let me, possibly before that time, know what kinds of assumptions his department was making when they calculated this information? For instance, things like how far a vehicle travels per year. Can he tell me what assumptions were used to arrive at these figures?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the system we are proposing, the cost would be related to how many zones the vehicle actually crossed. The toll only kicks in if you cross from one zone to another. If you are operating within a zone, there is no cost. It depends on how many zones are actually crossed. For instance, from Alberta to Yellowknife, that would possibly be three or four zones. That would, in the end, decide what the actual cost would be.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In getting to Yellowknife, I am sure we would go through at least one zone. Could I ask him to table in the House the estimated impact of, for instance, a five cents per tonne kilometre weight of freight truck toll and annual NWT household costs for selected communities so we can get this information and analyze it? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not totally sure whether I have the ability to table this, so I will take the question as notice.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The supplementary has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for another opportunity to pursue my questions to the Minister of Education. My question has to do with accountability. I understand school boards in Yellowknife have a level of autonomy about what they do with their block funding. What is the level of accountability of a Minister and of this government to make sure there are some boundaries in the way they spend the money? For example, class size, especially in younger grade levels. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of autonomy by the school boards to ensure that their funding is done in their judgement to their needs in the community. Our area of concern is mostly one of overall crowding on a jurisdictional basis. That is the point where we come into the situation to address it. If, for example, a jurisdiction has enrolments of 105 percent for the available school space, then we would naturally step into the situation to see how we could alleviate the situation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way this blended ratio works, we could theoretically have a class of three students at Sir John, but the figures we have at Range Lake is that every class above grade 4 will have more than 30 students. Could the Minister commit to look at that situation and see if that 30 is too big a number for a class at that level?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that yes, I agree it is very high. There is no doubt that there is concern on the parts of the parents with this enrolment that classes do exceed 30, or even 27 or 25 plus.

The school boards, however, have some options available to them, and that is to have enrolments in other schools where there is space available. That is why I state when there is space available in other school areas, that option is available. In other words, until, overall, the enrolments are beyond the level we feel that action is required, then I think we have to leave it to the school board to sort this out.

In the case where the overcrowding may be in one school, if there is a hurdle for students to get to the other school, we do provide funding for bussing services. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not think we are speaking about a situation where a school like Range Lake in grade 3 has 30 students and another grade 3 class in another part of the city has less than 20, or something. We do not have that. Almost every class at that level is overcrowded.

What the average is doing is upper grade levels, like grade 12, may have three students in one of their French immersion classes that is bringing down the average. It is really having a negative impact on lower grade levels. Would the Minister please review this situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to point out that the school boards have some ability to deal with situations such as this. Until the school board comes to me to say they have a problem, I have to respect their autonomy, Mr. Speaker. I cannot just walk in and suggest to the school board that they have to solve this.

I know they are trying to deal with this situation on their part and they are trying to deal with it on a very real basis. They have some options, as I said. The schools are not totally overcrowded on an overall basis in a specific area. I do have to leave that to the school board. If the school board wishes me to help them out, then certainly I will pay attention to that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Final short supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I respect the autonomy and independence of the board, I think the Minister would agree with me that all of the Members in this House are accountable to the parents and children for their environment and education. Can I please get the Minister to commit to take the discussions in this House as a direction for the Minister to talk to the school boards about what can be done about the class size? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 43-14(4): Accountability of Education Boards

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue is being discussed by the school board. I believe that they are trying to address this issue on their part. I will await word from the school board to see if they wish me to have a look at this.

However, I have stated already that there are some options here that they can possibly consider. I will leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Question 44-14(4): Training for Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on the same matter. Mr. Speaker, I asked for a commitment. What I received was an answer that we cannot take shortcuts.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for shortcuts. I am asking for an extended, concentrated training program for northern graduates of nursing programs in the regional hospitals, so they can be trained to go and work in the small, isolated communities where they are sometimes left to fend for themselves without doctors. Can I again ask the Minister to see if she can commit to us in this House that her department will look at developing a plan that will accomplish that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 44-14(4): Training for Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, we do have practicums and we do have mentorships. If we were going to extend the mentorship, the working one-on-one... it is a little different once you get out into the community. In fact, in the mentorship program, the experienced nurse goes right to the community with the graduate and works with them side-by-side for several months.

If the Member is suggesting that we extend that mentorship program to get that unique experience, what I can do is undertake to find out what that would cost. Right now, the cost of the mentorship program is fairly significant. Of course, our challenge is finding nurses, senior nurses, to be involved in the mentorship program.

What happens is they leave other positions in which we may need them. Backfilling always creates a challenge as well. I could prepare an indication of what the mentorship costs and what it would cost to expand it for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 44-14(4): Training for Northern Nursing Graduates

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Minister is committing certain things, can I also ask her to commit to give us statistics on the success rate of the mentorship program? How many of the students who go through the mentorship program go into our communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 44-14(4): Training for Northern Nursing Graduates

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I missed just the very last part of the question -- how many of the nurses who go through the mentorship program do what? Can I just have the last little bit of the question? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. For clarification, Mr. Nitah, short and sharp.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are losing a lot of students to southern markets. I am asking how many students who go through the mentorship programs end up in our isolated communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Success rate. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have those statistics. I know a high number of northern graduates find employment in the North. I could not tell you by percentage right now, but those numbers would be fairly easy to obtain, so I will undertake to get that for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Transportation, the Honourable Vince Steen. In the past, I have questioned the strategy on why new roads to connect the communities were not included. The Minister stated that it was only for existing infrastructure. Can the Minister tell me when this strategy was changed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we should get something clear right here, that the strategy indicates what this government would like to see for new roads and for all roads, and it indicates what would be needed to complete those roads. What we are talking about here for the new roads, the funding for new roads has to come from sources other than from this government because we do not have the capacity or the mandate to build a new road. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister is going to be lobbying for a road in the Beaufort region, should the Minister not be sharing this information with the rest of the Members in the House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, I was responding to recommendations from the committee established by the department previous to my time, to gather information and input to the strategy from the general public. This committee was established for this specific purpose, to come up with recommendations for the department. The department was responding to those recommendations and reported to the federal government on a number of things, including the road in the Beaufort. It would not be appropriate, I believe, for the department to come up and put out this type of information, which may cause expectations from people. It is more appropriate to try to get some firm commitments from the federal government and from the stakeholders to ensure that we have something firm to present to the general public and to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. The normal time for question period has ended. You still have two supplementaries, Mr. Lafferty, carry on with one.

Supplementary to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister stated earlier to my colleagues that strategies are living documents. If this is a living document, when is he going to let me know when they will have something in the document that the North Slave will have the communities connected? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe I indicated to the Member previously that in order to change the strategy, we need direction from the Assembly and from the government. What we need is input from the stakeholders, including the Member and interested stakeholders in his riding. Put forward proposals to us, and we will consider them. If everybody sees it as a priority then it will go into the strategy as a priority. It is as simple as that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year, I have stood up and I have talked about the road to resources and a road connecting the communities. If that is not an indication that something needs to be done, I do not know what it is to the Minister. I would like to ask the Minister if he would include the North Slave in his future planning in the strategy. It is a living document and it is time to see some changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen, the final answer.

Further Return to Question 45-14(4): NWT Highway Strategy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the Member earlier that his comments and his suggestions did stir interest in the department, and as a result of that, I did take the trouble, with the department, to go and view these routes that he suggested with a helicopter. This is not something I like to do every day, but I did it, and it was because people in this Assembly have the opportunity to put forward their suggestions. We take them seriously -- seriously enough to invest money and follow on the suggestions of the Members. Once we have completed our studies as to whether this is a feasible thing, we will then put something forward to the Members or the committees to consider. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The time for question period has ended. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 10-14(4): Letter Regarding Employment Opportunities for Undergraduate Nurses

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will table a letter that I have received from Sally Ross with regard to the undergraduate nursing program, and also information with regard to employment opportunities for undergraduate students from hospitals in Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Education Act...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ootes, I think the topic is motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 17: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 5: An Act to Amend the Education Act

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Education Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 5 has had first reading. Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 2: An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Income Tax Act to increase the rate of deduction from an individual's net income set out in section 4.1 of the act. This increase has effect for the 2001 and subsequent taxation years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 2 has had second reading and accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee. Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

Bill 3: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to clarify that only one Minister serves as a member of the Board of Management, and to provide for the appointment of alternate members to that body. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 3 has had second reading. The Chair recognizes Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. The honourable Minister is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2). Are there any nays? There are no nays. Accordingly, Bill 3 is now referred to committee of the whole.

Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Education Act. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. The honourable Member is seeking consent of the House to proceed with second reading of Bill 5. Are there any nays?

AN HON. MEMBER: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: We need two nays, so you have consent.

-- Interjection

AN HON. MEMBER: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: I only heard one, so I will ask again, are there any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Now the Chair has heard more than one. You do not have consent. Thank you. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters: Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Sessional Statement; Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Fiscal and Economic Update; Minister's Statement 4-14(4), Update on the Social Agenda, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

ITEM 19: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Welcome to committee of the whole. We have three items to deal with: Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Sessional Statement; Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Fiscal and Economic Update; Minister's Statement 4-14(4), Update on the Social Agenda; and Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. With that, I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of committee of the whole. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Sessional Statement; Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Fiscal and Economic Update; Minister's Statement 4-14(4), Update on the Social Agenda; and Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meeting of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight at adjournment today. Meetings for Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. of the Cabinet House Strategy, 9:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, 10:30 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development, and 12:00 p.m. of Caucus.

Orders of the day for Monday, June 11, 2001:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion

15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
 - Motion 1-14(4), Appointment of Sole Adjudicators
 - Motion 2-14(4), Affordable Access to Energy
 - Motion 3-14(4), Amendments to the Rules of the Legislative Assembly to Facilitate Referral of Statutory Reports
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 4, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2001-2002
18. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Education Act
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Sessional Statement
 - Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Fiscal and Economic Update
 - Minister's Statement 4-14(4), Update on the Social Agenda
 - Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, June 11, 2001, at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

