



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, March 6, 2002****Members Present**

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

-- Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Please be seated. Good afternoon. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 28-14(5): Improving Health and Social Well-Being**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of this government, as outlined in Towards A Better Tomorrow, is the improvement of social well-being through self-reliant individuals, families and communities working with governments. In particular, the vision provides for a specific focus on issues facing women, children, elders and persons with disabilities.

In support of this direction, the department, in collaboration with its partners, has been working on a number of significant initiatives which are now positioned to move forward in conjunction with the Health and Social Services Action Plan 2002-2005. These include the Continuing Care Framework, the Addictions, Mental Health and Family Violence Framework and the Disabilities Steering Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the Continuing Care Framework is composed of programs and services to meet the needs of both adults and children of the Northwest Territories. The framework focuses on strengthening integration of community services and intersectoral links through three strategies: home and community care, supported living so people can remain in their own homes and the provision of long-term care in facilities. The goal of this framework is to ensure individuals' needs are being met in the least invasive manner, promoting the greatest opportunity for lasting wellness and functional independence at an optimal level. The planning and costing of the framework is to be completed by June 2002.

The Continuing Care Framework will also assist the department to focus on issues relating to repatriation. This work will include identifying and analyzing the costs associated with repatriation options, recruitment and retention issues and training and capacity building. It will also provide a forum to discuss how best to address the needs within the NWT related to specific issues such as Alzheimer's.

In 2001-2002, efforts were focused on the home and community care portion of this strategy. A steering committee representative of aboriginal partners, health and social services authorities, the federal government and the department has guided the implementation of three-year enhancement plans

for home care services. These plans include training of community staff and the enhancement to services. Through this process, 21 home support workers were certified in 2001-2002, six home support workers are currently in training and ten home care nurses received additional training in such areas as diabetes and palliative care.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT Disability Framework and Action Plan will be developed to address the special needs of persons with disabilities. Where appropriate, this work will to some degree supplement the work being carried out to develop the Continuing Care Framework. An NWT steering committee partnership consisting of GNWT departments, aboriginal organizations and non-governmental organizations has been established to guide the development of the Disabilities Framework and Action Plan.

The framework for action will be completed in the spring of 2002 and the planning and costing for implementation of these actions will be completed by June 2002. The framework will address areas of concern, such as service gaps and income support for the permanently disabled.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Addictions, Mental Health and Family Violence Framework for action is another important initiative supporting health and well-being for Northerners. The goal of this framework is to ensure effective, culturally relevant addictions, mental health and family violence programs and services be accessible to all residents, provide for the needs of the most vulnerable groups and support a nurturing and responsible society in the NWT. The department is committed to an array of services to address addiction, mental health and family violence issues.

The framework will be critical to addressing a number of issues that have been raised by the people of the NWT and Members of this Legislature. These include socio-economic impacts of development, funding and salaries of non-governmental organizations, training of alcohol and drug workers, family violence services available to communities, training of mental health workers and requests for addiction treatment facilities.

The department will be completing a framework for action and action plan with costing for Cabinet consideration later this spring. We will be implementing the action plan after consultation and in collaboration with stakeholders and other related strategies and frameworks, including the Social Agenda, Early Childhood Development Action Plan, Northern Wellness Initiative and the Continuing Care Framework.

As this government continues its efforts to promote economic growth and prosperity, these initiatives will provide a framework to effect change and improve the quality of life of our citizens. These programs and services are an essential part of our social safety net. They are orientated to support healthy, self-

reliant Northerners who can fully participate in the opportunities that the North provides. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 29-14(5): NWT Power Corporation Receives National Awards

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to report that an NWT Crown Corporation, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, has won two of the highest environmental honours available from a national environmental organization. The awards come from the Voluntary Challenge and Registry Incorporated -- a voluntary, not-for-profit organization in Ottawa designed to celebrate the achievements of members in limiting their greenhouse gas emissions.

The first of the Power Corporation's honours was attaining gold level champion reporter status for excellence in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is the second time the Corporation has been acknowledged for achieving gold level status reporting. Accountability and reporting of emissions can earn members bronze and silver awards, but only those members who actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions can achieve gold level. The Corporation achieved a 100 percent rating from the Voluntary Challenge and Registry in attaining its gold level. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the Northwest Territories Power Corporation has gone the extra mile and has actually decreased its greenhouse gas emissions by 47 percent from the 1991 levels. This, Mr. Speaker, represents the reduction in the Northwest Territories alone, so does not include any reductions due to the creation of Nunavut.

Despite stiff national competition, the Power Corporation was also awarded first place in the electric utilities category. The Power Corporation's prize-winning submission outlined a detailed and successful plan to reduce greenhouse gases. This plan included:

- a promise of support from the Power Corporation's management;
- a commitment to quantifying and setting a target for greenhouse gas reductions;
- a specified time frame in which to carry out the plan;
- a commitment to regular reporting; and
- measurable proof that it had succeeded on all points.

A copy of the report can be found on the corporation's web site at www.ntpc.com.

Mr. Speaker, the Power Corporation received these awards at a ceremony celebrating environmental leadership hosted by the Voluntary Challenge and Registry last night.

Among the methods the NWT Power Corporation employed in winning its awards are: development of hydro projects; "recycling" residual heat; better efficiency of existing plants;

replacing old style street lights and converting the Inuvik plant to natural gas. It has also decreased the amount of carbon dioxide relative to the total megawatts of power provided by diesel generation.

Another function of this organization is for its members to learn from the experiences of other organizations, as well as to contribute to a general body of knowledge about reduction of greenhouse gases. I am proud to say that this northern company, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, can stand as an industry leader and a model to other companies in the North and nationwide about how to effectively reduce greenhouse gases.

It is encouraging to know that this environmental success story is being acted out in the North. It is especially impressive considering the unique difficulties facing industry and power generation in our climate. Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that the leadership the Northwest Territories Power Corporation has shown will encourage other organizations to voluntarily record and reduce their greenhouse gases. Thank you,

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement on Delivery of Eye Care Services in Communities

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to focus on a topic that has been raised by some of my constituents, that being the delivery of eye care services in the communities. Mr. Speaker, recently, meetings held by the Premiers of the provinces and territories seem to focus primarily on the health issues.

If any one issue achieved consensus, Mr. Speaker, it was that health care represents Canada's largest financial issue. It gives me cause for concern, Mr. Speaker, when I contemplate what our increasing population numbers mean to immeasurable, perhaps even shrinking, health care dollars.

Mr. Speaker, one recent example that was brought to my attention by a senior in my constituency was that of eye care delivery in the communities. Mr. Speaker, in Hay River, for example, people requiring eye examinations are seen by an ophthalmic technician. The ophthalmologist, or eye doctor, only travels to Hay River three to four times per year, and that is to treat certain people who have been referred to him specifically, not for regular eye examinations.

Mr. Speaker, we had a scenario occur in Hay River with a senior citizen who received an eye examination by an ophthalmic technician. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the eye exam performed by the technician failed to detect cataracts in this woman's eyes. The cataracts were only detected when she went south for an examination by an ophthalmologist, at her own expense, I might add.

To further illustrate my point, Mr. Speaker, another constituent, a senior citizen in Hay River, had bifocal glasses fitted by an optical technician in Hay River and they were not fitted properly. The patient returned to the eye clinic because he was

having so much difficulty, and was told by the technician that he would just have to get used to them. I do not believe that this is an acceptable response.

Mr. Speaker, this senior also travelled south to have his glasses checked and was told by an ophthalmologist that his glasses were not done correctly, that the prescription given in Hay River was not close enough to the actual prescription, so as to provide proper vision. Mr. Speaker, this senior ended up purchasing, at his own expense, a second pair of bifocals, since he could not see out of the pair provided by the technician in Hay River.

I find this totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. It appears that we are provided substandard services because of the fact that we live in communities. In the words of the eye care technician...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Delorey, your time for your Member's statement is finished. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: 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. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the words of the eye care technician, you will just have to get used to it. Mr. Speaker, our health is so precious that we should take every precaution to protect it. This includes our eyesight. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we as a government owe it to our residents who live in communities outside of Yellowknife to provide top quality eye care. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister responsible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement on Disclosure of Public Bodies Contract Information

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the contracts process used by the public bodies associated with the Government of the Northwest Territories needs to be reviewed. I believe we need a transparent system that benefits northern business, but I am not convinced this is always the case right now.

After having been contacted by some constituents concerned about some contract awards, I requested some information about contracts from the Housing Corporation, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and Workers' Compensation Board. To say the least, Mr. Speaker, it was an arduous process to get it.

Even worse, I have become concerned about some things that came to my attention while we were looking for that information. Mr. Speaker, these public bodies are outside of the government, so each agency had to be contacted individually. Another hurdle was created because none of these agencies provide contract listings like the GNWT does, where contract payments are publicly listed every quarter.

In fact, the GNWT, right now, posts all payments over \$5,000 on the web site for easy public access. However, Mr. Speaker, at WCB, the Housing Corporation and the Power Corporation, it is a lengthy process for staff to manually compile these reports when they are requested. I think it should just take a quick search from a simple set of records, as it does with the regular quarterly report from the Government of the Northwest Territories.

There were some problems too, Mr. Speaker, with this reporting, when it is done by hand. One of the reports even had a contract listed to a northern business when the business says they did not get it. Mr. Speaker, it is time for all public bodies to report contract payments like this government does publicly.

I am concerned that without regular public listings of contracts, it is too easy for contracts to go to southern firms when there may be qualified northern firms. Public scrutiny is an important part of the use by government of public funds by revealing when contracts are awarded to non-northern firms.

I was also concerned by some of the terms that I found in the RFPs looking at these contracts. For instance, Mr. Speaker, one of the terms set out to successfully bid on some of the contracts that I looked into required the proponent to have a huge revenue base to qualify for consideration. Mr. Speaker, I think that a smaller company would work much harder fulfilling a contract, and the mobilization costs would be much lower, or non-existent, for a company already based in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen contract specifications that appear to have been drafted by southern companies. I would think that it is obvious they would be preparing their specs to position their firm for future contract bids.

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. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, government and public bodies have a responsibility to support northern businesses. It is not long ago that nearly all GNWT capital projects were built by southern firms. It took guts for the government to say we are going to support development of the northern economy by giving preference to northern business. By taking that step, it led to a dramatic growth in northern contractors. Now, northern builders compete on a global scale. We have developed a lot of specialized expertise.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we took a similar approach to information technology contracts. It is time for this government and public bodies to better support the development of information technology firms. Let us stop overstating the requirements for IT contracts and let northern firms show how well they can deliver. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Public Housing and Income Support Harmonization Initiative

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as part of Towards a Better Tomorrow, we stated we were aiming for housing that was adequate, affordable and suitable, and elders who were well supported by their community and able to live independently.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that the public housing and income support harmonization initiative does not support either of these stated goals of this government. Residents of public housing make up many of the most vulnerable people in our society; our elders, people on social assistance, and single working parents. These are all people who have little ability to be flexible with their income, yet it is exactly these people that the harmonization program was targeting.

Given the fact that people in public housing are on fixed income, I find it incomprehensible that the government would announce changes to the rent scale system without having completed their own calculations. The uncertainty that was caused by this announcement without the necessary financial information to go with it is inexcusable.

Mr. Speaker, most organizations tend to fully plan and develop an initiative before they stand up and make public statements about it. Most organizations would send a letter directly to the people in this program informing them about how it would affect them. Most organizations would have the decency to inform their elders well in advance of what their rent increase was going to be, not just vaguely tell them that it may increase sometime soon.

According to our Residential Tenancy Act, the government requires that private landlords provide at least three months notice of rent increase. Here, we have a government whose job it is to protect and assist people in public housing and they cannot extend the same courtesy to our own residents.

Mr. Speaker, given the lack of planning and poorly managed job of conveying information to public housing tenants, I would like to recommend that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation scrap the entire harmonization program and focus on housing issues that would benefit Northwest Territories residents instead of hurting them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Taking Responsibility for Alcohol Related Problems

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement today about an issue on the radio that seemed to get a lot of coverage. It is the call from the RCMP in Yellowknife regarding the number of nuisance calls they receive regarding alcohol and drunkenness in the communities.

I think as a government and as a people, the Northwest Territories has to recognize this is a problem. I think the problem we have is a lot of people assume that strictly by phoning the RCMP or letting the RCMP take care of the problem, the problem will go away. They will come along, pick

the person up, take them to the jail, put them in the jail, let them out the next day, problem solved. Mr. Speaker, my view is that does not work.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we here, as a government, have to take on that responsibility. We are here to ensure the well-being of the Northwest Territories residents and the reflection of our residents regarding the people who live in our society who are at need because of the effects of alcohol and drugs and other effects on our society.

I for one, Mr. Speaker, feel that as a government, we have not taken hold of the pace of development happening around us. The cuts that took place during the 13th Assembly, the closures of alcohol and drug treatment centres, and also with the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program, it has not seen any movement.

In the Northwest Territories, we have one alcohol and drug treatment facility with 30 beds. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that not only we as the government, but people in our society from the community governments to the organizations that are there to assist people, have the resources, and that we give people who have problems in our society with alcohol and drugs and other forms of problems the tools to give them an alternative. What is the alternative with drinking and doing drugs? What will make these people better people in our society to give them the tools to make that change?

I feel that we as a government are letting these people down, and also letting down the people who are there to protect us in our community, especially the RCMP, by expecting them to take care of a problem that is really all our problem. I think we as a government, Members of this Legislature, we have to take issue with this problem and make it a priority of this government, if we expect to take advantage of developments in oil and gas and mining. We have to set the example. As a government, we should do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Delivery of Health Care Services in Smaller Communities

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my statement is on health care in the smaller communities. Friday, I stood in the House and I talked about why it takes so long to diagnose cancer patients and other diseases. Now, after talking to my constituents in the smaller communities about the medical care they are receiving, I am finding out that they sometimes do not get visits for specialists up to a year.

Once a year they are getting specialists visits. The more and more I talk to my communities, I find out we are getting less care than any other large centres. Mr. Speaker, I will be asking questions on the medical care in the smaller communities. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement on Child Poverty Petition

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today, I will be tabling a significant message from hundreds of Northwest Territories residents on an issue that we have all become far too complacent about. That message, Mr. Speaker, is that child poverty is real. It is not going away. Our government can be doing more about it.

The petition I will be tabling was sponsored by a single parent, by the Yellowknife Women's Centre and the Status of Women Council in the Northwest Territories. It was launched in October of last year. Since then, Mr. Speaker, it has generated 613 signatures from ten communities across the Northwest Territories. I wanted to list those communities because they deserve recognition for the effort they put into it.

Signatories, Mr. Speaker, are here from the communities of Lutselk'e, Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Fort Smith, Holman, Fort Liard and Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker. The petition asked the government specifically to do the following:

1. To stop the clawback from the national child benefit supplement from monthly income support payments;
2. Stop deducting child support payments from monthly income support assessments;
3. Set income support rates at the DIAND 1998 study level, which is an average of \$900 per month for food for a family of four.

Mr. Speaker, I direct your attention, or anyone who is in the Assembly today, to the display that is set up outside, which illustrates the dramatic difference between what our food allowances permit and what this DIAND level permits;

4. Mr. Speaker, to re-institute income support for basic necessities like telephone, transportation, sanitary products, diapers and laundry soap;
5. Provide the NWT working supplement to families on income support;
6. Stop forcing income support recipients to liquidate their assets such as RRSPs or children's trust accounts.

Mr. Speaker, in Canada, one in five children lives in poverty. Mr. Speaker, I would like to 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. Braden, you may conclude your statement.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues. As I have said, one in five children in Canada lives in poverty. These levels have grown 39 percent since 1989. Here in the NWT, according to some 1996 statistics, 20 percent of all families -- all families in the NWT, Mr. Speaker -- are single parent families. Seventy-nine percent of those families are led by women and 35 percent of the women in the NWT earn less than \$20,000, which is below the poverty level, Mr. Speaker.

For a one-year period from April 1999, 334 children used emergency shelters in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, child poverty is something that is in our communities every day. We cannot be complacent about it. We must act. I will be asking the appropriate Minister questions on this petition and the important area that it raises. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Services for Disabled Persons

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about disability and what has been done for people with disabilities, specifically in the small communities. We find in the cities, the streets are paved and access to centres is accessible by wheelchair. However, in the Northwest Territories, in the small communities, most of the streets are not paved. There are no sidewalks to mention. It is very difficult for people with disabilities in those communities to get around to visit family members, grandchildren, community functions, et cetera.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs does not even have a program to address the needs for dust control at the community level, let alone paving the community streets. The Minister of Health and Social Services mentioned the establishment of a committee to look at issues that are faced by people with disabilities. I will be asking the Minister some questions about the terms of reference of that committee, to see if Municipal and Community Affairs is one of the departments that he is partnering with to develop a framework to deal with issues faced by people with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Family Violence Prevention Legislation

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to have recently received the Family Violence Legislation Interim Status Report from the Minister of Justice. There is some information that was presented in that report that I would like to share with the House.

Presently, there are seven provinces and territories in Canada that have family violence legislation, and I am sorry that the Northwest Territories is not one of them. Of these seven provinces and territories, Saskatchewan and PEI have the most experience with the legislation, as these were enacted in 1995 and 1996 respectively. Both provinces have conducted reviews and evaluations of their legislation and both provinces have come to the same conclusion, that family violence legislation is an effective way of helping the victims of family violence.

Another benefit of having the legislation cited by both provinces is that it provides victims and police with an option where they feel a criminal response is not warranted. In 1998, the

Saskatchewan report had this to say about family violence legislation:

In addition to providing immediate protection to victims, orders remove the onus from the victims in dealing with domestic violence by allowing them and their families to remain in their home communities where they have access to family, school, employment and community support.

Mr. Speaker, I think these studies and evaluations by other provinces have shown that family violence legislation does help the victims and that, Mr. Speaker, is what we should be striving towards. Mr. Speaker, later today I plan to ask the Minister of Justice how we can more quickly move this legislation along and what other interim measures we might take to assist the victims of family violence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Lack of Policing and Legal Aid Resources

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like today to speak about a justice issue that has been concerning me and it has to do with the lack of resources in policing and lack of resources for legal aid.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the recent reporting in the media about the inadequate funding for the RCMP that may result in reduced services. I guess a reduction of policing services where it is necessary is always a concern, but I am more concerned about the fact that the RCMP has chosen to speak about the fact that they are not going to be able to enforce some of the responsibilities they have. I cannot think of any other notice to those who might want to engage in deviant behaviour or break the law, to get some comfort in knowing that they may have a better chance of not getting caught if the RCMP does not have enough resources to enforce the laws.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to give notice to the Minister of Justice that I will be interested in listening to what he has to say about what he has been doing to address this.

The second issue I would like to speak about is the lack of funding for legal aid. Mr. Speaker, I am aware that forever and ever, there never was enough money in legal aid. From what I understand and from the information that I have, it is getting worse and worse. The ones who suffer the most are usually the parents or single mothers who need legal assistance to get child support payments or custody applications put through the courts, Mr. Speaker.

I know that working on legal aid files is the lowest priority for most lawyers in town, and there is already a lack of family lawyers in town anyway. I think a lot of people who need help are not able to get the help to get the support payments and custody situations settled. It is really an unfair situation for those who are in need of legal aid and cannot get it because there is not enough money in the fund and there is not enough

legal assistance available. I will also be pursuing that with the Minister of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

Member's Statement on Acknowledgement of Holman Drummers and Dancers

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when Premier Kakfwi returned from the Team Canada trade mission, he acknowledged the presence of many people and groups that took part in promoting the NWT in other parts of the world. Some people promoted the economic opportunities in place here, while others displayed the cultural aspects of our unique society.

Mr. Speaker, it is the latter group I wish to acknowledge today. Mr. Speaker, there were six residents of Holman who made up the group known as the Holman Drummers and Dancers. Jimmy Memogana was accompanied by members of his immediate and extended families, namely Roberta and Kevin Memogana, Fred and Linda Kataoyak and Buddy Alikamik. Mr. Speaker, this group not only showcased part of the Inuvialuit culture through their actions and performance, but through their age differences, it clearly indicates a desire of the Inuvialuit to pass on these skills to the younger generations.

Mr. Speaker, Jimmy Memogana is 83 years old, and a father, grandfather and great grandfather many times over. Roberta is his daughter and Kevin is Roberta's son. Fred and Linda Kataoyak and Buddy Alikamik are also the grandchildren of Jimmy.

Mr. Speaker, Jimmy Memogana is a very popular Inuvialuit drummer and dancer and a great performer. When he dances, he does so with real emotion in his movements, and the same can be said of his family members.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Holman drummers and dancers for showcasing the Inuvialuit culture while performing in Munich, Germany, and for sacrificing their time away from home to do so.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish Memogana many more years of good, healthy drumming and dancing. I look forward to seeing him again on my next visit to Holman. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for MACA, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Question 83-14(5): Community Sport and Recreation Funding

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to an oral question asked by Mr. Lafferty on February 27, 2002, regarding community sport and recreation funding.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs does not have operations and maintenance or capital funding for multi-use facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not get many occasions to rise on this item, but today I would like to recognize my wife and partner for 34 years, Betty, and our youngest daughter, Meika.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome Bruce Suzan, Ms. Harry and Carol Owen to the gallery. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would like to welcome everyone who has come to watch your Assembly. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Jim Antoine. As I mentioned yesterday, since I have been elected, I have been trying to keep a close eye on the number of committees and the different bodies that are formed and look at the membership and the mandate.

I noticed that the Intergovernmental Forum has set up a new group called the Northwest Territories Economic Development Advisory Forum. However, I am not sure what their mandate is. I would like to ask the Minister if he could tell us today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Return to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is an economic development forum that was created by the Intergovernmental Forum. It is accountable to all three parties, not only to us here in the Government of the Northwest Territories through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, but it is also answerable to the federal Department of DIAND as well as the representatives on the Aboriginal Summit. This Economic Development Advisory Forum was created by all of these representatives of the three parties.

The mandate is to provide recommendations to the Intergovernmental Forum regarding priorities, directions, policy development and program design and implementation related to economic development in the Northwest Territories.

It is a good example of a collaboration that is possible when parties with an interest in northern economic development work together.

Canada, the Aboriginal Summit and the Government of the Northwest Territories collaborated on the screening and appointment of members. All three parties solicited names through a variety of processes, including approaching elected leaders for suggestions and placing advertisements in News/North, inviting interested people to submit their names.

Eighteen individuals have been appointed by the intergovernmental leaders to the Economic Development Advisory Forum, representing a broad cross-section of economic interests in the Northwest Territories. That is the make-up of this advisory forum. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gathering from the Minister's response, it is my understanding that this group will be working on setting priorities and direction, mainly for aboriginal communities in the North. I wanted to ask him if he could tell me how many people are on this committee? How many members are aboriginal? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of aboriginal people on there. I do not have the list of this group handy, but there are aboriginal people on this forum. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been told that the majority of the membership of this committee is non-aboriginal and that concerns me as this group will be dealing a lot with aboriginal issues and aboriginal governments.

I would like to ask the Minister another question relating to membership. How many people from this committee are from the south, who live in the south? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to emphasize again that this advisory forum was selected by the three different parties putting names forward; DIAND,

the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Aboriginal Summit.

There are people on there who live in the south. I think there might be one or two. I have to check the list. Like I said, I do not have the list handy. I would have to check on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the information that the Minister will provide with regard to the aboriginal membership and the people who live in the south. I would also like to ask him if he can provide me with the information regarding the number of members on this committee who are currently doing business with the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 149-14(5): Economic Development Advisory Forum

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will provide that information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reference to the statement I made about child poverty, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment what this government is doing to address and reduce child poverty in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member has brought forward a petition that he is going to table later today on child poverty, and I think we are all very concerned about the issue of child poverty in the Northwest Territories.

Our government has recognized that and continues to provide funding increases, Mr. Speaker, in terms of food allowances. We are proposing with this budget that we have just put forward to put more money into the food allowance, which will also take into account other areas of expenditures that are referenced in this petition. We took that into account when we decided that we would move forward with increases in funding, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last year, if we approve this particular budget, we will have increased the amount of funding in this one specific area

by approximately \$1.1 million. That will go directly into the hands of those on income support. The question of course becomes, does that go down to the children? Are people using that to support their children? Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the question, as the Minister has pointed out is, does this very welcome new funding go down to the children? I would like to ask the Minister specific questions on a couple of points in the petition.

Is this government going to stop deducting child support payments from monthly income support assessments for clients on income support? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of areas here. The NCPS clawback is consistent with how we do it across the country, with perhaps one or two exceptions, but it was a condition by the federal government. That is reinvested within the Northwest Territories in the workers' supplement and in the Healthy Children's Initiative, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to some of the other areas, we have taken into account that the level of support that we provide and, Mr. Speaker, we have an area of unearned income that we must take into consideration and an area of assets that are available for the individual to support themselves. So, we come to the level of support that we provide. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, will this government introduce income support rates that would allow a family of four to purchase the same amount of food as suggested by the DIAND 1998 study level? It is a substantively increased amount of food than our food allowances allow. Will the government try to do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I say, our program takes into account a number of areas. What we do provide is not consistent across the country. We provide the cost of housing in our jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. We also

provide the cost of utilities, clothing, furniture and we allow the individual to earn up to \$400 more a month.

The Stats Canada 1999 survey indicated that Northwest Territories households consisting of 3.1 persons spent \$564 per month on food. Our level of support, Mr. Speaker, today is \$524 for a household of one mother and three children. We are increasing that amount with this particular budget, so we are coming close to the amount that would indicate by our national survey what would be the average spending. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Those are all very encouraging bits of information. To give us a handle on this though, could the Minister advise the Assembly, what do we do to measure levels of child poverty in the Northwest Territories? What are our criteria? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 150-14(5): Addressing Child Poverty in the NWT

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a good question. It is more measured by those who are on income support rather than children on a poverty level. I think there is an area here that we could potentially look at and see how children are living.

However, as I say, I have to relate that back to the amount of income support that we provide to the family. Does that get down to the child? That is the major question. Thank you.

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

Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding my Member's statement. Mr. Speaker, the word alcoholism for most people is just a word or it is a word that most people just do not want to realize exists. Yet, Mr. Speaker, in our society, we see the effect it has on our communities, our families, children and people who try to work within our society to deal with these problems, especially the RCMP, people at women's shelters, the Salvation Army and other organizations that tell us time and time again that this is a problem.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services about the RCMP, who finally brought to light that 95 percent of their time is spent dealing with alcohol-related calls. What are you doing to improve access for alcohol and drug treatment for people who have this problem in our society? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first I would just like to point out that there is an element of personal responsibility when it comes to decisions to drink and do drugs. Do they wreck havoc on our society? Without a doubt. What are we doing about it? We are doing a number of things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we currently spend about \$5.6 million directly related to alcohol and drug services. As I have indicated in my Minister's statement this afternoon, we are concluding the final pieces of our alcohol and drug, mental health and family violence strategy. We have acknowledged there are problem areas, the socio-economic impact. We have to look at the requests for alcohol and drug centres and we have to make a decision. Do we spend more money on institutions or do we look at further enhancing programs and services to the communities to deal with alcohol issues as they occur in our communities?

The Nats'ejee K'eh is one facility we have in place, which puts us at about two or three times the national average in terms of beds per thousand for alcohol and drug treatment. There are some difficult issues. There are some difficult program issues and treatment issues that we have to come to grips with. We are working very aggressively to try and deal with this issue. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement, I touched on the cuts that took place in the 13th Assembly, where we cut a lot of alcohol and drug treatment centres. They are basically shut down; Delta House, Tl'oondih and other programs that were being provided at the time.

What is the Minister's plan to ensure that we have more accessible beds to clients in the area of alcohol and drug treatment in the Northwest Territories?

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

Further Return to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on beds per thousand, we have an adequate number of beds at Nats'ejee K'eh. Are there concerns about the current service delivery, a program model? In some cases, I believe there are. We are committed to working with the regions and communities to look at the kind of alcohol and drug services that are currently being provided.

I have acknowledged and committed to the Member to going up into his constituency to look at some of the requests and issues up there as they relate to the socio-economic impact as a result of major resource development.

Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to move on this. We recognize there are going to be some extra efforts required, especially in those areas where there is major resource development. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister, what are we doing to work in conjunction with any other organizations or people who see this area as a problem, in which they seem to be carrying the brunt of the burden in terms of public outcries, especially organizations such as the RCMP or the policing responsibilities?

I think that as a government, we have a responsibility to provide programs and services in relation to alcohol and drugs. I would like to ask the Minister, how are you working in conjunction with these other institutions or organizations to head off the problem with alcohol and drugs in our society?

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

Further Return to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the list I have provided in this House to the previous two questions, I would like to point out that we have struck a working group committee. The terms of reference have been shared with the Member and the members of the Social Programs Committee last week. The working group committee is going to try to come to grips with the socio-economic impact where there is major resource development. That will be expanded to include not just oil and gas but all resource development. We are going to expand it to include the aboriginal governments as well as our federal colleagues and industry.

Mr. Speaker, we are making significant efforts in what is a very significant issue and one that has a tremendous negative effect on our society. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister touched on the idea that he has a few endeavours on the go. I would like to thank the Minister for that, but I think we as a government have to have a long-term plan here as to where we are really going in relation to the problems at hand and developing a strategy, scenario or business plan, to see where we are going to be in five or ten years time to deal with this problem and ensure we have the resources there to carry it out.

I would like to ask the Minister exactly where are you by way of ensuring that we have a long-term goal and a business plan to

ensure that we are able to accomplish the goal we are trying to set here? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 151-14(5): Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Minister's statement today, we are just a few months away from concluding this Alcohol and Drug, Mental Health and Family Violence Strategy and it will be ready, after it goes through the proper processes with Cabinet and committees, to be included in the business planning process for the upcoming year 2003-2006. Thank you.

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

Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding disabilities. The Minister just announced this afternoon the establishment of a disability framework committee to look at a disability framework and action plan, which is to be completed in the spring of 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is part of the partnership he is referring to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Minister's statement, I was giving this Legislature a clear picture that we are bringing three ongoing strategies and framework to, hopefully, a successful conclusion in the next few months. With regard to the question that my colleague asked, the Disability Steering Committee membership is comprised of members of the Department of Health and Social Services, Education, Culture and Employment, the Housing Corporation, Municipal and Community Affairs, the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities, the YWCA of Yellowknife, Yellowknife Association for Community Living, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Dene Nation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from the answer provided by the Minister, I am assuming the issue of people with disabilities in communities that do not have paved roads or sidewalks has not been discussed as part of the steering committee's responsibilities? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the intent of this particular committee is to review services for people with disabilities across the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if in that review process, they reviewed the needs and requirements of people with disabilities in communities for transportation purposes, to go visit families, to go to the store, et cetera, so that these people with disabilities can be as independent as possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the NWT Council for People with Disabilities takes a very comprehensive approach in terms of dealing with its membership and their needs and issues. They have brought that approach to the table. We have a very good cross-section, as I have indicated, in this House.

Yes, I believe that all those concerns are going to be looked at in one way or another. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to get a commitment from the Minister to use his discretionary powers as Minister of Health and Social Services to encourage the working committee or the working group to look specifically at the challenges people with disabilities face on a daily basis in communities where there are transportation system difficulties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 152-14(5): Establishment of a Disability Steering Committee

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague for his comments and advice, and very clearly by raising them in this House, he has brought them to the attention of myself as Minister as well as the people on this particular steering committee. We will take that

as a clear signal that we should be taking that into consideration. Thank you.

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

Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my statement, I mentioned the lack of medical services to the smaller communities and I have a good example of that. I have a child in Snare Lakes that needs to see an eye specialist more often than regular people with good sight. He has retinitis pigmentosa disease. This is a disease that works on the eyes and eventually, people lose their vision. We get a specialist once a year into the smaller communities, but it is not enough to help these children and adults that are out there.

I would like to ask the Minister if he can tell me if he can increase that or can the department bring these people into Yellowknife as it seems they cannot get out of there for a referral? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member has mentioned a very specific disease and illness. I will commit to having the department look at that. I will raise it with the Dogrib Health and Social Services Board. We will look at this as we move forward with our service delivery model and core service document and the kind of integrated service delivery model we want to develop for the communities. I will make sure that the Member is kept informed. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for trying to work with the board. I think the problem here is that my constituent is having a problem getting out and I think the community service board is in charge of medical travel.

On the medical services overall in the communities, I had the chance of calling audiology in Yellowknife trying to book hearing tests. I understand they are booked until June. I would like to ask the Minister, how often do they have specialists coming up to the Northwest Territories for overall medical attention?

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

Further Return to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have specialists traveling into the North on a regular basis in the different areas of practice. I do not have the specific breakdown of all the specialists and their area of practice or how often they travel to the North. I can commit to get that information for the Member.

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

Supplementary to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just going back to the constituent of mine in the small community, is there any way if they were able to get here on their own they could be reimbursed by the department? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the intent and the hope that I would have is that the medical services we provide, the people who are there and the infrastructure we have in place, are responsive to the needs of the patient and the people in the regions and communities they serve. If there is a requirement to be referred, that will be done. If there is a requirement for medical travel, that may be accommodated. If there are specific initiatives or specific examples or issues the Member wishes to discuss outside this House, I will be happy to take that information, track it down and see what we can do to ensure they get resolved. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he could get his department to maybe do some kind of patient survey for the smaller communities, because more and more we are seeing a lot of similar cases coming up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 153-14(5): Access to Medical Services

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We always seriously check into issues raised in this House by Members. The one raised by my colleague will as well be given that same serious consideration. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have stated in my Member's statement, on average, people in Hay River receive their eye examinations once a year from an ophthalmic technician. I have already illustrated some common complaints that I have received from people in Hay River who have been examined by ophthalmic technicians who perform their eye examinations.

Would the Minister please indicate to this House what level of education is required for entry into the Ophthalmic Medical Technology Training Program? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have that level of detail in terms of the requirements or qualifications that my colleague asked for. I know he has a very important line of questioning, so I will not take that question as notice, but I will commit to get the information for him and I look forward to trying to answer the remaining questions he has. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, did the honourable Minister say he is taking it as notice?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for not being clear. I indicated I will not take this question as notice, because I know there are some important questions to be asked, but I will commit to get the information for the Member.

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

Supplementary to Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that candidates must have completed high school and attain a 65 percent average in English, math, social studies and one core subject. This equates to a passing mark of a C in all subjects on a sliding scale, with A being the highest and D just above a failing grade.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Minister if he feels that a grade C in a high school subject is adequate to properly diagnose and determine treatment for eye care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I am having difficulty with that question, Mr. Delorey. It appears that you are asking the Minister's opinion on a level of education. Perhaps you would like to rephrase that. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of those answers may come out in the Minister's information that he is going to supply to my first question. Mr. Speaker, I previously stated that a constituent who is a senior was required to purchase a second pair of bifocal glasses as a direct result of

an incorrect prescription being given by an ophthalmic technician who examined the patient in Hay River.

Would the Minister please state if his department would consider reimbursing this senior citizen for their second pair of lenses upon receipt of documentation to this effect? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I could get the particulars from the Member, once we are finished in this House, I will commit to having the matter reviewed. We will check out the information and I will discuss with the Member what the alternatives are. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the ophthalmologist travels to the communities three or four times a year. Given the myriad of problems outlined with ophthalmic technicians performing eye exams in the communities, especially with senior citizens, would the Minister please advise if he would give consideration to the ophthalmologist travelling to the communities more often in order to properly diagnose and treat our residents, in particular, our senior citizens? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 154-14(5): Ophthalmic Technology Training Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, very clearly, the Health and Social Services system places a very high priority on providing quality service. The Member has raised two particular issues for his constituency, which I take as serious matters.

I would also like to presume and assume that the vast majority of examinations go well and that there is, for the most part, a high quality service being currently provided. As well, we are looking at the level of services across the health and social services system across the Northwest Territories. This particular service will be one of the service areas that will be looked at as we move towards developing a service delivery model. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice, and as I

have said in my Member's statement, I would like to thank the Minister for providing us with this interim report on family violence legislation.

The Minister indicated that he is hoping to have results of more research and the feasibility of family violence legislation in the Northwest Territories back by June 2002. My concern with this is that this may not leave us enough time to pass this legislation during the 14th Assembly.

I wanted to ask the Minister, can he tell me if there is any way we can get this information back earlier? Or if, in fact, he can put such a priority on this legislation that we could see it introduced in the June session? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Return to Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is incumbent upon the department to take a very close look at the feasibility of introducing family violence legislation. We have developed a work plan, Mr. Speaker, to try to speed up the research and the amount of work that is involved in compiling that level of information.

We are committed, Mr. Speaker, to try to move as fast as we can on this piece of legislation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, indicated in the information that the Minister provided were tools that could be used to assist victims of family violence. In some other jurisdictions, they have something called an emergency intervention order, which does things like restrain the abuser from communicating with or contacting the victim or members of the victim's family. It gives the victim exclusive occupation of the home. It directs a peace officer to remove the abuser from the home, seize weapons, and accompany the abuser to the home to retrieve personal belongings, measures such as this.

We have indications that our shelters are filled to capacity and turning quite a number of victims away. I wanted to ask the Minister, is there any way we could adopt any interim measures prior to legislation being completed and passed that would assist police officers and social workers in dealing with victims of family violence? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Return to Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our intention is to work with the agencies involved in the overall process to identify the level of service we can provide in the interim. Our

intention then, Mr. Speaker, is to promote the message that family violence is a serious concern. Also, it is a cost to our justice system, so we certainly want to evaluate the cost. There is also a hidden cost, so we like to keep that in mind while we try to provide some level of security and safe communities. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a tremendous upheaval to families, most often women and children, when they need to travel from their home communities to reside temporarily in shelters. I would like to ask the Minister, does he support the concept of the abusers being removed from the homes and allowing the victims and children of family violence to in fact stay in their homes and in their home communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Madam Groenewegen, the question sort of suggests you are seeking an opinion of the honourable Minister. I will allow you to rephrase that, if you would. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister bring forward legislation that would enable women and children who are victims of family violence to retain occupation of the family home, and change our policy so that it would be the abuser that is removed from the home and community, not the abused? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 155-14(5): Family Violence Prevention Legislation

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to try to reply in the context of the question here. The victim's safety and support is one of the most important requirements considering the family violence legislation, so certainly in that aspect, we will respond to that. Thank you.

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

Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Health, and it is difficult to know who to address this question to. I have asked similar questions to the Minister of Education, about the testing and diagnosis of special needs. As I mentioned earlier, it can take quite a while to get special needs testing done in Yellowknife. I imagine even longer in some of the smaller communities.

Education, Culture and Employment identifies the kids who need testing and then, as I understand it, Health and Social Services conducts this testing. Can the Minister tell me how long it takes to get testing done in Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of testing and diagnosing special needs is not as simple as the title would suggest. There are a whole host of different issues that could be contained in that particular heading of special needs, so it would depend on the type of special need as well as where it is being done in Yellowknife. That would be dependant on the type of special need we are talking about. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If, for instance, the school identified a child with a learning disability, who was then referred for testing to the Department of Health and Social Services, how long does it take to diagnose this learning disability? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, learning disabilities themselves are as well not a precise term, but I can tell the Member that access to specialist services and testing services is heavily subscribed to, to the extent that there are backlogs. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the significant backlog in this area, I wonder if parents choose not to wait and stick around for possibly up to a year on a waiting list, and in fact go south for testing, will we help compensate for the testing? Will we in fact pay for it? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I know that for the most part, the intent is to use the services that are provided within our system. I know of other families that have gone south for testing of their children and have paid for that out of their own pockets. It is not an issue that I have a clear answer to. If the Member has a specific suggestion, I would be very happy to consider it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a suggestion and I am hoping that he would look into this. In fact we do have a significant backlog, I am hoping that he would bring significant resources to bear to deal with this backlog locally. I am not suggesting we should get into the practice of paying for more and more southern diagnoses, just that we need to bring resources to bear to deal with this backlog now as soon as possible. Will the Minister confirm that he will look into this? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 156-14(5): Testing and Diagnosis of Special Needs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated during the review of the main estimates for our department, the \$200 million we have in our budget is fully subscribed to. We recognize that there are pressing needs from all sides. We are working on a service delivery model and a core service document, and that will be one of the things considered; how do we deal with backlogs and access to specialists' services? Thank you.

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

Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today goes to the Minister of Justice with regard to the lack of funding for policing services in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to earlier in my statement, it has been about two weeks since the local RCMP detachment announced that because of the lack of their complement of officers, they would curtail some of their duties, including not attending to motor vehicle accidents unless they are serious. They will also cut the Drug Awareness Education Program. As well, they may not respond to property offences or intoxicated people who cause disturbances.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Minister is aware of this. Could he please advise the House as to what actions he has taken to address this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Return to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I can refer back to my Minister's statement several days ago, we have outlined a number of actions we have taken since that news was released. We have had senior officials from the Department of Justice meet with the commanding officer of the RCMP "G" Division. They outlined a number of action plans and concurred with no cutbacks on some patrols. I do not have the specific details. They will also reinstate the DARE program

and extend it into Hay River. We will continue to work with the RCMP "G" Division to look at additional funding and additional resources that we are continually being confronted with in terms of our budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate his answer and I am aware of his statement, but I did not hear anything in his answer as to what specific things he is doing to address the concerns raised in Yellowknife. May I please have the Minister state that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interim, we want to give the city and the citizens of Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories as a whole, the assurance that we are continuing to provide the same level of service until we can come up with a comprehensive action plan that will address policing across the whole Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if that is adequate to say that the Minister will come up with a comprehensive action plan. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, people who live in the downtown area, who have people come to their property and do all sorts of damage and so on after the bars close, and the local merchants who are having to hire their own security to deal with disturbances, do not have time to wait for a comprehensive action plan. I still have not received an answer as to what specific things he is doing in Yellowknife to address this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been informed by senior departmental officials that they are continuing to work with the RCMP to ensure there is a level of service that can be provided. We will encourage the RCMP to continue to do the patrols and provide deterrents to property damage. We feel we are on the road now where we are going to be able to provide a secure level of service until such time as we can discuss future financial and human resource needs. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what good it is to talk to the police and ask them to do the services at the same level when their funding level has not changed since 1981, 20 years ago, when the city had a population of about 10,000. Mr. Speaker, do we not agree that it is a lack of resources, and all the talk will not make any difference? Would the Minister consider providing more funds to the RCMP from the territorial budget? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 157-14(5): Lack of Funding for Police Services

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will let the Member know that there is a police agreement in force. It was signed in 1991 and there are about ten years to go. In the interim, we are working with FMB and Cabinet to develop a plan to deal with the many policing issues facing us. Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that since this is a monetary issue, we are continuing to work with the appropriate agencies to identify the best method which will continue to help support, and perhaps increase, the level of funding to policing across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question at this time would be directed to the Minister responsible for Finance, and it has to do with the fiscal situation. In the Minister's Budget Address, he refers to the longer-term outlook. Initially, the fiscal picture looks quite good, and my many questions in the past about a debt wall, it no longer seems to be there anymore. It is now gone because the light is so bright, we must wear shades, in a sense.

I would like to know, he does state in his address that in fact, if things do not continue to stay on the rise in the sense of our revenues, we will once again find ourselves in quite a situation around 2004-2005. I would like to know from the Minister why there is such a change in the fiscal situation. Thank you.

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

Return to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short-term fiscal situation for us is certainly rosy in that we do have a surplus this year. We had a surplus last year. The surplus for last year was higher than we had anticipated, and for the current year, we have the same thing happening.

A lot of that has come from one-time corporate tax payments, as well as some adjustments we had the federal Minister of Finance make to our budget.

We cannot count on those one-time tax revenues being there, so the picture is less rosy in the near future at least, unless we have more federal investment into the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has stated that there was some re-jigging of numbers, or some work on the federal initiatives or revenue side. Can the Minister inform us as to what areas resulted from the federal changes? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has recalculated two factors in our grant; one being the provincial/local expenditure calculator. That is a factor in the formula, which is based on provincial and local municipal funding across Canada. That adjustment was made because of an error in calculation and it went retroactive, giving us about \$60 million.

Since that time, the federal Minister has also reassessed the tax effort adjustment factor and that again gave us some retroactive money, I think roughly in the neighbourhood of \$50 million, and also means some adjustment into the future.

Those would be the two main recalculations that were done by the federal government. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if we just have to count on the reinvestment by the federal government, what kind of picture does that leave us when we come to the near future and the years beyond? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Trying to project our fiscal future is really a complex task, because the numbers I am using, the numbers I used in my Budget Address are based on the current financing formula. We have now entered into new negotiations on a financing formula. I am going to try to negotiate a better deal than we had the last time. I suppose every Finance Minister tries that.

The second is that we are also dealing with devolution and resource revenue sharing. Those discussions are starting this month. Hopefully, that will help us as well.

Third is our economy continues to grow. Our own source revenues continue to increase. Our tax revenues have increased by about 6 percent in this last year and we expect that to continue.

The other factor is, of course, that over the next 20 years or so, the federal government, just from the current oil and gas development that is projected and the mining development, will make somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$18 billion to \$20 billion dollars. That is billion, not million. That is substantial. We need to negotiate to have a bigger share of that money stay here in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the picture is painted in bright colours. If we are counting on what we know we are going to receive in the near future, and the Minister states it in his forecast that in fact, we would be awfully close to our borrowing limit of \$300 million again by late 2004-2005, why would we see such a shift from the picture today to two years down the road? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 158-14(5): Long-Term Fiscal Outlook

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, to put some numbers to it, we expect to end the 2001-2002 year with a surplus of \$160 million in our bank account. That is because of the one-time revenues we have received. However, starting in the 2003-2004 year, we could have about \$87 million less than we are projecting for the 2002-2003 year, because the federal government would begin then to recalculate our own corporate tax revenues, unless those kept coming in. They would have made assumptions and overpaid us in 2002-2003. In 2003-2004, they take it back. We would probably be short in that year by about \$78 million; in 2002-2003, we could be short by \$118 million.

The net result, Mr. Speaker, is that by late 2004-2005, if nothing else changed, we still had the same formula, we made no progress on resource revenue sharing, we had no increase in federal investment in the North, we could be hitting our \$300 million debt wall in late 2004-2005. Again, Mr. Speaker, those are all ifs, because there are a lot of calculations to be worked out between now and that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services,

regarding the comment he made earlier when I asked a question. He mentioned that he talked about the beds based on a thousand per capita distribution, that we looked pretty good compared to other jurisdictions. I would like to ask the Minister, exactly what is the rate of people affected by alcoholism compared to other jurisdictions?

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

Return to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we consume alcohol at two to three times the national average, I believe. I would suggest, based on that simple correlation, that our rate of alcohol abuse is higher than the national average. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the Minister's comment, we definitely have the bragging rights regarding alcoholism, the consumption per capita in most places in Canada. Just on that basis alone, does the Minister agree that tells us we have a major problem in that area in the Northwest Territories? What are we going to do about it?

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

Further Return to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any argument at all with that particular statement made by my colleague. Our jails are filled, our family violence shelters are filled. We have children in care. We have a rate of FAS/FAE that is very lamentable. Yes, it is a problem.

I outlined to this House at some length earlier in question period the various initiatives we have underway. I could let those stand, unless the Member would like me to repeat them. I have already provided the information on what we are trying to do on that particular issue. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Minister exactly what is his department doing to educate the public regarding these high statistics, and making them aware that we do have a problem and that we definitely have to take some stringent action to ensure that we implement some policies and procedures, and ensure that we have the expenditures in place to deal with these problems.

I would like to ask the Minister, exactly what is he doing regarding public education about these problems?

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

Further Return to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have initiatives that encourage young people not to drink and drive. We have initiatives encouraging pregnant mothers not to drink while pregnant. We have initiatives with Education to deal with that kind of information in the schools. We deal with it through public health. We are dealing with it through the early childhood development initiative with family visitors to try and get into the home early to work with families.

We, in a number of areas, at every opportunity, make the case about not drinking; not drinking when they are pregnant, not drinking when they are diving, not smoking, trying to eat right. The issue of personal choice and those kinds of decisions are very critical, and we are recognizing that we probably have to do more. We are not unaware to that particular area. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible to maybe touch base with the Minister responsible for the Liquor Commission, they being the ones who provide most of the alcohol in the Northwest Territories, if he can find some sort of meeting of the minds, realizing we have a major problem and we have a distribution agency within this government to find a solution to make some major changes in how alcohol is being distributed. Also, how some of those profits can be put back to address some of the problems with alcohol in the Northwest Territories.

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

Further Return to Question 159-14(5): Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, alcohol is a legitimate legal substance. If the Member has a particular suggestion about how it should or should not be distributed, I, along with my colleague, Mr. Handley, would be interested to hear those.

Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex issue. The impact of alcohol stretches far beyond the \$5.6 million that I have indicated we have dedicated to that particular area. If you put together the full cost of the impact of alcohol across the Northwest Territories on all of our systems as a society that would far exceed -- far exceed -- any money that is raised in tax revenue from the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Mr. Speaker, for some years now, Hay River has been waiting for some development in the oil and gas sector. I am happy to report that finally, this year, some work is getting done in Cameron Hills.

I was wondering if the Minister could maybe bring us up to date on the scope of the work that is going on north of the border in Cameron Hills right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware that Paramount Resources have the go ahead from the necessary regulatory agencies to go ahead with development of natural gas in Cameron Hills to do some more wells. They have some natural gas there so they are doing a gathering system with the pipeline and putting the pipeline south. They are pretty close to finishing that project of putting the pipeline in. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, I am very happy to see some of the activity going on there, but I am very concerned about a phone call that I received yesterday from a local company that has been trying to get some work, saying the majority of the work, a big majority, is being done by southern firms. His company, or some of the companies from the North, are being known as the raven companies because all they are doing is getting the scraps.

I was wondering if the Minister or anyone in his department has or could have a list of the companies that are doing the work north of the border in the Territories. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is probably aware of what is going on, the officials are aware. Personally, I do not really know. I have a list of who is working there. We will do everything we can to try and get a list of the types of jobs and the work that is going on in

Cameron Hills and how much of it is to northern companies. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is it still a priority with the department to have as many northern companies as we possibly can working in any development that is going on within our borders? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our message to the oil and gas companies that are just starting to come into the North is that we want to see maximized benefits to the people and companies in terms of business opportunities and for the jobs and for the training.

That is our number one priority. We will have to see what Paramount Resources is doing in regard to trying to live up to the types of goals that we set for ourselves. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Minister is reaffirming his department's desire to have northern companies working. I would just like to get clarification. Is the Minister committing that he will do a review of the work that is going on there this year and see how well the companies are living up to putting our people to work in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 160-14(5): Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Activity

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am making that commitment. I would like to know, for the record, on behalf of the people in the North, what kind of benefits are staying in the North from this project in Cameron Hills. This is one of the first gas operations north of 60, besides Fort Liard, and we need to do it right. We will see what is going on there and make sure they live up to the types of commitments they make when they are moving into this area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The time for question period has ended. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Braden.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, colleagues, please give me a little longer than normal for this. There are a number of people visiting us today in recognition of the petition I am about to table and the display that is set up out in our lobby. I would like to recognize, Mr. Speaker: Marilyn Harry, of the Yellowknife Women's Centre; Dorothy Matthews, an advocate also with the Yellowknife Women's Centre; Ann Marie Giroux, a single parent and one of the sponsors of the petition; from the YWCA housing staff, Kate Wilson, Charlotte Ruttan and Darlene Ulrich; Lyda Fuller is the executive director of the YWCA in Yellowknife; Susan Pepper is a family support worker at the Yellowknife Women's Centre; Captain Karen Hoeft wears many hats in Yellowknife and in the Territory, not the least of which is the leader of the Yellowknife Coalition for Homelessness. Mr. Speaker, we also have Lorraine Sampson and Barb Baldwin with the YWCA Women's and Children's Healing and Recovery Program.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Welcome to the visitor's gallery. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me special pleasure as well to recognize the family of John and Marsha Argue and their immediate family, who are visiting the gallery this afternoon. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Welcome to the Argue family and our condolences on your loss. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 10: PETITIONS

Petition 1-14(5): Fight Child Poverty

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure, on behalf of 613 signatories and sponsors of the petition entitled Fighting Child Poverty, a petition on behalf of children living in poverty. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. 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. Item 14, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

ITEM 14: NOTICES OF MOTION**Motion 6-14(5): Establishment of a Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs**

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, March 8, 2002, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that this Legislative Assembly establish a Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs;

And further, that the special joint committee shall be comprised of four Regular Members and one Member of the Executive Council whose appointment shall be recommended by the Striking Committee;

And furthermore, that the terms of reference for the Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs be established as follows:

The Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs shall:

1. Consider and make recommendations respecting alleviating adverse socio-economic conditions which may exist in non-tax-based municipalities; and
2. Prepare an interim report to the Legislative Assembly by the fall session of 2002; and a final report with recommendations no later than February 2003 that identifies a process or processes whereby the Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Northwest Territories can better address the unique needs, concerns and difficulties experienced by non-tax-based communities in the Northwest Territories.

And furthermore, that the special joint committee shall:

- a) conduct its business in a manner approved by the committee and in accordance with the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, and which does not impinge or encroach on the mandate of any existing standing or special committees;
- b) conduct its consultation through a maximum of two territorial conferences attended by leaders of non-tax-based communities;
- c) be provided with the necessary administrative and professional support by the Legislative Assembly; and
- d) be provided with the necessary funds to carry out its responsibilities from the appropriations of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with his motion today. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS**Motion 6-14(5): Establishment of a Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs (Carried)**

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS there is a trend of people moving from smaller communities to larger centres for employment and services;

AND WHEREAS the small communities of the Northwest Territories represent enduring remnants of a traditional social and cultural existence that must be recognized and preserved;

AND WHEREAS the interests of small NWT communities deserve the attention and consideration of the Legislative Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that this Legislative Assembly establish a Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs;

AND FURTHER, that the special joint committee shall be comprised of four Regular Members and one Member of the Executive Council whose appointment shall be recommended by the Striking Committee;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the terms of reference for the Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs be established as follows:

The Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs shall:

1. Consider and make recommendations respecting alleviating adverse socio-economic conditions which may exist in non-tax-based municipalities; and
2. Prepare an interim report to the Legislative Assembly by the fall session of 2002; and a final report with recommendations no later than February 2003 that identifies a process or processes whereby the Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Northwest Territories can better address the unique needs, concerns and difficulties experienced by non-tax-based communities in the Northwest Territories.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the special joint committee shall:

- a) conduct its business in a manner approved by the committee and in accordance with the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, and which does not impinge or encroach on the mandate of any existing standing or special committees;
- b) conduct its consultation through a maximum of two territorial conferences attended by leaders of non-tax-based communities;

- c) be provided with the necessary administrative and professional support by the Legislative Assembly; and
- d) be provided with the necessary funds to carry out its responsibilities from the appropriations of the Legislative Assembly.

Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

-- Applause

Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 7: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowance Act

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowance Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in a supplementary retiring allowance plan and sets out the details of the plan. Those Members who participate in the plan will contribute more under the registered plan.

This bill also changes numerous provisions of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowance Act to ensure that the two plans are alike and consistent with similar plans whenever possible.

Finally, this bill makes other changes to clarify the details of the registered and supplementary plans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not use my full allotment of time here. For the record, I want to state that I will not be supporting this initiative. Based on my initial stance on this bill as a Member of the 13th Assembly, I cannot support this at this time. I feel that it is not appropriate for me, again with my initial stance, that saw a previous plan of this nature go down in the 13th Assembly. I could not support it coming back in the 14th Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Range Lake Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment on this. I will not be supporting this second reading of the bill. Mr. Speaker, I understand this is a difficult

issue. It is a sensitive issue, but I believe it is important that we as public legislators articulate our position and why we are supporting this or not.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to indicate at the outset, I hope none of the things I am saying will be taken personally. It is not meant to be personal. I am just stating my position as the Member for Range Lake. I believe this is a public issue and it is about how we are spending public money.

I should correct here that I made an error in the way I answered some of the questions from the media. I do accept that some of the money for the last pension was from contributions by the Members and that this pension would also have contributions from Members towards the fund. My position is that most of the money, or at least part of the money, is public money. The surplus money that we are talking about in this fund therefore should be accountable to the public.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of positions being put forward about this pension. I would like to address some of them.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this is about whether or not some of us need this money more than others. I believe that we could argue until our faces are blue about who needs more money. I do not know anybody who is too rich to take extra money.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it is about whether or not we are entitled to this or not. I have heard the argument that because other Members, or the honourable people who have represented this House prior to us, have it that we should be entitled to it as well.

I have also heard people say that we work very hard, we make a lot of sacrifices, and that we should be rewarded for that. I have also heard other people say this place has to stay competitive in order to attract people of good calibre to seek public office. You know, I would agree with all of that. I do believe this is difficult work. It is not a nine-to-five job. I believe that the needs and desires of all the Members here are very different.

We come from a very diverse background, reflective of the people we represent. We are of different income level, different social background. Some of us have a pension from other lives we had. Some of us are much younger than the rest. Some of us have kids, some of us do not. We have a lot of variation to who we are, but I do not think that is what this is about.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard people say, "Well, we feel that we should be entitled to what other Members had, and if you do not like it, just vote no and opt out of it and let the rest of us worry about it."

I believe that position also ignores the issue at hand, Mr. Speaker. The issue is on what we are doing with the surplus public money. What decision are we making?

Mr. Speaker, I believe what this is really about is that we are able to introduce a legislation like this simply because we can. We have the power to do this. Nineteen of us are the only ones in the Territories who could pass the law to set up a pension for the benefit of the 19 of us. We have that power to do that. I have spoken many times in this House about the power we have to make enormous decisions that affect the lives of the people. We have a say on how we spend the money for hospitals, schools, roads, even perhaps who goes to jail or not.

We have enormous power. With that power comes responsibility and privileges.

I do believe that when we are making a decision or passing legislation on money and public money that is for the sole benefit of the Members in this House, the exclusive club of 19 people, we should be held to a higher standard and answer to the public about why it is that we should be getting extra pension.

Mr. Speaker, I think that many people here are aware, or people out there are aware, that there are a lot of people who do not have a pension at all. We should also be aware that the Members here already have one pension that is similar to the public service employees. Mr. Speaker, people who work at Wal-Mart or McDonald's or many, many private businesses, do not have a pension.

Mr. Speaker, I also recall that we were not able to do anything for the Giant Mine pensioners. I am not going to talk about what can we do with five million, ten million or 20 million people because again, just like the needs and aspirations of us, we could come up with ten million different ways to spend \$10 million or \$5 million. It is not about us not being able to find another way to do it. It is really about fairness and integrity and how we are exercising our power to vote and make law.

Mr. Speaker, my mother worked for the government. She worked for 20 years. She does not have enough pension to do a lot of things that she likes to do. I am just going to narrow my discussion to pension options.

I just had a constituent who had to sell her house and move out of the Territories because her pension does not pay her enough to allow her to make her payments.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with this pension because I consider this pretty close to abuse of power. This is the kind of thing that people hate politicians for, because politicians are known to do things just because they can, without due consideration for what is in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that this has been going on for a long time and this goes on in other jurisdictions. I am sure things a lot worse than this go on. However, I ran for office. My platform said I believe in good government. I believe in government that is accountable and that has integrity. How we get evaluated is how we pass the law and what sort of laws we pass and how we decide to spend our money, and continuing on with practices that have been going on forever does not make it right, Mr. Speaker. I do believe we have other options to do with the money. I am sure the Members here have a better way of stating what the needs may be.

I will not take all of the time. I did not expect to speak so soon. I assumed there would be other people speaking in favour of it. I would just like to close by saying this is not because I do not want the money. This is not because I do not need the pension. I have as many desires and needs as the next person, but I believe that exercising the power to vote and pass the law and spend the money in a way that benefits us to give extra pension, we are doing it because we can. I do not believe that is the right thing.

Just because things are doable does not necessarily mean it is the right thing. For that, Mr. Speaker, I will vote against the

motion and I would encourage other Members to state their position. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this bill, I think some people should learn from the past, especially coming from the 13th Assembly. I for one feel we were suckered into passing a motion with bad advice, in which we were under the understanding that through that resolution, we were going to be able to clawback the supplementary pension of the supplementary funds that were there.

I think on that basis, we decided to vote with the understanding that there was a surplus. We had over a \$100 million deficit and we had to do something. We looked at every avenue that was out there. We looked at the pots of money available to us. We had to make some big decisions. We made some tough decisions. We were not liked because of some of those decisions, but we had to make the decisions. One of the decisions was because of the amount of money that was in different supplementary funds, if it was possible to take those funds back, put it against the deficit and bring down the impact of the deficit on the people of the Northwest Territories.

We assumed that was possible. We were given information and advice to that, in which we voted on the basis of...the majority of the Members of the House were rookies. I for one was a rookie.

I think it is that type of advice that I have concerns in this bill right here, because my concern is the effects this bill has on other people, not in this Assembly but in future Assemblies, and in Assemblies prior to this will be affected. I think in order to do justice to everyone, we should ensure that we do it right. We do not want to be put into a situation where people can stand up in this House and say, "You are getting a free pension. You are not going to put anything into it."

Just to make it clear to those people out there who can hear me, for me to buy back the pension of the 13th Assembly, that is going to cost me \$128,000. Is that fair? I think as a government when we make comments or statements that it is a freebie, it is not a freebie. You have to put into this fund. There is a surplus to this fund of I believe \$9 million. The \$9 million surplus did not come from the majority of the coffers of this government. Some of it did, but those were put in place because of the good investments by the people that are investing that fund. The intention of a pension fund is how you invest those funds and how you manage those funds. I for one should praise the people who are managing that fund.

Again, getting back to my point, I think it is important as the Legislature that whenever we make statements that we have a one-time option, if you do not buy in by the end of the term of the 14th Assembly, that is it. There is no other alternative. I think that for us to tie the hands of previous or future Assemblies, it limits the ability of a Legislature to basically develop and mold a system that is workable, compatible and you can basically tie it into other Legislatures across the country.

I have to really sit here and bite my tongue when I think about people that I knew, such as Mark Evaloarjuk in the 13th Assembly, who is no longer with us. He did not have a chance

to enjoy his pension. We have Pete Fraser who passed away a number of years ago. He was almost at the age of being able to enjoy his pension, but he is no longer here. I know a lot of people in political life, such as Johnny Charlie, who put 30 years of his life into being a community leader. Most of our chiefs and band councillors in our communities do not have a pension.

I think it is sad to say that just because you serve in public life, you have to give up something to get something. I think we are giving up something being in this Legislature. When I came here in the 13th Assembly I do not think I had one gray hair. Now, I am almost looking like Jake Ootes.

-- Laughter

I think the stress and impact of the work that is associated with this, and the effect that it has not only on yourself but previous Members of this Legislature. I know my predecessor to this Legislature had a hard time getting a job after he left office. It took him many months, if not years, to build up that credibility to find a job within the private sector. To develop yourself so you can find those opportunities, for myself, I have served in public service with regard to aboriginal politics since 1984. I have seen a lot of good people come and go, many good people who are no longer with us. That is the part that has an effect on me, looking at ensuring what we do here is fair and that it does not obligate or put restrictions on other groups or people from previous Assemblies and the effect it will have on future Assemblies. It has to be construed that we have a system in place that flows from the previous 33 Members right up to the 13th Assembly, and the ones that are going to come in the future.

On that, I will be making some amendments to the motions to ensure that it is fair. I think that in order to do that, we have to ensure this act is fair. I will be making amendments to the resolution and will speak on that at the time of my amendments, so that people can see exactly how bills or acts we pass in this Legislature have an affect if we do not have all the information, or do not do it with the understanding of what the implications are on previous or future Assemblies. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will speak very briefly to this, but I first of all want to say that the one thing the public expects from us on this bill and other bills is to ensure that the information we have is accurate. I do accept Ms. Lee's apology for having given the media some inaccurate information, which may have misled or coloured people's thinking on this issue. I do take a bit of exception though to the statement that was made today about this being surplus public money. This is not all public money. There was some public money in it. I believe somewhere in the neighbourhood of a third of what is there now is public money. I do not have an exact figure.

Some people have said that there were no contributions by Members in past Legislative Assemblies. I am told by Members that there were contributions. A lot of the money that is in here is money that has been earned through investments in the pension plan.

There is a question, who does that money belong to? Who does any money in any pension plan belong to? Does it belong to the pension plan of those people who paid into it or does it belong to government? I guess the question I put out to other Members to consider is when does a government dip into pension plans? Is it appropriate for a government to dip into pension plans? For example, the Ontario Teachers Federation has a huge surplus in their pension plan. They are public servants, and there are other public pension plans that all have some public contribution in them. Should the Ontario government dip into the Ontario teachers' pension plan? I do not know. It is a serious philosophical question. Whether it is an MLA's pension plan, whether it is a teacher's pension plan or a union worker's pension plan, whose ever it may be, when do we step into a pension plan and begin to dip out the money?

I do not think we should view ourselves in our role here in any particular way. I do not feel that I am abusing my authority. I do not believe that is what I came here for. I did not believe it when I ran for election. I do not believe it now. I will not abuse my authority, but at the same time, I want to ensure that all people in the Northwest Territories are treated fairly. I do not like the suggestion that somehow we have been abusing our authority. I for one have not done that at all and I will not do that.

Mr. Speaker, on this whole issue, really the fundamental question in my mind is if we begin to dip into pension plans as a government, where does that stop? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the commission that reviewed our compensation recommended that we deal with this issue and I have no problem with this House considering the issue of pensions. I regret that commission did not make a recommendation on pensions, because I would point out that this House has already accepted most of the recommendations that commission made, and most of them will, of course, come into effect after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, in the 13th Assembly, we were faced with a difficult financial situation and we agreed to end the supplementary pension. We were cutting jobs and salaries and it was the right thing to do. Mr. Speaker, I am not opposed to considering pension plan changes but, Mr. Speaker, like other changes to our compensation, I think the pension changes should come into effect after the next election, a similar approach that we have taken with the recommendations that were made on our compensation.

The pension plan we ended was a so-called 3 percent plan. I know that people thought that was too rich. I think it is important that the public understand that Members did contribute to that pension, but the public still thought we did not contribute enough to justify a 3 percent pension.

The pension proposed today is a 2 percent pension. That is better than 3 percent, I think, in the eyes of the public. Mr. Speaker, I think I could personally go and justify to my constituents a 1 or a 1.5 percent pension, but I am having trouble with the 2 percent. If we cut the old one in half, I think we would be able to say that it was justified.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will have to vote against the bill in its current form. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not in the habit of turning down money, even if it means receiving it when I am 60 years old.

I have given this issue quite a bit of consideration. I am fully aware that my colleagues have given it a lot of thought. Some have even gone as far as providing confidential Cabinet documents to the media, as I heard this morning when I tuned into the radio station...I meant Caucus information that is only available to us.

I was in support when the supplementary pension was withdrawn during the last session. I think most of the North was. The rationale at that time was to lead by example. I fully supported that because the government was in a deficit situation.

Today, now that we are in a surplus, we are reconsidering that. However, the surplus situation is not going to stay in place for very long. Our Finance Minister has indicated that we will be in a deficit situation by next year.

I really have had to give it serious consideration. I went through Hansard and went back to when the days of the supplementary pension were introduced and voted on. I wanted to see what was stated at that time. What was the rationale for introducing such a pension? However, there was no discussion in those days. The motion was put on a table and it was voted on without any discussion. Nobody said anything on it. It is really hard to go back and look at this thing historically.

I have heard the arguments for it and against it. I have heard arguments by my colleagues, stating that we will have a difficult time as former politicians after our term is done to obtain a job. However, when I look around and see what the former MLAs and Ministers are doing now, it is obvious most of them have very good jobs. If some people get elected and get a position as an MLA and do not have the qualifications prior to coming here, they are still going to have a difficult time once they leave here. They are not going to have any more qualifications other than the experience as an MLA. They will continue to have problems obtaining jobs.

I plan to live for a long time yet. I plan to be a contributing member of society for many years. I knew the terms when I was elected. I came into this position with my eyes open. I knew that the supplementary pension was gone. I accepted that. I continue to think that this pension we have currently in place is fair. I am willing to live with that.

However, what really seals my decision to vote against this bill is when I look into my own riding and see the economic and social conditions my communities are in, I certainly cannot accept it. If I had my way, all supplementary pensions would be terminated. However, we are not voting on that today. My position on this is I will be voting against it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel compelled to reply and speak to the motion. As well as many Members across the hall and including myself, we are newly elected to the 14th Legislative Assembly. I do not beg to differ, however, in the context of the information provided to us by the actuary, I still feel that we have put our political life on the line. We have worked non-stop for the betterment of the people of the Northwest Territories. Some of us have taken great strides in trying to improve the socio-economic development of our communities. We have sacrificed our own ability at the regional and territorial level to participate in what is now a highly developed territory. That is certainly my reason for supporting this bill.

The obvious reason for myself is that we have worked diligently to provide the same level of opportunities for our people. In doing so, we have foregone those opportunities. I beg to differ on the fact that, and I share the same sentiments as my colleague for Weledeh, we are not here to abuse our power, nor are we looking for authority. We have complied with the requirements to be transparent and open and accountable and we have in many of our portfolios.

We are also working with our Members to ensure we have met the demands of our people across the Northwest Territories.

I do not think this is putting our people at any risk, but to allow ourselves as Members who want to support this motion, so that we have an opportunity at some point in our future to share in those benefits as we do work on behalf of the people of the Territories. Mr. Speaker, I am in support of this motion. I will vote in favour of it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking in favour of this bill. I have done so already previously in the media. I do not imagine that will surprise many people. I agree entirely with Mr. Handley. I do not believe government should be in the business of dipping into pension plans. Certainly neither should private companies. We have seen what can happen when private companies leave pension plans unfunded and then go belly-up. I do not think it is fair. I think people rely on this money, people's families, possibly estates, count on this money and it is not fair to leave them underfunded or short-funded.

There have been other options that have been talked about, as Members have indicated. The possibility of taking the surplus was there. The Members of this House have decided that would not be appropriate. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the entire supplementary pension is unprotected. We can simply swoop in, in one vote, and take it all and leave past Members high and dry. Well, you know, we are not prepared to do that and I think rightly so. That is not fair to past Members, to their families. We have a fiduciary responsibility. There are still Members in this House currently sitting here before us who are enrolled in that pension plan. I do not think that would be fair at all.

Mr. Speaker, there is no new public money going into this and there has not been for some time. Members are contributing and have contributed in the past. This is also only two-thirds of past pension. The fact remains that there is a surplus that will take us forward without new contributions, and our actuaries tell us it is a conservative estimate with some eight to ten years before any new money would be involved.

Mr. Speaker, I guess for me, standing here today, having talked to my colleagues, I am aware that this bill is going to pass. I had to ask myself if it passes, would I sign up for this pension? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes. Knowing that, and knowing that I would sign up for this, I am not prepared to stand here today and say I do not support this and then turn around and say look at that, I will accept the will of the House and quietly sign up. I do not think that is fair.

One of my colleagues has insisted, or suggested -- requested, I suppose, that Members stand here today and make it known how they feel about this pension and which way they are going to vote. Mr. Speaker, I do not even think that is the real issue. We know it is going to pass. I think the thing that Members should be speaking to is whether or not they intend to sign up for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of the bill. I am going to be supporting this with my vote. Mr. Speaker, I was one of those rookie MLAs that came in here very idealistic and bright-eyed into the 13th Assembly, having no idea what I came to face, wondering why so many of the Ministers and former MLAs had not come back, had decided not to run again. I was not here very long before I started to realize why some of them maybe did not want to come back. We were facing a \$150 million deficit. We at the time were facing a rollback of the entire public service of 6 or 7 percent. I had the job of going back to my riding to explain to members of the public service why their wages and benefits were being cut and we thought it was the right thing to do at the time.

Having said that, Members of the 13th Assembly did have to make some tough choices. Things such as the rollback of public service wages, cuts to programs. We had to do the responsible thing and address the deficit and we did that. I find it ironic then that some of those Members from earlier who had created this supplementary pension for themselves lived in happier times in terms of government largesse and they were able to do more for their constituents.

We came along. We had to make the tough decisions. We had to deliver the bad news and at the same time, rolled back our own wages as Members and did away with supplementary pensions. Well, you know, times have changed a little since then. In looking at the actuarial reports and looking at the surplus in this supplementary pension, I look at it and I say if, through good management and good investment, there is this surplus money there, why not bring the Members of the 14th Assembly back into -- not to the full extent, not at the 3 percent, but at the 2 percent -- why not bring them back into this benefit that was set up? This money is there.

If we do not want to do that, then we are going to be so righteous, I suppose, to say there should be no supplementary pension. Well then, let us take the whole pension out. Let us take the full amount of the supplementary pension, what is it, \$25 million? I mean, if you want to do that, let us put it all back into general revenues.

-- Applause

If the surplus is there, then it was there for a purpose; to provide a supplementary pension to Members. I do not see what Mr. Krutko or myself or any of the Members who came in on the 13th Assembly, what have we done less than our predecessors? Have we not worked as hard? Have we not made the same sacrifices? Have we not done our jobs just as well? Why should the pre-13th Assembly Members be the beneficiaries of the supplementary pension and we are not?

My position on this all along has been either kill it for everybody or, since there is this big surplus which is not going to require any more public funds, do the right thing and bring the Members of the 14th Assembly into the supplementary pension. That is my position. I think it is not the right thing to take something away from these former Members, so I am going to be supporting the bill to support supplementary pensions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am standing to say I am supporting the bill. I also, along with my other colleagues, must say that I take offense to my colleague saying that we are abusing our powers. It seems to me that whenever she disagrees with anything, she takes it to the media, even if the information is right or wrong.

I came to this Legislative Assembly as a person who worked for the community...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Lafferty, we have a point of privilege. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Point of Privilege

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise a point of privilege. I appreciate the debate that is going on. I believe that this is the right thing to do. The Member for North Slave just suggested that I had somehow intentionally misled the media. I have already indicated -- I did not apologize -- I clarified that I made an error in one message.

The implication that I am somehow out there spreading misinformation, I find that to be an infringement of my right as a Member to show integrity and respect for this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I am not sure whether you have a point of privilege. The Chair did not hear a point of privilege. Your rights have not been violated. I would just caution the Member. I was going to call the Member to order anyway, to caution him on his language and the direction that he may have been going in speaking to the principle of the bill. To the principle of the bill, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did have a point of privilege in the earlier session there in the summer when at that time I was also referred to as abusing my powers, but I did not do that at the time, Mr. Speaker. Today, I just followed up on what the Member did say.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Lafferty, to the principle of the bill.

MR. LAFFERTY: I thought I would just clarify. I was just repeating her. To the issue, I have to say that I came to this

Legislative Assembly to see if I could make a difference. I went from 25 years with one company and sacrificed that to be here. When you leave here, you are not guaranteed that you are going to have a job. There is no guarantee that you are going to get employment out there where you can work towards a pension for yourself.

Like one of my colleagues said, you do not collect this until you are 60 or 65, whatever it is. You do not get it on the day you walk out of here. Being here, I have burned a lot of bridges. I have stood up and asked questions. I have criticized the other side. These are the guys that might be my employers in the future. Will they be my employer? We do not know that.

That is the chance that you take when you come here and you stand up and you ask questions and you criticize how the government works. I have burned bridges within my communities, against my leaders. I stood up for the little guy against the big guys. Those are the guys that might have employed me when I leave. I have burned those bridges. There is no guarantee that I am going to have employment when I leave here. I might have to be on income support and expect clawbacks...

-- Laughter

... every year. Wait until I am 60, then I get my old age security cheque. Then, if I go do a little speech in the school, I may get that clawed back.

There is no guarantee that you are going to have a comfortable life for the rest of your life. We are standing here today. We are looking at doing something that is good for the future of all residents in the Northwest Territories, and we sacrifice good paying jobs to try and make a difference. Should we not be rewarded for that? I think we should be rewarded for the good work we do.

Everyone out there should know that it is not a nine-to-five job. It is a 24-hour job, seven days a week. You get calls in the middle of the night. When they call the RCMP and cannot get a hold of them, they call you. That is in the small communities. That is what we have to work for. In the larger communities, you have 911, or whatever numbers you have. You have all the facilities out here. I get calls in the middle of the night when someone wants a medevac and they do not get a medevac. You get calls for everything. You are the social service worker for everyone in your constituency. If they do not get their way with the local group, they go to you and then you have to go to the government for them.

You are everything. You are an advisor, the ombudsman, is what they call it. We put a lot of time into that. I sacrificed 155 days other than our Legislative Assembly and committees, and that is for my constituents. In the past, other Legislative Assemblies did not have as many committees. They did not have as many days in the Legislative Assembly. We are putting a lot of time in here. We are sacrificing a lot of our own time being away from home. Should we not be rewarded for that? I think we should.

There are so many things that need to be said, but a lot of them were said by some of my colleagues. I have to stand up and support it. There is no guarantee that I am going to get income support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too am in support of the bill, for many reasons. My colleagues mentioned many, many good reasons why we should be getting this bill. There are no guarantees that I will live until I am 60 but I do have a couple of children that might benefit from this if I am not lucky enough to be there.

Other jurisdictions in Canada, if you look at the Ontario government, they give themselves a pay raise, an enormous amount, over 100 percent, I believe. The Nunavut government is looking at 3 percent. They have to pay out of the general revenues of their government. These are decisions made by elected officials. It is never an easy decision. It is never a popular decision, a decision that you make and your constituents and media will find something bad about it.

We hold jobs where we are sometimes the centre of conversations at dinner tables. We are in the media on a constant basis, being criticized or being promoted. We have the luxury of giving good news and the responsibility of giving bad news. We are on call 24 hours a day. A person who is working at Wal-Mart is not expected to jump on a plane at 10:30 at night to come home by midnight and get to work at 7:00 for the first meeting. It is not the same kind of job as a nine-to-five job. There are no guarantees at the end of the job. You stand up for the little guys or do things that are right. Oftentimes, you upset people in positions of power.

We deal with individuals on a constant basis who are earning a salary of hundreds and hundreds of thousands and a bonus of millions. We are talking about a few bucks in the supplementary fund that is not even part of the general cache of the government.

Our salaries are comparable to individuals working at BHP on a two-week rotation, 12 hours a day. Our salaries are very low in comparison with other positions in the Northwest Territories.

There are a lot of reasons why I support this. My colleague, Mr. McLeod, is saying that our communities are suffering financially. I agree with him, but if we have to depend on the supplementary fund to relieve those pressures at the community level, then I believe we are in trouble as a government.

Mr. Speaker, there are no guarantees I will be eligible for income support as well. I have no problem in supporting this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to be brief in my address to this bill. I will be supporting the bill and for different reasons. I am not about to stand here and try and convince my colleagues or anybody else to vote for the bill or vote against the bill. I think we have to make up our own minds and have our own reasons for supporting or voting against the bill.

I know there have been many arguments put out against this and it will be controversial. However, in looking back as to how

this pension surplus came to be and why it is there, you have to give some consideration to the fact that the Members who chose to cut back on their pensions to lead by example, so they could save money for the government and maybe put it to where it was more needed because there was a \$100 million deficit, well, obviously if those same Members today had to do it all over again, they may vote differently on that. Obviously that money just could not be dipped into and put back into the general coffers and put to health and social services or put to education or wherever you wanted to put it.

The money could not be touched. Now there is a pension surplus there that has to be addressed. We could vote this bill down. That money is going to stay there because as soon as we try to touch it as a government to put it somewhere else, there is going to be a court case and the lawyers will get the money or somebody else will get the money.

I think we have to deal with this issue. I do not look at it as a huge financial benefit for me. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I worked for 28 years for Canadian National Railways with a pension plan. When I finished that job, I took my pension plan and reinvested it into a long-term pension plan, so it is not a live or die situation for me.

I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have a responsibility to look after Members of this Legislative Assembly that come after us. I think they are entitled to a good pension. I sometimes find it hard to justify when a hockey player is making \$5 million a year or \$50 million in five years, and they justify it by saying that maybe in five years, they will not have the health to be a hockey player.

Well, maybe in four years or two years, I will not have the support to be here as an MLA, but I hope that it does not come down to whether I vote for this pension or not because I am trying to get rich, because it will not matter with this little amount that we are talking about.

I think we do have a responsibility to deal with this issue, get it off the books because there will always be a temptation for this government to dig into a pension pot and try to put that money somewhere else. There will be an uproar when that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I know in working for industry with a bargaining unit that went to the table and bargained for me every two or three years, or whenever the contract was up, one of the issues was a pension. Every year, it was a big pension issue. It is very easy to sit back as an employee and you have an elected negotiator to go in for you and raise all the issues that have to be addressed, and everybody sits back and says "I hope our negotiator gets us a better pension" or "I hope they get us higher wages. We can take it because somebody else is saying it for us."

Nobody is going to say it for us in this Assembly. Nobody is going to be out there saying that we have to get better wages or better pensions or whatever benefits as a whole. Maybe it is one of the ugly things at this job that we have to speak for ourselves and try to make it better, either for ourselves or people coming behind us. I think the pension issue is one of these issues. The surplus is there. It is going to be going back into a pension. I do not see it as a huge financial windfall for any Member here to address that surplus pension issue and make it better for all Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand to speak in favour of the bill and to put my position on the record as some of my colleagues have done. I will be subscribing to the supplementary plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is quite literally an issue where it can be said that the buck stops here, right here. I have already been taken to task by one of my opponents in the previous election campaign, who said "If you want another reason for me to run against you again, Bill, you have one." That is fine. I have already accepted that criticism in the media. I will continue to take the position that I have outlined.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, what some of my colleagues have already talked about. When we consider taking on public life like this, one of the things we have to ask ourselves is what is in it for me, for my family, for the security, and for life after public life?

We just had a panel that reviewed salary levels for this Assembly. It came back and said they cannot recommend any increase in pay or benefit levels. We have looked at increases in expense allowances. I think for the chairs of some of our committees, an increase in that stipend, which will come into effect in the next election.

For this term and going into the next term, the 15th Assembly, there will be no increase in remuneration. I spoke in the media, Mr. Speaker, to an aspect of this that I think has merit and has validity, and that is for the benefits, the pay and the remuneration that MLAs receive. We are in a very competitive market, especially in the Northwest Territories. The kind of skills, the kind of experience and background that I believe are required here to serve the people of the North well are also in demand out there across the Northwest Territories in the private sector and in industry and indeed, in the various levels of government.

I contend, Mr. Speaker, that by applying this supplementary pension, that is otherwise sitting there and doing nothing -- as some Members have said, it would be very difficult to turn into the general revenue fund -- this is something that without new cost to the taxpayer can, for I think an estimated eight or ten years at least, be applied as one other benefit, one other advantage, one other attraction to help bring the people who are really well qualified to consider public life and run in elections.

I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that we should try and stay ahead of the private sector. That is not the point. Here is something that can really serve to encourage people to say that this is a worthy task and there is a reasonable level of remuneration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one final comment. It is respectfully to take what one of my colleagues has said that there is a reward to be had here. I do not look at it at that way at all. I look at the reward that I get out of doing this job, really, in some ways, being able to make a difference in people's lives, open up opportunities and be able to put my name to some of those things. That is really where the reward is.

This kind of thing does not fall into that category but I believe that it is certainly a legitimate and, in this case, a cost-free way

of improving the calibre of the remuneration that is here and being able to attract people to come into public life. That is my position on this. I hope Members will very strongly consider continuing to support this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are here debating this act to amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowance Act and the Supplementary Retirement Allowance Act. I have to stand here and say that I have no problem in supporting this bill.

This will allow Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in this supplementary retirement allowance plan. As an MLA standing here, if we participate, we will have to contribute from our salaries to this plan. I have no problem doing that.

To buy into the plan, there is a surplus through investments of the retirement plan, so there are no additional dollars from this government to activate this plan. There is no new money coming from the government into this plan.

The only money that is going to be going into this plan from now on will be if I participate, it will be coming from my salary. I am willing to do that.

As a Dene person, it is difficult to talk about telling people how much you think you are worth. In this line of work, going to my constituents and talking to some of them, they realize the type of work that we do and the contribution that we are trying to make to people in the North. It is taking away from what we can do out there in the business world or your own business.

I can tell you that there are people who are not working as hard as we are, but they are comfortable and well off. We give that opportunity up to be here, to do the work that we believe in.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, I have no problem in supporting this act. Hopefully everybody else does because it is for everybody. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Antoine. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this is a free vote in this House on this issue. It is a personal choice and decision we are all going to have to make.

I look around this room and I see nine of us from the 13th Assembly. This is an issue that has a history with us, with me. When I hear the comments, I have a special empathy and understanding for what they are saying. It is difficult for some of us.

Those that come to us in the 14th Assembly two years in can be much more categorical. They can be much more definitive. They can be much more pointed in their comments. They did not live through the dark days of the 13th Assembly like the nine of us here did.

We made choices. I made a choice to lead by example for whatever the reason. I voted against first reading of this bill and I will vote against second reading of this bill. I accept very clearly whatever comments my colleagues from the 13th

Assembly want to make about my actions and what they may think is my motive.

Those of you from the 14th Assembly that are new here, I would ask you to be cognizant as we deal with this issue that all things are not black and white. It is not easy to be definitive and categorical, as some of you may want to choose to be or you may want us to choose to be.

I will make my choice as I have indicated. I will vote. If this bill passes second reading, I will vote against third reading. I do not condemn anybody. I do not think this is an abuse of power. I think this is just a difficult issue for me politically that I am trying to deal with in the best way that I can for myself. We are all making that choice.

When this final decision is made and, as my colleague Mr. Bell says, if it is going to pass as he predicts, then we will all have to make that other final choice. Once the voting is done and the will of the House is known, we all have to make that other personal choice of do we sign up for the pension or do we not?

I will make that choice as well, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you what it will be. I will accept the will of the House, but I will take every step along the way to make the case that is consistent with the position that I took in the 13th Assembly. That is my personal position. I have nothing but respect and understanding for the positions taken by all of you in this House. I just ask that you be cognizant and aware of those issues as we deal with this. Let's get this dealt with and let's make the decisions necessary. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my comments will be brief. This issue did arise during the 13th Legislative Assembly and at the time, circumstances were such that we had to address the financial deficit of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Decisions were made. However, the reality of it was that contribution that we made to eliminate the pension contributed nothing towards the elimination of the deficit of the Northwest Territories. What we did do, however, was take a cut in our pay at the time as did civil servants. That was a contribution, but the pension area had no particular relevance to the deficit elimination in the Northwest Territories - absolutely none.

I guess what I look at, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of what does a person do once they leave public life? There has been reference made to it. Mr. Lafferty referred to it. You know, it is very true. Members may leave here and find themselves in a very difficult situation. I think that should be kept in mind.

Some of us have the ability to move into businesses -- and I say some of us. Even there, some of us have given up our businesses in order to contribute here.

Mr. Speaker, there is a one-year term of once we leave this House, we are not allowed to do business with this government. A one-year term. That means as a consultant, you cut out half of the employment possibility here in this Territory. Many of you, as Mr. Lafferty has said, if you are doing your

representation, then you may very well annoy some other employers out there. So what do you get out of this at the end?

At the end, there really is not a great deal of reward. Not that we come in here with the reward in mind, but I think there needs to be recognition of some security. The issue has been covered fully here with the comment that the money that is there, it is not like we are contributing from this government towards this pension. It is already there. We are personally contributing towards that as other Members have.

The income level of MLAs, Mr. Speaker, is not that high. I would suggest to you that many of our public servants make a lot more than our MLAs do, yet the responsibility is incredible.

Mr. Krutko speaks facetiously and in a laughing tone about the grey hairs, but it is very true. All of us put in hour after hour and we do not have a personal life after we get into this House. We really do not have a personal life. I have tremendous difficulty getting around to taking care of my personal affairs, time wise, because when do you leave here, you are either exhausted or you have to take care of constituency business or other matters.

Mr. Speaker, dealing with the issue of pensions, I do not believe we are in any way cutting into the coffers of the territorial government. I think it is very justified. As Mr. Krutko mentioned earlier, previous Members had it in place.

I also agree with Mr. Krutko that we should not cut off the possibility of buying it back for possible service. Why not? That is up to us. If I am prepared to pay for that cost, why should I not be able to do that? I agree with Mr. Krutko on that.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour, as you can well tell, with the motion. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Mr. Ootes. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the first Assembly I served in 1987, I remember arguing about some of the benefits that Members and Ministers were providing to themselves. Just before Cabinet was elected, we had some discussion about it. I argued that there was no need for pensions, for supplementary pensions, unmarked cars and other benefits that were apparently available at the time. One of the Members from the Eastern Arctic came over and said "You know, Steve, we are all going to support you for Minister, but if you think you are going to do away with the pension, then we might have to reconsider that". It was an interesting introduction into the Legislature.

The benefits and the way that business is done in this House has not really changed that much. I know that it was of my own free will that I chose to offer to serve the people of the Sahtu and the people of the Northwest Territories. It had nothing to do with the salary and the pension plan. I chose to make the offer. It has been an honour to serve since 1987, both as an MLA and as a Member of Cabinet. It does take many hours of our time -- days and weekends, it is true, but it is our choice. That is how we choose to do our work.

There has been discussion at the beginning of the previous Assembly about cancellation of the supplementary pension. I

had argued against it at that time because I believed that Members were entitled to a pension that reflected in large part the commitment and the difficulties of the work.

Many of the Members came from sectors where there was no pension and went back to remote communities, having lost the only jobs they had available to them. Since it was bestowed upon us by previous Assemblies, it was difficult, as Mr. Antoine has indicated, to stand there and talk about what we thought we deserved or did not deserve.

Since the Members have brought this issue forward, I must admit that I have not given it a lot of thought. My initial response was I was in support of keeping it. In the first instance, it was voted away from Members in any case. If the Members were talking about reintroducing it, then I would be inclined towards supporting it.

What I wanted to say is that today, I thought there was a good discussion. There is, unfortunately, sometimes a little bit of animosity amongst ourselves about the way we phrase things. That is unfortunate because I believe that we owe it to the public to have a full, free debate without intimidation, without ridicule.

Personally, I admire people like Ms. Lee who, as a new Member, raises issues with a lot of passion and clarity. Perhaps raising the venom of some Members about the way she phrases things, but I think that is allowed. We have the freedom to express ourselves with all the passion and determination and conviction, as we should.

Those of us who will vote for it will do that. Those who speak against it gave their reasons. I sat here and listened to everybody and enjoyed the debate.

There are many issues that go on beyond this Legislature. We are facing collective bargaining. We did away with the supplementary pension for deputy ministers at the beginning of this government. We are facing a deficit in the next year or so. Those are important considerations to have as people look in and listen to us, watching us from the communities.

There is not enough money for those who are in dire need; housing, day cares, many of the needs we have, but as well, it is true that there will never be enough.

We have an issue here that is not new, as I have said. If it was a new pension that was being proposed, I would object to it because I never brought it forward, never asked for it. It is here. The one sentiment that I think I disagree with is the one expressed that since the majority are going to vote for it, I might as well accept it and sign up for it anyway.

I think it is very important that when we vote, we vote according to our convictions and not take a fatalistic approach that it is going to happen anyway. It is important to stand up and speak our mind at the very first instance, because we know that when it comes to legislation and budgets, even if everyone is in support of a piece of legislation or a budget issue, if we view it as wrong or inappropriate, then we have an obligation and a duty to speak against it.

It is also true that once it passes, that once legislation becomes law, it is our duty to uphold that. There is a big difference between what is proposed and what is passed. The distance between the two is often what measures us in this Legislature. I

do not have any particular feelings about this issue. The fact is the pension was there before. It is being suggested to be continued. It was terminated. It is now being offered to be continued. I will support the motion at this time. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen, to close debate.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this Assembly representing my constituents of Nunakput, I often wondered in the past how much attention my constituents pay to my salary issues when they are raised in the newspapers or in this House; my pension issues that are raised through the newspapers or through the media and through this House. Interestingly enough, I do not recall the salary or the pension being an issue at the election both times I was elected. It just was not one of the issues.

I do not think it is an issue now. I do not think my constituents would feel all that upset should I vote in favour of a pension for myself. Also, I do not feel that I have to answer to the newspapers or to the media for my vote here. I may not even feel that I have to answer to the rest of the Territory, but I do feel that I have to answer to my constituents. Like I said, I never got an indication from my constituents that this is an issue. I am sure that not one of my constituents would ever feel that I took bread or butter off their table in order to give myself a pension. If anything, it was the reverse.

I recall in the past Assembly where we discussed this that I did not vote in favour of this thing willingly. I recall there was some unified decision that we would come in here as a unified vote, that everybody would show uniform. I did not see the sense of it at that time and I do not see the sense of it now.

Some people say some people never get a pension. Well, that is true, but they have to live in order to get to that age to reach that pension. That is one of the catches of the pension -- you have to earn it. You have to live long enough to enjoy that pension. It is not going to come all in one lump.

I believe you have the option of buying out the pension, but then you do not get a pension in the end. There is a catch to this thing. You have to live. You have to earn it. You have to reach that magic age.

I also remember that there are a lot of people in my riding, and probably in the whole Territories, who never paid into Canada pension because they never had a job all their life. They were trappers. Now, they are that age and they are receiving old-age pension, and they are happy about it, that somebody put in place a pension for them. Somebody thought of the future for them.

I tell you, when you get towards the sunset ages, the pension starts looking pretty good. I really wish all the Members in this House a long life and that they may enjoy the pension, if they ever vote in favour of it. Thank you.

-- Laughter

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Well put. This ends debate on the issue. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded vote on this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking a recorded vote when the time comes. Thank you. Is the House ready for the vote? Thank you. All those in favour, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Steen, Mr. Antoine, Mr. Kakfwi, Mr. Handley, Mr. Allen, Mr. Oates, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Lafferty, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Bell, Mr. Nitah, Mr. Braden.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Miltenberger, Ms. Lee, Mr. Roland, Mr. Dent, Mr. McLeod.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those abstaining, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Krutko.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The result of the vote: those in favour, 12; those opposed, five; those abstaining, one. The vote is carried. Bill 7 has had second reading. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, moved into committee of the whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2). Are there any nays? There are no nays. The Chair did not hear any nays, therefore Bill 7 is referred to committee of the whole. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters; Bill 2, Bill 4, Committee Report 1-14(5), Committee Report 2-14(5), Committee Report 314(5), Motion 114(5) and Bill 7 with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will call the committee of the whole to order. We have several matters to deal with; Bill 2, Bill 4, Committee Report 1-14(5), Committee Report 2-14(5), Committee Report 314(5), Motion 114(5) and Bill 7. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend that we continue consideration of Municipal and Community Affairs, that is Bill 2, and Committee Report 1-14(5), Committee Report 2-14(5) and Committee Report 3-14(5) concurrently. If we conclude that, we will take a look at what else we might consider before rising to report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We will take a short break and start with Municipal and Community Affairs.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call the committee of the whole back to order. It is my duty to inform Members that due to the passage of Motion 614(5) earlier today, Motion 1-14(5) is dropped from the order paper and shall not be further considered. Mr. Nitah moved a motion earlier and because of that we are taking it off the order paper.

At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I will be.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that the Minister bring in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses in. Mr. Minister, please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Dave Murray, the deputy minister of MACA. On my right is Gay Kennedy, the director of corporate affairs.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. We are on emergency services, Page 4-17, operations expense, total operations expense, \$676,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Page 4-21, community governance, operations expense, total operations expense, \$685,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Page 4-25, lands administration, operations expense, total operations expense, \$2,084,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, under lands administration, I would like to get some information from the department as to how land development is taken care of in communities in the Northwest Territories. For example, in Inuvik, I believe that to do any land or lot development by a municipality, it is done through the tax base. The ratepayers would have to pay for that development. Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, that is correct. The only program that the department has for assisting tax-based communities is through debentures. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What would that debenture include in a tax-based municipality? For example, by going with a debenture, basically borrowing from the

government, I take it at a percentage, what would that percentage be?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the government would be able to guarantee a loan to the municipality. I am advised that the municipality can approach the Department of Finance directly in this matter through a loan that would be obtained from the government directly, rather than through the banking process.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What kind of interest rates would be set when they go to, say, the Department of Finance?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The purpose of allowing a community to approach the government directly would be to allow for an interest rate that would be lower than what is being offered by the banks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Has that been in place for some time now?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Chairman, I will have to defer that to Mr. Murray.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister. Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the debenture program has been going on in the government for many years. We work with Finance in analyzing the submission from a community and then Finance handles the financing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am aware of the debenture program. I have been on the town council before in Inuvik and have known that we have had to borrow money, but I have known also that the interest rates at that time were rather extreme and there had to be some negotiation to get those down as interest rates began to drop. My question is, when a community comes to this government to borrow money, what is the interest rate? Is it set? The Minister stated that it would now, in fact, be set lower than what they can get at traditional banks. How long has that been in effect?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not aware of how long the program has been in effect, whereby the community can actually obtain a loan directly from the government. However, the purpose of it would be to obtain a lower rate than is being offered by the banks. Obviously, if the government is charging a higher interest rate than the banks, then we would be offering a debenture instead. I presume that is the option that the municipality would choose. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the program has been a debenture system, but my understanding from what I have heard from the Minister today is that aside from the normal debenture practice that used to be available, and is still available to municipalities, they can come to this government and obtain a better than prime rate, I guess, loan from this government. How long has that been in place?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information with me. I would have to obtain that information for the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I can get that information, that would be good for me. That is all I would request at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are dealing with lands administration, page 425, operations expense, total operations expense, \$2,084,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 4-29, sport, recreation and youth, operations expense, total operations expense, \$1,027,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Municipal and Community Affairs, sport and recreation, there has been some discussion in committee about some work done in this area to try and consolidate the groups, or at least look at what the department is offering. There was some work being done in that area. A paper was developed and put out to organizations for their comment. Where has that gone?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we received responses from a number of the sports organizations. However, we are still consolidating and analyzing the responses from the organizations. The department has not met at this level yet as to how we would react to the responses. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there a time line that you would have for those responses?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have, I believe, a meeting coming up in April in Inuvik when we would be able to sit down with our partners in sports and discuss the results of the responses from all the sports organizations. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sport, recreation and youth, operations expense, total operations expense, \$1,027,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 4-31, sport, recreation and youth, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$28,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Contributions, total contributions, \$195,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Total grants and contributions, \$223,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 433, regional operations. Mr. McLeod.

Committee Motion 814(5): To Develop a Program to Pave All Municipal Roads (Defeated)

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman,

I MOVE that this committee recommends that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs develop, in cooperation with the Minister of Transportation, a program to pave all streets and roads within municipal boundaries in the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod, your motion is in order. The motion is being passed to the Members that are present. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion has been defeated. Regional operations. Mr. Roland, do you have a motion?

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to get some information from the department in this area with regard to community infrastructure and programs. What is included, for example, in block funding transfers to communities? Yesterday, I was given information in response to my question about, for example, water and sewer development and how that broke down for tax-based municipalities. For other community infrastructure, for example, in the area of sport and recreation and any facilities of that nature, what is the breakdown? What would a tax-based community like Inuvik have to come up with when it comes to a recreation facility? As well, with respect to road development, what would the community of Inuvik have to come up with or what would they be eligible for in government dollars? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I will defer the question to Mr. Murray.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister, Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of policies or programs for sport and recreation infrastructure, new facilities in the tax-based communities, we have no programs for sport and recreation facilities in tax-based communities in terms of capital infrastructure. The only program we have for tax-based capital infrastructure is water and sewer, which is cost-shared 50 percent.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I ask that because recently in the community of Inuvik, a plebiscite was held for

ratepayers to vote on with regard to a family centre, as we call it. The ratepayers approved that. The town council was asking for \$5 million. The whole thing would be at the cost of the taxpayers of the community?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: I will defer that to Mr. Murray, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister, Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They can also use the other funding that comes from the Government of the Northwest Territories. For instance, the block funding they get for operations and maintenance. If they do not use all that for operations, that can go towards facilities as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did not quite catch the last statement the deputy minister made.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Murray, could you restate your statement?

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was saying at the end that the community may use its formula funding and put that towards a capital facility, if they so choose. That is at their own discretion and it is their own decision.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For road infrastructure in communities, how does that break down for support from the government in tax-based communities? Again, I am speaking of Inuvik. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, it is up to the community to plan its road projects, if it is talking about new road construction or in terms of road maintenance as well. Again, they can use their own avenues or offset that against the money that comes from formula funding.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Formula funding, to my understanding, was formulated a number of years ago. I know, for example, that initially when block funding came out, it was based on historical expenditures. If in that time period, when they looked at block funding for the next number of years, if you had little or no capital infrastructure being put in place, it just rolled all together. If another community had large capital projects being replaced in that year that they looked at block funding, that block funding stayed at a high level for a number of years. We are just starting to see the changes to that.

I guess that is why I asked the question. When you refer to block funding, my understanding is that a lot of that initial block funding is O and M, and there was, initially at least, some capital criteria in that. I understand that the formulas have changed significantly now since those days and there was some work done on it by the department to try and simplify what the formula was in the past. I guess that is why I asked the question. If in the community of Inuvik, where right now we

have paved roads, but I understand that in the past that was funded by ratepayers as well. My question is, are there existing programs within this government that would help with infrastructure like that in communities?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Murray could respond to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister, Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the present time, there are no capital infrastructure programs for tax-based, other than the water and sewer cost-shared. In terms of the formula, by going to this approach on the formula, it gave the community far more discretion as to how it decided to allocate that money it got from the government. As I said, if they chose to put some of that towards capital infrastructure, that is the community's decision.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is all of my questions in this area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to resume my line of questioning I had yesterday, and I was certainly not satisfied with the Minister's response when I asked about the swimming pools in the communities being included as part of the capital program. In his response, he stated that it was not in the capital program and that, in fact, curling rinks were low priority. When I look at the capital plan and I see recreation projects, such as a curling rink for Aklavik that was not in the capital plan over the last five years, is now scheduled to be constructed next year, that indicates to me that it is in fact a priority. It has been put in, included and fast-tracked, so in one year it has come up for construction. Lutselk'e is getting an arena and the Hay River Reserve is scheduled for an arena, so I do not understand what he means by capital projects not being a priority any more. MACA has also provided \$300,000 to Fort Liard to use towards a swimming pool.

To me, that indicates there has been a change in policy and that is what I am trying to get from the Minister; if there is in fact a change in policy. If the policy allows a community to change their preference from accepting an arena or a curling rink to a swimming pool, then I would assume that a swimming pool is an acceptable item under the capital plan.

I want to know from the Minister, if he can tell me in simple terms whether or not swimming pools are now allowable as part of the capital plan, as an item in the capital plan.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Chairman, I will try to respond to all the concerns expressed by the Member.

My comments yesterday referred to what the policy of the department is now and that is there are no swimming pools in the capital plan. I said this in committee of the whole yesterday, that what the department had allowed was for a community to put the funding towards the priority of their choice. In this case, the Fort Liard swimming pool was \$302,000. That was less

than the cost of the curling rink. There is no curling rink there now, but there is a swimming pool. What the department allowed in the past was the community to switch priorities if they wish.

However, we still do not have a policy in place whereby we fund swimming pools through the capital planning process. As I stated yesterday, the priorities, as far as the new corporate capital planning process, identifies recreation facilities way down the list.

What has happened with the Aklavik situation is that this was a result of the Hay River meeting, where all the communities were asked if they had some priorities that they want to fast track, some projects, then they could come forward and identify them. This becomes political priorities rather than corporate planning priority system, and that is what happened. Aklavik came forward with a request. There was a certain amount of money that the government was willing to spend towards capital projects and communities. MLAs were asked to identify what those projects were. That is what happened with the Aklavik project.

I repeat again, this department does not have any program in place to fund swimming pools out right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

Committee Motion 914(5): To Include Swimming Pools as Projects Eligible for MACA Funding (Carried)

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman,

I MOVE that this committee recommends that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs include community swimming pools as projects eligible for funding within the department's capital acquisition plan.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Member is making a motion. We will wait until we hand it out. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, yesterday I had questions about the difference between tax-based and non-tax-based communities in terms of infrastructure in communities, specifically dealing with dust control by paving or hard-topping the roads. The Minister responded by saying that tax-based communities generate their own revenues that pay for these.

I would like to ask the Minister, is that still his position, that taxes are used to pay for hard-topping and paving roads in those communities that are tax-based? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we just finished responding to the other Member there, we identified what capital funding is available to tax-based communities from the department. The only funding available to tax-based communities is through the water and sewage programs.

If a community such as Yellowknife, for instance, includes paving as part of their water and sewage program, that is how it is done. Other than that, it is paid for by the city through taxes. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, does the Government of the Northwest Territories and Municipal and Community Affairs receive money from the federal government for band residents who are on band land, who do not have to pay municipal taxes? The taxes are paid by the federal government in lieu. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I understand correctly, we do receive funds from the federal government in lieu of taxes on band lands, yes.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In that sense, band members living in communities on band land are paying taxes, municipal taxes. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the feds are paying the taxes, not the individuals.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What I am trying to establish here, Mr. Chairman, is that the municipal taxes are being paid. It is the federal government that is paying it, but it has been paid.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Can you elaborate a little more? I did not hear a question.

MR. NITAH: What I am trying to establish here, Mr. Chairman, is that municipal taxes are paid. Whether it is paid by the federal government or by an individual is not the concern here. The concern is that municipal taxes, on behalf of band members who are living on band land, are being paid by the federal government to this government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Can the Minister tell me how much funding the territorial government receives from the federal government in this area, where the federal government is providing funds to the territorial government in lieu of taxes that have been paid by band members? How much?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would have to obtain that information from the Department of Finance. I do not have that information. If the

Member wishes, I can obtain that information from the Department of Finance and forward it to the Member.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. It would be great if you can get that information to the Member. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you. I would appreciate that information, Mr. Chairman. What I would like to know is what is that money currently being used for? How does that compare with funding community governments, specifically chief and council, and funding tax-based communities? Is there a comparison? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All of this information I would have to obtain from the Department of Finance. However, whatever funding we do receive from the federal government in lieu of taxes goes into general revenue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the argument used by the department and those representatives of communities that are tax-based, saying that we do not pay taxes, is not true then. Taxes are being paid on our behalf as guaranteed in treaties, treaties signed a hundred years ago, in some instances. Yet still, the department uses that excuse to say "We do not collect taxes from you guys, so we are not going to fund you to pave your streets."

If we do have a block funding arrangement, like we do with the City of Yellowknife, we block fund them. They use revenues from taxes to do additional work that this government does not do, like paving the streets. Why can we not use those funds that we get from the federal government in lieu of taxes that are not paid for just that, to do the extraordinary work and not use that fund and put it in general revenues and use that to block fund municipalities and communities run by chief and council, but use it to address the real need of dust control, to create an environment for disabled people, and just improve the optical look of the community, so it does not look like a third world community? Hopefully, we will stop the exodus of people from those communities.

I would like to ask the Minister, would he look at using that funding that the Government of the Northwest Territories receives in lieu of taxes specifically for that purpose? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are four types of land that I am aware of in communities. There is private, federal, government-owned, band lands, and Commissioner's land. So although the federal government may own some land, it is not necessarily band land. They only pay lieu of taxes if they are still in possession of the land. Not all land within municipalities, including small communities, is band land. There is both Commissioner's land and federal government land in there as well. If someone has a lease on federal government land, the federal government does not pay in lieu of taxes on that.

However, if the federal government owned that land, they will pay in lieu of taxes on that land.

I will commit to having a look into communities to see how much land is in fact being paid for in lieu of taxes by the federal government and produce this for the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would also appreciate, along with the information of how much we get per year from the federal government for monies in lieu of taxes, I would like to know how much we received in the past. I feel a little disappointed, a little ripped off, that none of these dollars were used in the past. This is a problem that has been there from day one.

I would like to know how much money has been transferred from the federal government to the territorial government in lieu of taxes on band land. I would assume, Mr. Chairman, that there is enough there to pave every street in the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, our colleagues do not mind if we in the smaller communities suck back dust on a daily basis during the summer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I will commit to try and obtaining as far back as possible what the federal government has paid in lieu of taxes in the small communities, and get that back for the Member. I am not sure how far back we are able to go. It depends on what records we have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are on page 4-33, regional operations, operations expense, total operations expense, \$54,363,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 4-35, regional operations, grants and contributions, community government grants and contributions, grants, \$33,703,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Contributions, \$6,569,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Infrastructure contributions, \$3,405,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are on page 4-36, total community government, grants and contributions, \$43,677,000. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on many occasions in the House, I talked about Lutselk'e being an isolated community. Flying in and out is the only mode of transportation outside of using snowmobiles in the winter and boats in the summer. The equipment used to maintain the airport and all the roads in the community is from one source only.

I have been asking the department to look at the need for additional equipment, because of the fact that we are a one-route community. The airport is the lifeline. Yet I do not see anything for infrastructure contributions for equipment in the

community. If the Department of Transportation is not going to put equipment at the airport, then MACA should put in additional equipment to ensure the airport never shuts down because of equipment problems. People's lives are on the line here when it comes to medical emergency travel. We have to have that airport open at all times. We rely heavily on equipment use.

The grader we have in the community is an old grader with parts falling apart, gauges coming out. It has spent one whole winter at the bottom of a bay because it went through the ice one time. That grader is still there.

I would like to know when the Minister and the department are going to do something about it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the department has, in the capital plan for 2003-2004, a water truck, a fire truck and a grader for Lutselk'e. In the following year, we have a sewage truck. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: I thank the department and the Minister, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 4-36, infrastructure contributions, total community...can I have some order in the House, please? Total community government, grants and contributions, \$43,677,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 4-37, other grants and contributions, grants, \$49,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Contributions, \$2,852,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to get some information on the Youth Corps. How and who would be available for this funding?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Chairman, I will have Mr. Murray respond.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister, Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The concept for the Youth Corps and the funding that is shown in this activity is designed to go to the community governments so that they can sponsor programs for youth within their communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must apologize. I did not catch the last portion of what the deputy minister stated.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Murray, could you repeat your last statement?

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the Youth Corps funding is designed to go to the community governments and possibly local groups within that community, as long as they have community support, to fund local projects for youth within those communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So is this funding through application?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly there would be a formal plan required so that the funding was being directed towards the purposes of the program. We are still doing research into similar programs around the country for youth. As well, we are going to be consulting with the Territorial Youth Association before we finally put it in place, as well as with communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When would we have a final version of how it would be implemented? When would that be available and how would that information be relayed to communities?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our plan is to have the program laid out so that it can be taken to the youth themselves in April, and then be able to start taking the applications. As you go into the summer, students get out of school and are available.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time, I will recognize the clock and rise and report progress. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses out?

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 Bill 2 and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted, and that Motion 14(5) is concluded. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes, seconds the motion. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning; of Cabinet and FMB

at 9:00 a.m.; also of the Standing Committee on Social Programs at 12 noon.

Orders of the day for Thursday, March 7, 2002:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
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
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2001-2002
 - Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 2, Appropriation Act, 2002-2003
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act
 - Committee Report 1-14(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the 2002-2003 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 2-14(5), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of the 2002-2003 Main Estimates

- Committee Report 3-14(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the 2002-2003 Main Estimates

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 Thursday, March 7, 2002, at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

