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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1477
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	1477
92-15(3) - EDUCATION WEEK - SUCCESS BUILT ON PARTNERSHIPS	1477
93-15(3) - NEW DEAL FOR NWT COMMUNITY GOVERNMENTS	1477
94-15(3) - NWT LIBRARIES INTEGRATED SEARCH.....	1478
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS.....	1478
MR. HAWKINS ON 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL.....	1478
MRS. GROENEWEGEN ON CLOSURE OF THE SOUTH MACKENZIE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE REMAND UNIT	1479
MR. RAMSAY ON HEATING COSTS IN THE NORTH	1479
MR. ROBERT MCLEOD ON YOUTH ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS PROGRAM	1480
MR. MENICOCHÉ ON ECHO-DENE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM.....	1480
MR. VILLENEUVE ON CARIBOU MANAGEMENT PLANS.....	1480
MR. BRADEN ON GNWT SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS	1481
MS. LEE ON CONCERNS WITH SOCIAL HOUSING AND INCOME SUPPORT POLICIES	1481
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	1482
ORAL QUESTIONS	1482
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	1494
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.....	1520
ORDERS OF THE DAY.....	1520

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 23, 2005****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve, Mr. Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 92-15(3): Education Week – Success Built On Partnerships**

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Today I would like to recognize the value of education and its importance in helping northerners reach goals of self-reliance and personal fulfillment. This week is Education Week. Each year, at this time, we celebrate the importance of education with activities, events and by sharing information. Every year a different theme is selected that profiles a critical element of our learning system. This year's theme is "Celebrating Partnerships."

Our NWT learning system has a number of key components. Early childhood development programs, schools and adult and post-secondary education all provide opportunities for northerners to develop their skills and build knowledge.

Learners in our education programs are involved daily in the pursuit of learning. But we all know that students do not succeed simply by sitting in classrooms and soaking up information. There are many factors that support our students and many people share in helping students be successful. We need to recognize our "partners in education" and thank them for their support.

First, Mr. Speaker, we must recognize families who make sure their children get enough sleep, are provided with nutritional food and a nurturing environment while being supported in their homework and studies. Families are a key element, perhaps the most important, of every student's success.

As well, there are teachers, adult educators, and college instructors who work in education because they believe in enriching the minds of our next generation. We have principals, administrative professionals and college staff who provide students with the structure and the necessary tools for learning.

As well, there are many who may not immediately come to mind when we think of the success of our graduates. We need to also recognize:

- volunteers who freely give of their time to help in so many ways in all our schools, college and early learning centres;

- trustees who sit on our boards to help guide operations, making the sometimes difficult and not always popular decisions;
- professional associations, such as the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, whose focus on professionalism and professional development helps strengthen the skills of teachers and other employees;
- businesses and employers who provide learning opportunities "in the real world" and who also contribute funding support to a wide range of educational activities; and, Mr. Speaker,
- elders and community resource people who add the unique language and cultural aspects of our northern communities into the learning system.

Over the past few months, I have had an opportunity to visit a number of learning centres, I have been impressed by the dedication and hard work of all of our educational partners. More and more, our students, whether they are young children, teenagers or adults, are being successful. They are successful because of their personal efforts and the solid support of all of those who contribute to our NWT learning system.

I ask you to join me today, Mr. Speaker, in celebrating Education Week, to show appreciation to each and every northerner who has partnered with us and our students to reach their goals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 93-15(3): New Deal For NWT Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide my colleagues with an update on the department's progress on implementation of the new deal for NWT community governments and the ongoing support provided to communities as we move forward on this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I recently met with the board of directors of the Northwest Territories Association of Communities to brief in detail on the funding announcements in the budget address regarding the new deal. I am pleased to advise that the association has welcomed this announcement and has reaffirmed their interest in continuing to work with my department to implement this exciting initiative. When fully implemented, it will result in expanded authorities and predictable revenues for all community governments to use to advance community priorities.

As Members of this Assembly heard in the budget address, there are a number of exciting details around the new deal on the horizon. Beginning in the 2005-06 fiscal year, we are transferring property tax revenues in the general taxation area to community governments. This is an interim step to making hamlets and charter communities municipal taxation authorities in 2008.

The taxation revenues will flow to community governments on an unconditional basis, however communities will be encouraged to use the funding for infrastructure development or related O and M.

As well, Mr. Speaker, with \$1 million in planning and design funding in 2005-06, we are preparing to implement the separate allocation for community public infrastructure in the GNWT capital plan, effective in the 2006-07 fiscal year. We will allocate an incremental \$413 million for infrastructure in non-tax-based communities and an additional \$43 million for tax-based communities through a formula allocation that will be developed in consultation with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities. This predictable stream of funding, when combined with property tax revenues, federal gas tax funding, GST rebate and other sources of own-source revenues, will provide community governments with the flexibility to plan and construct community infrastructure, based on local needs and priorities.

The NWT new deal represents a fundamental change from today's approach. We recognize this will require ongoing support, advice and assistance to community governments as we make this important transition.

MACA recognizes the challenge that implementing the NWT new deal brings to some of our communities. Some communities do not have staff available to plan for and manage capital projects or to maintain existing and new infrastructure.

Other communities may not be equipped to undertake the administration functions that will accompany municipal taxation authority status.

To address these issues, Mr. Speaker, MACA plans to explore options for innovative capacity building at the community level through the work of the School of Community Government. This will be a primary focus of the new deal and we will work to ensure that community governments are ready, able and supported to the degree that they want and need to be, in taking on these new responsibilities. As the work on the new deal progresses, the department will collaborate with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities and community governments to develop workable transition plans that address capacity issues.

Mr. Speaker, the new deal for NWT community governments is a key priority for our government and the department is committed to working with our key partners, including the Northwest Territories Association of Communities, to ensure that communities are ready, willing and able. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 94-15(3): NWT Libraries Integrated Search

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, access to reading and reference materials helps people to develop literacy skills and obtain needed information and knowledge. Today, I am pleased to announce the official launch of the NWT library network's new automated system "Unicorn" that will improve public access to library holdings in the NWT.

The system has been in operation since December 6th to rave reviews. At noon today, I had the pleasure of launching the system here at the Legislative Assembly. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Mrs. Groenewegen for attending that. Mr. Speaker, similar launches took place in the library at Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith and the Centennial Public Library in Inuvik.

The NWT library network was established in January 2003 and consists of nine community libraries, three Aurora College campus libraries, the Aurora Research Institute library, the Legislative Assembly library and Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre reference library.

The first initiative of the NWT library network was to combine the databases of all the libraries in a new integrated library system using "Unicorn" software.

The new system allows access to the holds of all the libraries through one search engine and on one search screen. At the same time, network partners retain control over the policies and operation of their respective libraries.

The NWT Library Network union catalogue of holdings is available to all NWT residents on any computer with Internet access. The online public access catalogue provides the library patron with coloured pictures of the book covers and descriptions and reviews for many of the books and videos.

Reading and access to information is at the foundation of northern growth and development. Libraries play an essential role in supporting people of all ages to build their skills and knowledge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On 100th Anniversary Of Rotary International

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago today, attorney Paul P. Harris gathered with three friends and planted the seeds for the world's oldest and one of the most respected service club organizations. The meetings they held rotated from business to business, hence the name "Rotary" was born.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Rotary is a worldwide organization of businesses and professional leaders that provide humanitarian service. They encourage the highest ethical standards for its members and they help build goodwill and peace throughout the world.

Approximately 1.2 million Rotarians belong to more than 31,000 Rotary clubs in 166 countries in our world. Mr. Speaker, in Yellowknife and in Hay River, close to 100

professional women and men are proud to call themselves Rotarians. Our two Rotarian clubs have contributed to make the Northwest Territories an even better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, later today, I will be noting the attendance in our gallery of the attendance of the Rotarians from the city of Yellowknife from our local club. I just want to say thank you very much for this time to acknowledge the Rotarians' 100th birthday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my statement and questions in the House yesterday pertaining to the closure of the remand services at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, many of the responses I received from the Minister create more questions.

In reference to the occupancy number of 1.5 inmates per month in remand that was provided, the Minister indicated that this reflects inmates from Hay River and the Hay River Reserve only. SMCC services the South Slave communities of Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Fort Resolution, Enterprise, Fort Providence, Kakisa, Fort Liard, Fort Wrigley, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie River, Trout Lake and Lutselk'e. That's why it's called the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. If it were the Hay River Correctional Centre, providing stats for Hay River only would be completely understandable.

As to their being no extraordinary additional cost associated with holding remand inmates in cells in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, the cost of transporting and escorting prisoners is an extra cost. Again, that additional cost should not only be for inmates from Hay River. It should include the difference between the cost to transport to Yellowknife versus Hay River for remand inmates from every one of the communities that SMCC currently services.

In addition, when calculating the savings of \$400,000, if there is a human resource cost in Hay River, you have to account for the cost of corrections workers in Yellowknife as well. It's wrong to say it costs this much in Hay River and it costs nothing in Yellowknife, except for extra food, unless we are expecting these inmates to look after themselves. Also to the cost of savings, the Minister indicated the cost of transporting the prisoners is absorbed by the RCMP. When asked how much it would cost the RCMP, the Minister said it's included in their budget for their contract. I sure hope that contract was revised to reflect these extra activity and travel costs. My worst fear, Mr. Speaker, is that the Hay River detachment will be devoting extraordinary financial resources and man-hours to transport inmates to the detriment of policing services in Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, I am thoroughly convinced that the removal of remand services at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre is an ill-conceived plan that will result in additional

cost, an inconvenience to inmates and their families and unwarranted centralization of services in Yellowknife and the secondary effect of diminishing the quality of police services in Hay River.

Since these supposed savings were going to accrue by attrition and not by a set date of April 1st, I would ask the Minister to carefully reconsider this initiative. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement, please.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I would ask the Minister to carefully reconsider this initiative. The normal requirements for layoff notice were not relevant in this instance because of casual employees providing services. So there have been no irreversible actions taken to this point complicating the reinstatement of the designation for remand in Hay River. The trained staff are there, the facilities are there, the service is well utilized. So it's an operations decision, Mr. Speaker. I trust that the Minister will take another look at this matter. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Member's Statement On Heating Costs In The North

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories recognized the impact of high fuel costs on residents and provided a one-time subsidy to households below a certain income threshold. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we thought prices were high then, I guess we didn't know how good we had it.

The price of heating fuel in Yellowknife is now at 71.5 cents per litre, up from 53.5 cents last year. That's a 34 percent increase. The price is over \$1 a litre in some Northwest Territories communities. This has had a tremendous impact on families and businesses to try to make ends meet. Mr. Speaker, no matter how efficient a home or building is, when you get days and weeks of 40 below temperatures, it's going to take a lot of fuel to heat the place.

The irony, Mr. Speaker, is that we are already producing oil and gas in our own territory. There was 20.4 billion cubic feet of natural gas during 2004 alone and an average of 20,000 barrels of oil a day from the Norman Wells field. Most of this is being piped down south and we are paying the fuel market price, plus a premium to have it trucked back up to us. It doesn't make sense. I know oil has been in the range of \$50 a barrel in the last several months, but when it's coming from our own backyard it's unbelievable that it doesn't count for anything to insulate us from world markets.

Mr. Speaker, this is a problem that needs to be attacked with both short and long-term solutions. In the short term, I would suggest the government needs to consider reintroducing the fuel subsidy to give residents and

businesses immediate relief to help cope with the rising fuel costs.

In the longer term, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that in negotiating the socioeconomic agreement with the pipeline proponents, that the government is pursuing commitments from industry that will ensure we see a direct benefit from our own oil and gas. If the Mackenzie Valley pipeline goes through, are we still going to be waving good-bye to our resources at the wellhead and paying outrageous prices to bring them back? Why couldn't we have a small refinery in Norman Wells or Fort Simpson to supply this territory?

---Applause

What about piping natural gas directly into Yellowknife and other communities? I hope these options and others are being seriously explored and, later today, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Youth Entry Level Skills Program

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this is Education Week, I would like to take this opportunity to speak on a very successful program that is in danger of being cut in the Beaufort-Delta. The Youth Entry Level Skills, or YELS program, was started by the Beaufort-Delta Education Council in 2001 and provides students between the ages of 17 and 29 with exposure to the trades and the oil and gas industry while encouraging them to stay in school and graduate. Mr. Speaker, by exposing students to the trades and oil and gas industry, we are expanding students' horizons. Students see that to get a good job, even in trades, you need a good education. Industry has supported this program since its inception. Students are offered job placement for two weeks where they can get some hands-on experience and can get a sense of whether a particular career or field is of interest to them.

Mr. Speaker, the statistics speak to the success of the YELS program. Program completion rates are around 96 percent of students enrolled in the YELS oil and gas program in 2003. All but two of them came back to regular school in 2004. Finally, in 2001, only one student out of six tested drug-free and, in 2004, 10 of the 12 students tested drug-free. This shows that the message on drugs in the workplace is getting through.

I have also heard good things from parents, educators and students and two other school boards are looking to set up their own version of the YELS program. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, in these times of economic restraint, the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council may no longer have the funds to administer and run this very valuable program and will have to make a decision on whether the program will continue.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good program. Industry and the regional aboriginal governments also provide support to

the program because they, too, recognize that YELS provides opportunity and encouragement to students to succeed in life. I strongly encourage the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to work with the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council and examine ways that the YELS program could continue to be funded. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Echo-Dene School Attendance Program

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of Education Week, I too would like to recognize the extra efforts that have taken place in our schools, such as the initiative that is going on in the Echo-Dene School to improve school attendance. In an effort to get the kids of Fort Liard to classes on a regular basis, the school has decided to reward students for good attendance. Students who manage 90 percent attendance or better are invited to a tasty lunch and a movie. Mr. Speaker, I was even more impressed when I learned that the families of the students with good attendance also receive recognition and rewards. Last Christmas, they were presented with a turkey or ham and, this spring, a small feast will be held in their honour.

Mr. Speaker, it takes a community to raise a child. Families play a crucial role in ensuring that a child is at school and ready to learn. Community-based approaches to education are an essential component in building a healthy community. Initiatives like the ones at Echo-Dene School in Fort Liard do a lot towards putting these ideals into practice, but we still have a long way to go. According to a report put out by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 32 percent of parents in smaller communities are still under-involved in their children's education. Providing incentives for kids to attend school on a regular basis is a great move in the right direction. Congratulations to the staff, students and families of the Echo-Dene School in Fort Liard. Keep up the good work. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Caribou Management Plans

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise to talk about the proposed Bathurst caribou management plan the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is considering for future development and possible implementation. The Minister of RWED did state that four years of research by this government had gone into studying the caribou migration patterns. Although this type of research is always welcomed by residents of the NWT, I feel that the lack of public input and traditional knowledge incorporated into the development of a manageable plan for caribou conservation purposes is missing from all of this. This research and these consultation processes have to be considered as an

integral component towards any successful wildlife management plan this government undertakes.

Mr. Speaker, for myself, and I am sure for many others of this House who are avid outdoorsmen or women, the traditional knowledge learned from elders is very valuable when establishing our high level of respect and protection of our wildlife and wildlife habitat when out on the land. A good example of this, Mr. Speaker, is the information I have received from one of my conversations with some of the local aboriginal elders, about why the caribou are not as fat or as healthy as they were last year. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons is the increase in the level of development and exploration activity in the region and another is the increase in the number of people going out to hunt and harvest animals.

With the large number of snowmobiles and vehicles travelling through the migration routes, the animals do not have time to dig for their food under the snow because of the increased number of distractions like noisy machines and vehicles and people who are camping and fishing in the area. As one elder eloquently put it, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: "I remember the days when the caribou were so fat that we had to skin them twice; once for removing the skin and then again for removing the fat."

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, although this observation is somewhat far-fetched, I hope that these good old days are not lost and that we will see some improvement, be it through government legislation or personal practices, in the way we manage our wildlife so that we can all have the same enlightening experiences as did our elders when out on the land. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On GNWT Support For Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we gradually approach the spring season, Mr. Speaker, we are getting into the season of carnivals, festivals and events in communities across the Northwest Territories. It is interesting to note that, last year, a couple of our real hallmark events, the Folk on the Rocks festival celebrated its 20th anniversary and the Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik commemorated 15 years. This year in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, will mark the 10th year of the Snow King festival down on Yellowknife Bay, and it's the 50th anniversary of Caribou Carnival.

Mr. Speaker, these principally volunteer-run festivals and events are not having good days right now. They are suffering from a lack of continuity and, I think, Mr. Speaker, a real lack of support from the Government of the Northwest Territories; especially when it comes to recognizing their significance as the primary vehicles, the real showcases of our northern culture, northern lifestyle and, of course, our arts and crafts, sports and recreation.

The Arts Strategy released late last year, Mr. Speaker, was something that I had hoped to see as a real opportunity for our government to step up to the plate and

show our communities and our volunteers just how important these festivals are, but there was, regrettably, nothing in the Arts Strategy, Mr. Speaker, despite the principal recommendations of a panel that spent two years surveying the Northwest Territories. One of those recommendations was to expand funding levels, flexibility and support, multi-year and ongoing funding, for important regional festivals and other activities.

Mr. Speaker, as we come into this season of festivals, we need to recognize that there is a big gap in this government's recognition of the significance and the importance of festivals and events as something that showcases just who we are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Concerns With Social Housing And Income Support Policies

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today to highlight some situations that are being created by our inhumane policies that lack compassion regarding social housing, homelessness and women. This crosses the board with departments responsible for housing, social services, and employment income security.

Mr. Speaker, I have three examples of these issues. The first one is the fact that, currently, the Yellowknife Housing Authority policy states that if a family gets evicted from social housing, they are not entitled to get any more than \$32 from the Income Support Program. Anybody who knows anything about housing in Yellowknife could tell you that there is no way you are going to get anywhere to stay for \$32. This could potentially create a situation where you have dozens of families who are literally homeless and have no place to go.

A second situation that I am aware of, that I am really stuck with, is the fact that there is a woman who wants to live with a child, but social housing will not provide them a home. She cannot be united with her child unless she has a home. Without the child, she doesn't qualify for a home, and she is in a women's shelter. She is stuck in this place where it is really very difficult.

A third situation, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about is a situation where the housing association office in Yellowknife is becoming, for some, very punitive in the way they deal with those who they consider to be problem tenants. Instead of taking these concerns to the rental office, who I think they feel are being too lenient to tenants, and I think it was meant to be that way, they're bumping up a lot of cases to the Supreme Court. That requires a lawyer for these people who cannot afford that. This is one of the reasons why I thought the new legal aid office should have gone into. Anyway, I'm dealing with a lot of issues but, Mr. Speaker, I just want to highlight these three very difficult situations that people are dealing with in our community and that takes coordination on the part of all these three departments to work out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mr. Sandy MacDonald in the gallery. Sandy is the territorial librarian and helped launch the Unicorn system today at lunch.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to recognize Major Al Hoelt from the Salvation Army and a good constituent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today at lunch we had the privilege of being with the NWT seniors as they opened up their new offices. We have the privilege, as well, of having some of them in the House today. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Ms. Bea Campbell, the president from Fort Smith; Alvin Armstrong, the vice-president from Hay River; Lloyd Brooms, past-president from Hay River; Tom Wilson, a director from Fort Simpson; Florence Barnaby, a director from Fort Good Hope; as well, Barb Hood, the executive director of the NWT Seniors' Society. Please welcome these good folks.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize three people from Hay River in the gallery today: Alvin Armstrong, Lloyd Brooms, and, as mentioned by Mr. Dent, our chief territorial librarian, Mr. Sandy MacDonald. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I heard a constituent of mine's name mentioned, Mr. Tom Wilson. I'd like to recognize him. Thank you very much.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd also like to recognize Major Al Hoelt, who happens to be

the president of the Yellowknife Rotary Club. I believe John Argue is up there somewhere. He's no stranger to this Assembly and he's also a member of the Yellowknife Rotary Club. Finally, I'd just like to say as a whole I'd like to tip my hat to all the seniors we have in the gallery today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I, as well, would like to pass on my welcoming to the group that's in the gallery today, especially our seniors who had a big event today opening up their new office here in Yellowknife. I was glad to attend that. I wish you all the best of luck in your new offices. I'd also like to recognize a couple of my constituents in Hay River: Al Armstrong and Lloyd Brooms.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in following up with my line of questioning from yesterday and my Member's statement from today, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask Mr. Dent if he's ever seen the remand unit in the Hay River South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have, and not as an inmate.

---Applause

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

Supplementary To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I meant that question in the most serious way because it is difficult to talk about something that's technical like this without having a mental picture of how the layout is, and I feel like yesterday I was kind of having a hard time explaining all the many functions which happen in that particular controlled unit. Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to ask the Minister, he referred to the contract yesterday with the Hay River detachment for the RCMP saying that their budget would accommodate this extra activity and travel costs. I'd like to know, was the budget for this upcoming year revisited with these extra costs in mind? Was there an increase? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't mean to imply that we had negotiated a new arrangement with the RCMP. There's one overall contract with the RCMP in the Northwest Territories. But we are confident that, and after talking with the RCMP, the costs can be absorbed. Any extra costs that we may be required to pay, such as for transportation, we believe we will have very close to the right amount in savings and the \$18,000 that was not given up as part of the overall reduction exercise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the \$18,000 for staff and transportation and travel costs is supposed to absorb the inmates who are in remand being transported to Yellowknife from Hay River. What about the cost difference between the costs for transporting inmates from Hay River to Yellowknife versus the extra cost, more than what it costs say to bring somebody from Fort Resolution to Hay River as opposed to Fort Resolution to Yellowknife? Has that extra cost been calculated in there? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was always a cost to move somebody from whichever community outside of Hay River. The courts remanded them into custody to Hay River, and that cost will always be there. There may be some incremental costs; there may be some incremental savings. It is, for instance, cheaper for the RCMP plane to transport an inmate or somebody on remand from Fort Liard to Yellowknife than it is to transport them by road from Fort Liard to Hay River. So it's really hard to say exactly what the differences are going to be. But yes, we've taken a look at the costs and are comfortable that within \$5,000 to \$10,000 either way that the savings are going to be there. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this may be the first time in history when it costs less to charter an aircraft than it does to drive down a highway. Mr. Speaker, the \$18,000 just seems such an unbelievable amount as extra costs for all these things that we've been talking about. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could give me a commitment. Would he agree to put the decision to remove remand services from Hay River on hold until we have a chance to look at a more in-depth cost-benefit analysis of this particular move? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 458-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This initiative is included in the budget that is before this House. I am confident that the savings that we have proposed are real and I am not intending to withdraw it from the budget. It's come forward and it's part of the government's program right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is for the honourable Minister of RWED with respect to foreign investment into the NWT. Previously we had an aurora fund. What kind of vehicle do we have today to stimulate foreign investment into the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: In the past we did benefit from aurora fund one and aurora fund two. It is my understanding that the current initiative being headed up by Canada is called the opportunities fund. We've signed up to be a partner in that. Not all provinces have, but we anticipate as that process is unveiled we'll have access to money and then we'll have to sit down and are prepared to sit down with committee to talk about how this government would best utilize those resources that could flow from that opportunities fund. It's based on the same premise. It's an immigrant investor fund. People pay a certain amount of money which is returned to them after an amount of time and that can be used for an agreed upon purpose. The difference this time, as in past we had to go and solicit and market our own investment, this time Canada's doing it on our behalf and then they're parceling out the money to provinces and territories who have signed up. I'm not sure we exactly know quite yet what our share of the money will be, but we know we've signed up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just not quite certain what we as a government are doing to stimulate or encourage foreign investment. It doesn't have to be in the regions, it can be in the communities, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I didn't hear a question there. Did you want to rephrase that statement into a question, Mr. Menicoche?

Supplementary To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question was for the RWED Minister. What is our government doing to stimulate and encourage investment into the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a difficult question. The immigrant investor fund is one potential vehicle, but, as I've said, Canada administers that. So if the Member is asking about the specific activities of this government to solicit foreign investment, I don't think that we're actively pursuing investment in that regard. I think one of our challenges, and we've seen other jurisdictions, we know the Natural Resources Minister was in China recently and had some other provinces and I believe the Yukon territory in tow as well. We don't get the lion's share of revenues that flow from resources, so I suspect that we're not in the same boat as a jurisdiction like the Yukon seeking to make sure their resources are developed so their coffers benefit from that. Ours really wouldn't and we're obviously faced with that dilemma and I think that affects how vigorously we try to pursue foreign investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me if we do have a dedicated resource person within the department to address the question of foreign investment? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we do. We do have an investment and economic analysis division in my department which does a lot of economic modelling and helps us understand the benefit of resources. But much of our aspirations obviously are hinged on devolution and control over lands and resources and when the resources start to flow, when the royalties start to flow from resources, I suspect we'll have a discussion at that point about how we best want to see the development of our resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just wondering if our new business development, the BDIC, would be flexible enough to work with, say, Industry Canada for foreign investments into the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 459-15(3): Foreign Investment In The NWT

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the advantages we talked about with the BDIC is that it's certainly not as prescriptive as our existing legislation. So if there are local entrepreneurs who would like to partner with other agencies or would like to try and generate foreign investment, I don't think it's a matter of investors having to immigrate to the country to be able to invest in NWT businesses. I think there are a number of partnership approaches that could be taken. We do have currently some businesses in the Northwest Territories that are either partially or wholly owned by foreigners. It's, I think, a matter of really setting up a Canadian company in order to be able to invest here. So that's certainly possible and BDIC can work with anybody and then if the Member has anybody who's interested in this regard, please send them our way and we'll sit down with our officials and talk about what the possibilities are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment in his role as one of the departments responsible for the NWT Arts Strategy. Mr. Speaker, it's been well publicized that a couple of the NWT's premier festivals are not in good financial or organizational shape. I wanted to ask the Minister what avenues of support does his department make available to festivals and events in the NWT. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost all of the money that goes out from my department to support the arts in the Northwest Territories is funnelled through the NWT Arts Council awards or grants. There are a number of festivals that make application to the NWT Arts Council and they receive funding through that vehicle.

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

Supplementary To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the information. The last time I looked at the criteria for those there were some fairly severe limitations on the amount of funding, on whether or not multi-year commitments could be made, which was one of the recommendations of the panel, and other things of this nature. I don't know that is a really sufficient area. I wanted to ask the Minister if he could explain why festivals and events weren't more specifically targeted in the Arts

Strategy and in his department's responsibility for them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of awards to festivals that have amounted to tens of thousands of dollars, so I would suggest that the amount of money that is available for festivals is a significant portion of the money, but it takes the festivals to convince the members of the Arts Council that their festival is worthy of support. The funds are then awarded by artists to artist organizations. I think the funding is there for a well-run organization, but it is awarded each year to organizations based on their application. I think it's also important to point out that in the course of the last year, we have increased the amount of funding by \$125,000 to the Arts Council and to the tune of I think around \$300,000 in the last few years. So we are doing what we can to increase the amount of money that goes into Arts Council funding and making awards to artists is certainly a good way to make sure the right people are getting it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The areas of support that the Minister has outlined are indeed significant and appropriate, but I don't know if they go to the heart of the difficulties that some of these festivals are having, which is in their administration and their ability to hire staff, do promotion and marketing, and this kind of thing. This is the area that I'm really looking at, as I think it is a core problem for our festivals and events. Is the money that is made available through these arts grants targeted for that kind of purpose, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, it's not available for those types of purposes generally. That's one of the reasons that RWED and ECE cooperated on the Arts Strategy. The Education, Culture and Employment side of the strategy is aimed at funding art for art's sake. Not for the business, not for tourism, not for promotion, not for administration, but art for art's sake. When you want to talk about tourism or the business side of arts, that's handled by RWED. So artists and arts organizations have to take a look at what their focus is and where they're looking to have the grants focus on when deciding where to put the applications in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, art for art's sake is a great concept, but it doesn't get us very far if it's kept in a dark room or a stage that doesn't have an audience. Why is it that ECE will not appreciate that artists and cultural groups also need ways to present and showcase their art? Where is the support for bringing their art to the people? Thank you. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 460-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is accommodated through RWED and that's one of the ways that the Arts Strategy was set out to help people understand where they should go and how to apply for funding to support their project. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development what value-added or secondary industries are being looked at in conjunction with the Mackenzie Valley gas project that will ensure northerners can look forward to lower fuel prices in the future as a result of these hydrocarbons coming out of our backyard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll stick, I guess, to the value-added discussions around lowering the cost of living. We do know there are some manufacturing options that are being looked at, some things that other communities are pursuing. Pipe coating is a project that the community of Hay River is particularly interested in. But in terms of whether or not communities along the pipeline route will be able to access gas for their utilities, whether that's electrical generation or home heat, I know that discussion is on the table. There are other options. Obviously there are issues to deal with if you convert from diesel to natural gas. You can have stranded assets. The Power Corporation obviously would have assets that would need to be converted, or I guess would become not useful anymore. Appliances in homes would have to be changed over. So there are some costs.

Obviously the benefit would be the environmental cost that we're offsetting. But I think there's also the option, we've had a lot of discussion around hydro. We think the legacy infrastructure in terms of hydro can make a big impact on the cost of living or electrical generation. Waste heat generated, I think, from compression statements up and down the pipeline could potentially be used to generate electricity, as well. So there are a number of

options being pursued. There may be more in terms of access agreements being negotiated by regional groups that I'm not aware of, but those are the kinds of things we're talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know inside the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development there is a position that's referred to as an industrial initiatives analyst or specialist and I'm wondering if indeed this position or this group of people inside of RWED is looking at the possibility of setting up industry here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a day-to-day basis I'm not sure of the options that are being pursued. There could be work being done with potential private sector interests that I'm not aware of. In terms of setting up industry, I guess I'd need more clarification from the Member as to whether or not he's talking about petrochemical industry, issues that I've just spoken to related to the use of gas up and down the valley by utilities. I need a little more clarification from the Member, I guess, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to keep my questions short. Yes, I was talking specifically about petrochemical facilities and refineries, as well. I'd like to ask the Minister what he envisions staying here. Is there any gas or oil that's going to stay in the Northwest Territories or is it all going to go south and then get shipped back north and we're going to pay a premium for it? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are some private interests looking at exactly those kinds of issues. There has to be and we have to better understand the plan by the project proponents in terms of where liquids would be separated and where that would happen. But obviously I think just on a point of principle, we'd like to see as much value-added as practically possible in the Northwest Territories as opposed to Alberta or northern B.C. or somewhere else. So that certainly is on our radar and will be something that we'd be advocating for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So specifically what is the Government of the Northwest Territories doing to ensure that we get the value-added and the secondary industry here after the pipeline comes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 461-15(3): Value-Added Hydrocarbon Projects

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working to develop a socioeconomic agreement. The Joint AOC/Cabinet Pipeline Planning Committee is driving much of that process and providing the strategic direction for our department in terms of negotiating that socioeconomic agreement. It is in the early stages. We're laying out an agreed-upon process for doing that. So there are many areas, legacy infrastructure, business opportunities, training and employment opportunities. We're going through the whole range and I can assure the Member that in each of these topic areas, each of these priority areas we are looking at any option that makes any kind of sense. Starting from that basis, if we have to rule things out upon further research, we'll do that, but we're not ignoring anything. If the Member has any suggestions or thoughts or constituents bring thoughts to him, certainly bring them to our attention and we'd like to work with committee to pursue these issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and it arises out of the discussions we've been having about the different governments around the Yellowknife area applying for permits and land use and such. It is a very complicated field and I think that most people in the Yellowknife area and most people in the Territories know that various aboriginal groups are in the process of negotiating land claims and self-government agreements and that there are implications for non-aboriginal residents. I think it is incumbent on the Government of the Northwest Territories, as the public government, to facilitate opportunities for people to understand what's going on; not just specifically what's happening with the Yellowknives and the City of Yellowknife. I guess I'm asking specifically to that. I'm wondering if the Minister has any plans to conduct a public information session in Yellowknife so that people can understand what's going on, what land is being talked about, whether it's for identification, selection, and what it means for the non-claimant people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is looking at or preparing for some public information sessions dealing with the status of negotiations with the Akaitcho. At the same time, if there are issues around land applications and so on around the city, then I'd like to talk for my colleague, the Minister of MACA, and possibly the two of us can do something jointly that would help to explain to the public what the processes are and how one would access the applications and their interests in land. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to point out the fact that there are lots of communications going on. I think daily or at least weekly, residents of Yellowknife do get newsletters from various levels of government about self-government talks. The thing about this topic is it's very complicated and it needs to be done in a way that grabs the attention of the people. Our experiences in this committee in travelling with the Special Committee on Self-Government and Implementation, for example, is that you need to educate the public so they have enough to even ask questions. So I'd like to know if the Minister could make sure that this process is done in a way that's interactive and more participatory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Member is correct. We do send out a lot of information in newsletters and news releases and so on, but I agree that we need to have more of a meeting or workshop kind of session for those who have a keen interest where they would be able to ask questions and get answers to some of the concerns that they may have. My intention is that starting this spring we will be holding information sessions where people will be invited to come in and participate in dialogue around not just the Akaitcho claim, but claims in other areas. I'm saying that with the assumption that the Akaitcho, the federal government and others who are involved in negotiations are in agreement with the need to have more information out there to the public to give people some comfort. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I think it's very important and I think we all understand that this is a multi-party process. I think the latest example has demonstrated a need to get the communication straight. In this case it involves the City of Yellowknife, Akaitcho government, Yellowknives, federal government, territorial government, and I would like to ask the Premier to make a

special effort to get all those parties to agree to a communication and information session. I really believe it's in the interest of everyone to make sure that people affected understand. Could I get the Premier to commit to doing that? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lee. Minister Handley.

Further Return To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes, we will do that. We do want to put out a caution though, that we have to have the agreement by the other parties and that we are sure of what we are doing.

One thing that we don't want to do, and I certainly don't want to do, would be to have these interactive workshops and meetings become a forum for negotiating in the public or negotiating through the media. We don't want to go there. We do feel we have an obligation to let the public know where the negotiations are and what the issues may be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there is a lot of room to move in between negotiating in public and informing the public about what is going on. In the absence and vacuum of good information, people start operating on rumours and fears and that is not what we want to see happen with what is going on. I think the residents of Yellowknife and the surrounding area have every right to know what the process is and what is being done.

I would like to ask the Minister to commit to making every effort to getting all the partners to see the merits of that and making it happen. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 462-15(3): Public Information Sessions On Land Use

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I commit to undertaking that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to ask the Minister how they come up with the funding formula for the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The formula that we use to fund the education councils across the Northwest Territories is set by a group of superintendents that meet with staff from the department. Between them they decide on the formula and how it should be worked out across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

MR. MCLEOD: In 1996-97, the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council received \$425 per student. Today, I believe they receive \$440 per student. That is only an increase of three percent, yet inflation during the time was 17 percent. Can the Minister explain why inflation is not factored into the formula and should it be? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm not sure that the Member is accurate on the numbers. I believe that the average amount that we provide to education councils across the Northwest Territories is about \$9,000 per student. The amount of money is not in the hundreds, it is in the thousands.

The amount of money that is provided to education boards across the Territories was cut significantly as a result of federal cuts to our transfer payments in the mid to late 1990s. As a result, our pupil-teacher ratio went from, at that time, to just under 14 pupils to one teacher, to over 18 pupils per teacher. We have, over the past four, five, six years, put significant money back into the system, but it hasn't been enough to get us to that level of funding. We are now funding the system at close to 16 to one, in terms of pupils to teachers.

We haven't taken inflation into account. No department in government has been able to take inflation into account, because of the amount of money that we have been getting from the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

MR. MCLEOD: I will double check on those numbers. Maybe I was given the wrong numbers. Another question I have is the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council serves eight communities over a wide geographical area. Is that factored into the formula and would the Minister commit to looking into this matter?

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

Further Return To Question 463-15(3): Beaufort-Delta Education Council Funding Formula

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the formula is adjusted by the distance between communities, the size of the population in a region and the size of the schools. An education council that has more small schools receives a higher proportion of funding per student than one that has larger schools. Yes, that sort of thing is factored into the formula. The formula is adjusted every year, or adjustments are considered every year, as the senior administrators in the department get together to discuss the formula. It is adjusted every year and it is certainly something that I discuss with the board chairs on a regular basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod. Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a question to the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Michael McLeod. On February 5th, I wrote the Minister a letter in regard to the lack of a section in our Motor Vehicle Act, which refers to tail lights and licence plates being obstruction free.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister replied on February 17th, with a letter saying that two sections cover it. I won't go into detail about the sections, recognizing the time, but the problem is, it is not descriptive enough. Would the Minister be willing to look into this problem in making our Motor Vehicle Act descriptive so that it clearly says tail lights and licence plates should not be obstructed at any time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will commit to raising the issue with the RCMP and the municipal bylaw officers, in having a discussion around this whole issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

MR. HAWKINS: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear his response, but I will just assume he said yes. I will ask one more question just to be sure.

Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia, they clearly emphasize visibility of tail lights. Mr. Speaker, our legislation of the Motor Vehicle Act is very descriptive of not less than 300 meters, not less than 60 meters, within 60 meters, I mean. There are so many sections within this act that are very, very clear. Would the Minister be willing to engage in this problem to clarify this, therefore, safety is truly an issue being addressed here? Would he be willing to look into this problem a little further? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is already legislation that prohibits the operator of a motor vehicle; they are required to keep their licence plates and lights clear of dirt and obstructions. I have made the commitment to talk about enforcement with the RCMP and municipal officers. We have no plan to do a publicity campaign on this issue. We can discuss this issue further, like the Member suggests. However, at this point we do not have any plans for new legislation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate what the Minister is saying in referring to a section called 126 in the Motor Vehicles Act, which basically says that the enforcement officer can pull a vehicle over at any time, if it appears to be unsafe to the driver or the public.

Mr. Speaker, we go on clearly identifying very specific issues in our act. Section 142 talks about obstruction of view by snow. If we were to modify 142, by adding subsection (c), by saying "licence plates must be clear as well as taillights," that would add the extra surety. Therefore, it is a clear judgment call on the municipal enforcement, the RCMP enforcement, or whatever enforcement agency. Would the Minister look into the situation and address that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 464-15(3): Obstructed Tail Lights And Licence Plates

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will take a look at it; we will talk about enforcement with the RCMP and municipal officers, as indicated. This is a difficult piece of legislation to enforce or really look at and provide severe penalties or change it around.

We have to realize that the climate we live in, in a lot of cases, a lot of communities don't have paved streets, and they have a lot of snowfall. It is a difficult one. I will commit to having discussion around it. However, that is as far as I can commit at this point.

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

Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for my Minister...my Minister...the Minister of Justice, Minister Dent.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of questions for Minister Dent. The information I have is, Mr. Speaker, with respect to transportation costs from the communities in the South Slave region to Hay River versus the transportation costs from those communities to Yellowknife. The Minister referred to the cost of road travel versus airplane travel. His own department provided me with numbers. The Department of Justice provided me with numbers, Mr. Speaker, which would indicate that the RCMP plane is more costly in every instance from South Slave communities than it is to go by road from those same communities to Hay River. From every single community, the RCMP plane to go to Yellowknife is more costly than driving to Hay River. I would be happy to share these numbers with the Minister, but could he please respond to that? He said that there could be incremental costs, there could be incremental savings, but he is confident of the numbers. I am not confident of the numbers, Mr. Speaker. Could he please respond to those costs? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we could meet to compare numbers later, but I have what I believe to be a copy of what was provided to the Member in terms of the information. It may not be a copy, but the same numbers. They show me the exact opposite of what the Member has just said, so perhaps we need to get together and compare these numbers and how to interpret them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the decision to remove remand services from Hay River and put it into Yellowknife required some very serious, in-depth analysis. I think, when we are making a move of this significance, it needs to be backed up by some really good sound number crunching. That should take into account costs and benefits. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister a question. How much analysis did his department do of the historic use of remand services in Hay River by clients in Hay River and the South Slave? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was an extensive review of the use and of the costs. I must point out that the remand facility has been used not just for the South Slave. I believe that there are people who have been housed there from all across the Northwest Territories. So we have used remand facilities around the Territories depending on their specific client and where they best fit in the system. It hasn't been just used for South Slave, but, yes, we have taken a very good

look at the facility and its use. We are convinced that this is the right move to make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just can't accept that kind of superficial answer, "We think this is a right move to make." I would like to know what other people in the Northwest Territories think about whether this is the right move to make. How much community consultations went into this decision to remove these services from the South Slave region? How many communities did his department visit to find out how people feel about the delivery of justice services and not having those services available close to their homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member and Members of this House will know, we don't do consultation on the budget. That is an issue that we have to undertake as part of the operation of government. So when reductions are proposed, they are considered by the government, and we take a look at the information and make the decisions based on the criteria that we have. In this case, we looked at what the impact would be on those who use the service, and it was determined that this would have the least impact on users across the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, now that these reduction initiatives are out there, they are in the public again. I asked the Minister if he would consider putting this reduction initiative on hold until further analysis could be done. I had asked the Minister again. I am not asking him to withdraw it. I am asking him to put it on hold until open and proper consultation and analysis can occur. Would he commit to that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 465-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't put the budget process on hold. So, no, I can't commit to do that. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reductions in this budget. We are not going out and consulting with the public on all of them. We have consulted with MLAs. We started that process in the business planning exercise last fall. That is the consultation that the government does on its budget. This move will have a limited impact on people who have or are alleged to commit a crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for Mr. Bell, the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development in follow-up to his department's responsibility for arts and cultural funding and, specifically, festivals and events. Mr. Speaker, what avenues of support does the RWED department make available to festivals and events in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you. I think, as the Member will remember from our discussion yesterday in Committee of the Whole, the debate that we had around the Arts Strategy, we do have funding available. We provide money to the Great Northern Arts Festival, I believe it is called, in Inuvik on an annual basis. I can't remember the exact number. Under the Arts Strategy, we identified \$75,000 in additional funding, refiled \$50,000 of existing funding. We have \$125,000 initiative broken down into five regions, \$25,000 per region that is application based. It is for artisans who want to procure raw material in order to develop crafts. If there is a festival that has an initiative that could fit the criteria of this program and it is a schedule under the BDF, then I assume they would be eligible, but it would be a matter of meeting the criteria. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Okay. So if I am a volunteer and I am trying to sort my way through all of this, what I gather here is that there is a business development fund that has some criteria under which my festival event could be supported. Have I got that much of this correct? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. BRENDAN BELL: There is a schedule in the business development fund that speaks to funding arts by allowing people to, as I mentioned, procure raw materials for their activity. If somebody was involved in a festival and wanted to put on, hypothetically, a demonstration of tanning hides, we might be able to provide them some money in order to get some hides so that they can contribute to this festival in that activity. This is just a hypothetical, in the theoretical. I don't know the various different possibilities or iterations, but that is what this BDF schedule is intended to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I am not hearing is that there is a specific place or part of RWED's array of resources that a festival or event can directly go to to get help. I make the point again that, where events are in trouble, Mr. Speaker, is it in their ability to administer themselves and come up with that kind of support? Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of RWED, perhaps in collaboration with the Minister of ECE, undertake to look at this whole area of festivals and events, the significance, and where our government can really come in and help them where it is needed? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was the first initiative that we were able to respond to in terms of funding the Arts Strategy. As the Member has pointed out, there are other recommendations that remain unfunded. I anticipate that our departments will have a discussion of those issues with their respective committees. Where there can be logical collaboration between the two departments, I do agree that that makes sense. We could potentially look at some joint initiatives. In terms of funding festivals, the Member has made the point that he doesn't believe that there is adequate support for festivals. I suppose, from our department, our mandate is economic development. If a festival came forward and it was interested in a festival as a business and was in the business of making profit, they can go to our BDIC and apply for a loan or grant funding to make that happen. We have other business support programs, but our mandate is economic development. You can see that we have found a way to support the Arts Strategy by providing raw materials for economic development's sake. That is how we have been able to support this strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister's answer outlines the dilemma that we are in with the shared responsibility between his department and ECE; that this is one really large area that has fallen in between the cracks. Where does he think the responsibility lies for GNWT to come to the aid of festivals and events? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 466-15(3): Support For NWT Cultural Festivals And Events

HON. BRADEN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the Member is asking my personal opinion on who should be in the business of supporting festivals, and whether in fact that should be government that is expected to

subsidize festivals, whether it is municipalities. All of these questions are good questions. I am not sure my opinion is as relevant as the discussion of the issues and debate that we could engage committee in and talk about what happens in other jurisdictions and talk about how our support could best be targeted. Obviously, we have limited resources, and we do know that arts and funding for the arts has been sparse and does not compete well with other priorities. I think it is very much akin to the discussion we had yesterday around tourism infrastructure and support for our parks. I think that many other priorities rise to the top. That is something that we need to address in the government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is going to be to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mr. Speaker, his department recognizes the challenge of implementing the new NWT deal for some of our communities. In his statement today, he indicated that his department plans to explore various options. What is the time frame for the department to look at these options?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am assuming that the Member is talking about the new deal that we rolled out as a territorial government. The target date for implementation is 2008. We have a number of strategies we still have to roll out. We have already announced a number of things in terms of what we plan to do immediately. There are still a number of things that we have to decide how we are going to move forward with. One of the things that we have already put into the new budget for the next coming fiscal year is the transferring of property tax revenues over to the communities in the form of a grant. We are also looking at increasing the community infrastructure funding to a base amount so that there will be a lot more available for non-tax-based communities and also the tax-based communities to deal with their infrastructure requirements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I should rephrase my first question. Obviously, the Minister is not understanding my question. Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated that his department recognizes the challenge of implementing the NWT new deal for some of our communities. To address this issue, particularly in the capacity building area, he indicated that his department plans to explore options. Now they are going to be looking at different scenarios or different options. Are they going to do that for the whole next year or until June? I

would like to know the time frame for this exploration of options. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that I wasn't sure whether the Member was referring to the federal new deal or the Government of the Northwest Territories new deal. Mr. Speaker, our implementation date is actually 2007. We would like to have our communities starting to work as municipal taxation municipalities. We have a number of initiatives that we still have to develop. This is still in the early stages. We have committed to do some things upfront as I mentioned before about the property taxes being transferred over in terms of a grant. We have a lot of work in terms of assessing what each community is capable of handling and what they are going to need in terms of resources and capacity development. There is still a lot of work yet. This is an initiative that requires continual attention for the next while. As we develop and decide on what we will incorporate as part of this initiative, we will release it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how to rephrase my question again, but his department identified that it is going to be a challenge to implement the Northwest Territories new deal for some of our communities. He indicated in his Minister's statement, to address this issue, MACA plans to explore options for innovative capacity building at the community level. They are going to be looking at different options, Mr. Speaker. What is the time frame for the department to do this? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated to him the implementation date. Mr. Speaker, the government's new deal is intended to put new funding for capital, to allow for decision-making in the communities at the community level on how they want to deal with infrastructure, governance, and a number of different issues. Each community is different. We have settlements. We have hamlets. We have tax-based communities. We have non-tax-based communities. Some of this information and some of the discussion is going on as we speak. We continue to meet with the NWT Association of Communities to decide how we will move forward on some of these initiatives. Some communities are ready to move forward now. Some are not willing to move forward. Some are reluctant to take on some of this responsibility. Some want more information. So there has to be a lot of discussion. Our target date is for 2007. I am assuming that is what the Member is asking me. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Zoe.

Supplementary To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, his department, through the School of Community Government, is going to be exploring these options. Based on the option that they select, they are going to implement the new deal for the communities. Obviously, because it is a challenge to implement the NWT new deal, there seems to be a problem that not all communities are going to take advantage of this new deal that the Minister is going to implement by April 1st.

For these communities that are going to have or are having these problems, the School of Community Government is going to be looking at various options geared for specific communities. It could be different for each community, as the Minister says, but what is the time frame? Do we have a priority list for the communities that are going to first, second, or third? What is the time frame that we are looking at? I realize, in his statement, Mr. Speaker, that he said, by 2008, he would like to have all communities implementing the community's municipal...(inaudible)...authority. That is my question to the Minister. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 467-15(3): New Deal Options For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have already embarked on a journey of setting up this new initiative. We have targeted transfer of the property tax revenues to the communities, as indicated before, in the new fiscal year. We are also looking at planning over the next while. Our target date is to start implementing in 2007. We're also hoping that everybody will be on stream by 2008. But, having said that, there is no guarantee that we will be ready in each community. But we are in a position where we are going to work with the communities. We're not going to set this initiative in place and walk away. There may have to be capacity building. There are a number of issues and we have to identify ways that we're going to solve them. We don't have all the answers at this point; it's still a work in progress and we will continue to update the Members as things develop. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 468-15(3): Rising Cost Of Home Heating Fuel

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. I just wanted to let the Premier know that I am getting phone calls from constituents, as probably are other Members of this House, with concern over the rising cost of home heating oil. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, the cost has increased in the past three or four years by 34 percent and people are suffering, especially folks that are in the lower-income ranges. They can't buy groceries, they can't pay other bills because all their money is going

to heating their homes, which is an essential service, Mr. Speaker; an essential need and necessity.

I know a few years ago the government had brought in a Fuel Subsidy Program for individuals or families under a certain income threshold. Does the government have any plans, given the high rate of fuel oil, to have a look at bringing back a fuel subsidy for people who really need it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 468-15(3): Rising Cost Of Home Heating Fuel

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say that our government is looking very seriously at the issue of energy and the cost of providing energy. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that we provide a lot of subsidies right now to people who are facing hardship. First of all, we spend over \$8 million a year subsidizing the cost of power back to the Yellowknife rate, for communities outside of Yellowknife who are not on the hydro grid. We also spend about \$31 million a year, I think it is, on housing subsidies and a big chunk of that is energy. I don't know how much offhand, but a big chunk of that is energy.

Also, through Income Support, we have a hardship allowance, I believe, that people can apply for if they are suffering undue hardship because of the price of fuel. We also have the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program. So there are a number of ways that we're already subsidizing the cost of energy, but are we considering a cross-the-board subsidy for the cost of energy? Not now, because it seems that the prices we're paying now for energy are going to stabilize at around where they are now, somewhere around the \$50 a barrel for crude oil. That will set the prices.

The prices are going to be high, but what's the answer, Mr. Speaker? The answer is not for us to subsidize this forever, it would be too expensive. The answer is for us to find ways of being more efficient in the use of energy and that's where our focus is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my previous set of questions, I asked the Minister of Justice about the lack of community consultation with respect to the closure of the remand facility in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated that the consultation, in fact, takes place with the Members of this House who represent those communities and who represent those constituents.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is then, would he be prepared to take the advice of the MLAs? Would he be prepared to act on the advice of those MLAs, whom he says he places importance on with regard to the consultation with him? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members know, this government places a great deal of importance on the advice that it receives from all Members, but we've also received advice from all Members as to what we should be doing in our fiscal situation and the budget that we have before us reflects that fiscal situation. The decisions that have been made, where there are reductions, have been made where there will be the least impact on people receiving the services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The time for oral questions has expired; however, I will allow the Member to continue her supplementary questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated he places importance on the input and the consultation with the Members in this House. What did the Members of this House and the members of the committees who considered the closure of the remand in Hay River have to say about that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government listened to the recommendations that came from the committee and did add a lot of money back into the budget to a number of areas, but not in all of the areas that the committees recommended. The government tried to respond as best it could within the fiscal reality that the government faces. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister, in the fulfillment of his duties as any Minister, does consider the consultation and the input from officials in his department, from hearing from people in the community-at-large and certainly, we hope, places a considerable amount of importance on what people duly-elected to this House have to say. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know if the Minister, who is seemingly very heavily reliant on the advice of the officials in this department, would consider, as he's had to in the past on a number of issues, an independent review of the remand services provided in the Northwest Territories, to give Members on this side of the House confidence that what he is proceeding with makes sense and is in the best interests of the people and our fiscal situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A review might cost as much as the amount of money we're talking about saving. So we'd have to increase the budget rather than decreasing it. I am satisfied. I have challenged the department on the figures that have been advanced. I am satisfied that they are accurate and verifiable and I am prepared to sit down with the Member and go through them. Maybe that way we can come to some agreement on whether there are any savings or not. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I hate to point this out, but I think it's time to mention that this is the same Minister who stood up in this House and said there was no unusual or unsafe or any human resource issues at the North Slave Correctional Centre, and then commissioned a review that told him exactly the opposite. So I don't have a lot of confidence in what the Minister has been told. I don't have any confidence in his numbers. I ask him again, would he get an independent opinion that would prove that what he's doing with closing remand services in Hay River is a good and sound decision? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

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

Further Return To Question 469-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The decision is a fiscal decision and we are basing it on the fact that we can save money and provide the service in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motions for the first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 15, Tlicho Community Services Agency Act; Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act; Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006; Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005; Committee Report 9-15(3), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates; Committee Report 10-15 (3), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates; Committee Report 11-15(3), Standing

Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates; Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election; Minister's Statement 86-15(3), Northern Strategy; Minister's Statement 88-15(3), Update on Oil and Gas Development in the NWT; Minister's Statement 89-15(3), Community Leaders' Conference Report: Preparing for the Pipeline; Minister's Statement 90-15(3), Social Impacts of the Mackenzie Gas Project; and, Minister's Statement 91-15(3), Preparation for the Mackenzie Gas Project. By the authority given to me as Speaker, by Motion 2-15(3), I hereby resolve the House into Committee of the Whole to sit beyond the hour of adjournment until such time as the committee is ready to report progress, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. The Members are aware of the items before us today. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicocche.

MR. MENICOICHE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We wish to consider Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, specifically Environment and Natural Resources, followed by Education, Culture and Employment upon conclusion.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): At the discretion of the chair, we will resume after a short break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I am going to call Committee of the Whole back to order. We are on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. We left off last night under general comments on the department's main estimates. Last night when we adjourned, I had Mr. Zoe next on the list to speak. General comments for ENR. I'm sorry. What a great idea, thank you. If the committee is agreed, can Mr. Bell bring witnesses into the Chamber?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Bell, would you like to bring in witnesses? Yes. I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms if he will escort Mr. Bell's witnesses to the witness table.

For the record, Mr. Bell, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. The same as yesterday. Today I have the acting deputy minister for Environment and Natural Resources, Bob Bailey; and, I have the director of corporate services, Jim Kennedy, with me. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. General comments on ENR.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under this new shop will come or perhaps will stay, depending on your perspective, Madam Chair, the responsibility for cleanup and working with other environmental regulators and agencies, especially in the federal government, to see what can be done to seek a final remedy for the many abandoned and contaminated mine sites that are there in the Northwest Territories. I wanted to ask the Minister in the budget proposed, what specific allocations are in place for addressing contaminated mine sites in the fiscal year 2005-06? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is right that that remains on our side of the department. Our environmental protection division both intervenes in environmental assessments, but also is involved in negotiations around cleanup of contamination of sites, specifically they are working on Giant Mine currently with the federal government. In terms of identifying money for cleanup, we believe that the cleanup of these sites are federal responsibilities and, therefore, have not identified cleanup money specifically in this budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was of the understanding that at least on the Giant site, if not on others, as far as the responsibility for surface cleanup and contamination, that there was a shared responsibility and this was the kind of approach we were taking. With the federal government, we were trying to establish what proportion of responsibility each government was going to undertake. So based on that assumption or understanding, that is why I had asked in this coming fiscal year, had any allocation been proposed for the cleanup of the mine sites?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hope the Member can appreciate we are in negotiations with the federal government around that very issue regarding Giant. There has always been some debate about surface responsibility. We know one thing clearly, that the federal government is responsible for anything related to waters on the surface and we are having an ongoing discussion around other issues. Of course, we don't budget based on hypothetical negotiations on where those might arrive, so we don't have figures in this budget. I don't want to get into too much detail around the specifics of our negotiating positions, vis-à-vis the federal government in this case. The Member is correct; we are sitting down, we are negotiating and we are attempting to move forward with a cleanup plan. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chairperson, does the Minister anticipate that in the coming fiscal year we will have

something agreed upon and tangible that we can look at, so we can at least finalize the Giant matter? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I am certainly optimistic that we can move forward in that regard. I have talked to the department around this issue a number of times. It is of highest priority in my opinion. I indicated yesterday that the deputy minister, Peter Vician, has been involved in numerous negotiation sessions and meetings with the federal government; those are ongoing. I assure the Member that we are doing as much as we possibly can to see this cleanup go forward. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Related to that, Madam Chairperson, is the cleanup of the Con Mine site which is, I understand, still in the hands of the regulatory agencies to work out a plan and how it is going to be done. We also have the Colomac Mine site. It comes to mind, Madam Chairperson, as one that is a significant hazard.

I didn't want to infer that my interests stop only at the Giant Mine site. There are others in the territory. The federal government has indicated that it has put a significant amount of money in the hands of the federal environmental cleanup people and indicated that it is ready to put money to work in the North. I am hopeful, I'm optimistic that we are going to arrive at an agreement on how to go about this, but that federal money, Madam Chairperson, I don't think is going to be on the table waiting for us to get our plans together. There will be a finite time that we can tap this.

Are we also looking at those other environmental situations and are we mindful of the time limitations that there probably are on this money? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. As the Member knows, we believe a key component of the Northern Strategy could be related to contaminated sites and cleanup. We think that this is critical to deal with now. We are cognizant of the fact that \$3.5 billion dollars, I believe, has been identified by the federal government over 10 years. We want to ensure that we are able to take advantage of those monies within the Northwest Territories, because we know that there is much more cleanup to be done across the country than that \$3.5 billion will allow for.

That is a priority and we are trying to move the agenda forward. The Colomac cleanup currently underway is entirely federal, I believe, Madam Chairperson, and I am not really sure of the status of that. I know that there are some steps being taken.

The ANR plan, the abandonment and restoration plan currently being developed at the Con Mine site, MACA is involved with this. There is a lease with the city, but the Member is correct, our EPS does sit on the working group reviewing that ANR plan. We continue to stay engaged on a number of these files and will continue to push the

federal government. I think you will see some additional focus on this through the Northern Strategy. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The Minister mentioned the Northern Strategy and I guess I am a little curious about where that piece of work comes in. I was of the understanding that where the environmental cleanup allocation had been put aside for the northern mines was contingent on putting together plans that everybody could agree. That is fine, we are working on that, but now we have to factor in the Northern Strategy.

It's a continual revision and re-visitation of plans and strategies here. When are we going to stop and get the job done? I would like the Minister to clarify just what is our expectation or our obligation to pin ourselves down to get a Northern Strategy before we get some of these mines cleaned up? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell.

MR. BRADEN: Well, Madam Chairperson, the Northern Strategy, I believe, will be much broader than that specific initiative. I think that we are going to have some discussion around this framework and talk about what our priorities are. I look forward to that discussion with committee.

Our sense is that this should be a comprehensive plan for dealing with Northern Canada. We think that this is one of the initiatives, potentially, that can be plugged in here.

The federal government really has the responsibility for the cleanup of these contaminated sites. There are monies identified in the budget. It is important that we keep our contaminated sites agenda on their radar. I think we are effectively doing that and that is one of the key priorities was Giant. We are in continual discussion with the federal government and I think we are certainly closer to a potential solution there than we have ever been. I wouldn't suggest that we need new strategies, new studies or waiting for new strategies and new studies in terms of cleaning up contaminated sites, especially the Giant site with the ongoing negotiations.

Things are not on hold waiting for strategies and studies. We are moving forward on these, but some of these initiatives and issues end up on parallel tracks. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Bell. General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I just want to ask a few questions around the energy side of things. I know with the department splitting up, with ENR and ITI, there is an energy component on the ITI side as well as ENR side. I know we are on ENR now, but this is all relevant, I do believe.

Under ITI, the energy component there actually looks at hydro power. Given that the Power Corporation's recent endeavours to start up the Bear and the Taltson and work they are doing there, I am just wondering if the Minister

can give us kind of an overview of what the government's role in energy and energy management is, given the fact that now we have got the Power Corporation, we have the Arctic Energy Alliance, we have an energy section in ENR, we also have an energy section in ITI. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Yes, with the split of the department, I don't know if I am over simplifying this and we are looking here to make sure that this is correct, but my understanding is really that the supply side of issues will remain the responsibility of ITI. We are developing the energy policy unit that will help to provide us some guidance in terms of the initiative and issues that we have to come to grips with there.

Much of the demand side work, and I think the work that Arctic Energy Alliance has done in the past, I believe that the funding for that Arctic Energy Alliance, the base funding that used to come from RWED will come from ENR now, to help us deal with conservation measures and demand side issues. We do have energy conservation programs that remain in ENR and will be delivered by environmental protection.

That is essentially how we have rationalized this and I can talk about some of the energy conservation programs that have been undertaken in the past and those types of programs will continue going forward. Typically it is a breakout of demand versus supply side issues between the two departments. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I just wanted to ask if the Minister, I don't think he is going to answer yes to this, but I have to ask him anyway, are we replicating anything in having the Power Corporation and what they are doing with hydro and what is ITI doing with hydro and any of the work that is done in ENR? Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. We don't believe we are. Obviously the Power Corporation has been tasked with working to develop partnerships around hydro initiatives.

The broader energy policy and the decisions about where we focus our resources and the kinds of policy lines for this government to take, will be developed through the Department of ITI. That policy work will happen and will be developed by the energy policy unit and will come up for Cabinet discussion and debate. Then we will provide direction to our vehicle, essentially the Power Corporation, to undertake some of these activities.

What you are seeing now, is a void in terms of policy work and, absent that, we have the Power Corporation expected to carry these activities out, without a broader discussion in terms of overall energy policy. I think that is the piece that is missing that we are trying to address here.

I do not believe that there is duplication and as I have said, the focus on ENR will really be on demand side conservation issues. Some of the programs we have funded in past, heat pump studies, street light conversions, green building development plans, really conservation-type issues, those will continue to be funded through ENR. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I raised some concern with this last year as well, but now that the two new departments are coming on board here, we are further splintering what resources we have and what resources we are dedicating to energy to energy management and the whole gamut that that is. I would have rather seen the energy side of things kept together, so there is more cohesiveness and more of a direction or focus on what its mandate is. Where it is going. I think one would feed off the other, in my mind, and I don't know, again why exactly they were split up like they were. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Our feeling is that if you think about oil and gas development and supply side issues and our support around those initiatives, they are much different than some of the conservation issues that we have been talking about, and we think they can be adequately differentiated and think they are better headed up by the two separate departments.

We have talked in the past and had a lot of discussion through the last budget, and I know the Member made a number of points about the Arctic Energy Alliance, there was some discussion, questioning of the efficiency of that organization. We believe that it also plays a role. We are unable, in many cases, to partner with various different agencies without a vehicle like the Arctic Energy Alliance. It is able to lever additional resources from federal government, much the same way that the CMHC funding flows to the Housing Corporation, a corporation of this government with our various federal programs that are more adequately partnered with the Arctic Energy Alliance.

We think there is a purpose and certainly a justification, for continuing to fund that agency. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Next on the list I have Mr. Zoe. General comments.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Before I ask the Minister a question, I just want to say, for the record, I echo the comments that you made yesterday, Madam Chairperson.

You eloquently spoke of this department. I echo the same comments. I would just like to say, Madam Chairperson, that the move to create this new department is essential right now. It is needed. There is a lot of development going on and increasing development going on here in the Territories, and we need a body like this to make sure that our environment and natural resources are protected.

Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to ask the Minister, in regard to the comments that he made in his opening statement yesterday. The department is going to be establishing environmental protection officers in Inuvik and the North Slave area. I am interested more in the North Slave area. Where is that position going to be located? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The position in North Slave will cover both a number of communities and the surrounding area. The communities to be covered are: Yellowknife, Detah, Ndilo and the four Dogrib communities and the position is located in Yellowknife. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The Minister also indicated that the government's strategic plan also speaks of placing a high value on wildlife. They are going to be doing a number of initiatives, and one particularly that is mentioned in the budget is the Bathurst Caribou Monitoring Program.

I understand that the elders and community members are all going to be involved for their input. I realize that the government, or that the working group, has also tabled the management plan. A lot of people still have a lot of concerns pertaining to that report which has been in the works for at least four, or more than four years maybe. The numbers for that particular herd don't jibe with a lot of people. I am just wondering how the biologists, or the people that create these numbers, determine that.

I know it is difficult because that whole area where the migration occurs, there are the four different herds or eight different herds that were mentioned in that report. They all overlap, so the number that is quoted in that report does not jibe with a lot of people, even myself. I think my colleague from Tu Nedhe mentioned that in his Member's statement today. I think that the whole area of the numbers has to be revisited. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I would agree with the Member that we certainly need to do more research, and there are some new initiatives proposed and new money requested in order to better understand the Bathurst herd.

I think the Member makes a very good point that it is both difficult to measure the size of the herd, but our main technique, I believe, if I understand the methodology, is to do calving ground surveys. We do know that the individual herds go back to specific calving grounds. As I mentioned the other day in the House, the Bathurst herd is currently calving west of Bathurst Inlet. From there we have to make a number of assumptions. As the Member has indicated, the various herds do intermingle and we are only best able to count them at the calving grounds.

We have done a number of things in the past. I think it is important to note that we take both the science-based approach to monitoring caribou herds, the populations and

the numbers, including things like collaring, but we also think it is very important to work with communities and elders who have seen fluctuations, who have seen increases and decreases over their lives in the strength of various herds.

Traditional knowledge is very important to the department and it is these two facets that we focus on. There are challenges in terms of measures, if a herd is either in decline or the numbers are determined to be low. What I would say is that we will meet with all users of the resource and all stakeholders to understand what the most effective mitigation measures might be, before we would do anything. We are not going to race out and impose some restrictions on hunting without understanding whether or not they can, in the end, be effective.

We are working very hard. We need to continue to fund this research because it is critical to people of the Northwest Territories that we adequately manage this resource, so that it is sustainable and it is there for generations to come. A key component to that is working with all of the stakeholders. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Bell. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On another issue, in regard to our environment, Madam Chairperson, yesterday some of my colleagues mentioned the clean up of various sites. I know for a fact that a number of our shorelines are littered with drums and all types of things that have to be cleaned up. I know the department is strapped for money, but if various communities approach the department to do a cleanup for even, say, a summer project for students around various shorelines, would the department entertain that type of request? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we believe there are almost in the neighbourhood of 700 known contaminated sites in the Northwest Territories. Potentially there are sites that we don't know about. This is what makes our devolution negotiations very critical and important to do right. We don't want to be strapped with contaminated sites from the past that we were unaware of and then be on the hook for the cleanup of those sites. So that is one of the principles that we're operating under when we negotiate with the federal government.

Cleanup of many of these sites ends up being the responsibility of the federal government. There are a number of different federal agencies that their mandates are interwoven, be it CEAA, DFO or DIAND, depending on the nature of the problem. I would say that we're willing to work with any community that believes that they've spotted an environmental situation for cleanup and help them better understand the jurisdiction and roles of the federal agencies responsible and then help them in pursuing funding from those agencies to see these sites cleaned up. I think it's in the best interests of the federal government to be very forthright in dealing with people and acknowledging their responsibilities and moving forward to clean them up as well.

We will certainly champion that cause and work with communities who believe that there are sites that need to be cleaned up and vigorously pursue funding from the federal government to do so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Next on the list I have Mr. Pokiak. General comments.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just three quick general comments with regard to the Member's opening statement. The first one I'd like to ask the Minister, Madam Chair, is with regard to the Wildlife Act. I know that presently the game council is working diligently with the department to try to comply with the implementation of IFA. How far has this dialogue been going on and will the changes reflect pretty quickly in this new act? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Obviously, Madam Chair, we have an obligation to ensure that the new Wildlife Act respects the provisions in land claims, including those laid out in the IFA. We are working with the Inuvialuit Game Council very closely to ensure that what we're proposing meets that test. We will continue to do so and, as I've indicated earlier, this has taken more time than we would have liked, but we believe it's important to do an adequate and thorough job and ensure that we have the support of all the land claim organizations. To date, through our work with IGC and the YMAC, we believe we're going to have a much improved Wildlife Act and continue to pursue this. As I indicated yesterday, we believe that in the fall of 2006 we'll be ready to introduce legislation in this House that will reflect all of the input from IGC and YMAC. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. The other one I'd like to talk a little bit about is the Beverage Container Recovery Program. How is the department dealing with the communities in Nunakput in regard to the collection of the beverage containers and the export of them? Has there been a cost analysis done also with regard to the export of the beverage containers? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. That work is ongoing. As I indicated earlier, the regulations are still in development and we're working to develop the details of this program. It is our intention to have the program available to be rolled out in all of the communities in the Northwest Territories, so of course that includes Holman and Sachs and Paulatuk; all of the communities of the Member's riding. There are logistical challenges, clearly. I indicated yesterday, we're not proposing to be flying the material around at huge costs. We'll wait until the time of year when it's economical to do so, whether that's by winter road or by barge. Those details are still being developed. We'll have the storage capacity in each community to hold the materials until such time as we can economically remove them from the community. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can we just add one more winter road to Paulatuk so you can take them out in the wintertime? I'm just kidding.

---Laughter

Madam Chair, the last one I'd like to talk about is the wildlife management project. I'm just wondering if there's any funding available for the Peary caribou between Holman and Banks for the continuation of monitoring the program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Member will give me a few minutes I can give him an update on the work that we've done in the past with the Peary herd. I'll just need a couple of minutes to get that detail. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair. My notes indicate that in terms of the Peary herd we think their numbers have been increasing on Banks Island. We don't have good data, I would say, on Victoria Island and the western high arctic. We know that they've been nationally classified by COSEWIC as endangered, but, most importantly, I think, in terms of management we have drafted an NWT recovery strategy. Consultation is underway on listing the Peary herd as endangered under the Species at Risk Act. Obviously once listed, a national recovery strategy is required. So there's federal species at risk legislation. Our legislation, when we bring it in, will dovetail into that, but at this point we are dealing with the federal regime. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to the Banks and Victoria Islands, has the department determined if that's the same herd? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, we believe they're both classified as Peary caribou. I can certainly provide more detail to the Member in terms of some of the research and work that we've done on that herd. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. General comments. I have a few more general comments. I'm just going to ask Mr. Pokiak if he'll take the chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask the Minister about the issue of squatters on Commissioner's land which has been brought up in the House, and I wanted to talk about that in relation to not land use or municipal planning or anything else, but just in terms of the potential for contamination. I mean, there's really nothing worse than going into a very pristine,

beautiful landscape and then finding out that somebody has lived there and left a lot of garbage or equipment or discarded material at that location. Whose responsibility is it from an environmental point of view to monitor people who are using land in that capacity, as a squatter, in terms of anything that could be environmentally injurious; waste disposal, perhaps petroleum products from diesel generators, those sorts of things? Whose responsibility and whose mandate is it to monitor that on the land? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of Commissioner's land, and I believe that was the question the Member was asking, MACA is the land manager. But obviously we have a role not only in terms of the Environmental Protection Act and our responsibilities to monitor and ensure that that act is being upheld, but also forest management and forest protection and the Wildlife Act. So MACA is the land manager. If there are violations under the Environmental Protection Act that people are aware of, they can bring them to our attention and we'll investigate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So unless somebody comes upon something on the land that may pose an environmental violation, I guess there wouldn't necessarily be any way for anybody in enforcement to hear about it. So there isn't any kind of monitoring in place at this time that would bring an infraction like that to the attention of environmental protection officials. Is that what I should understand, Mr. Chairman? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've laid out the legislative regime. We do have our officers patrol and to ensure that the acts are enforced. As I mentioned, they are able to lay charges if they come upon something they believe is a violation of one of those acts. Admittedly, it's very difficult. You have to be able to, I think, prove who, in fact, was the violator of the act. This isn't easy and I'm sure the Member can appreciate that we have limited resources for these patrols and for enforcement. So while we have this legislative regime, enforcement is not an easy task. But we are ensuring, and I've had meetings recently in the last couple of days, that we set about a plan for cooperating with other agencies who may be able to act as another set of eyes and ears in this regard to help us have a better presence. That can be MACA in some regards, but Department of Transportation officials, if we think infractions are happening on the roadways. We're also working very closely with the RCMP for things like joint check stops or joint patrols potentially this summer in a number of more remote areas. Not necessarily just campgrounds, but on Commissioner's land in general. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's one of the unique things about the Northwest Territories, I

suppose, is that there's a lot of land out there and there's a lot of privacy if you want to find a place that's off the beaten trail and out of the way. I don't think, Mr. Chairman, that we can assume that people who are here for a long time or a short time are necessarily going to be good stewards of the land they may wish to occupy in some way. I think I should say also that I think this is going to become more and more increased as people find the cost of living maybe is untenable in communities. The appeal of living someplace where you may not have amenities and services, but neither do you pay taxes and you're not governed by all kinds of bylaws that are restrictive that you would in a community setting.

I think that the option of living on the land, so to speak, is going to become more appealing all the time. I think this is going to be on the increase. So I was wondering if the Minister anticipates creating any kind of awareness around the fact that we know that people are going to be carrying out certain activities on the land, if there were any kind of guidelines or information for awareness that could be created advising people of things like caution around the use of fuels and in terms of forest protection, open fires, and the kinds of implications and some of the ramifications of mishandling of fire. Things like that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we've chosen to take a multi-pronged approach at combating this problem and the Member may be right that in fact we'll see more and more people unlawfully setting up shop on Commissioner's land and they would be squatting if they do that. MACA, as the land manager, has responsibility in this area. Obviously indigenous aboriginal people can live on the land without running afoul of the MACA management regime. They have that right to do that.

In terms of laws being broken, whether it's the EPA or Forest Protection Act or the Wildlife Act, education is very important so that people understand what their responsibilities are in this regard. But if people are going to wilfully break laws, then that comes back to our compliance regime. We do have, for instance, a 24-hour spill line if people see an environmental spill. We have a poacher line to deal with wildlife issues and a fire report line, as well. So we're trying to work very much with the residents of the Northwest Territories to help us in our compliance, because we simply don't have enough officers to patrol, as the Member has pointed out, this very wide-spread constituency that we have to look out for. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's all I have for now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I asked the Minister a number of questions yesterday during question period and used my Member's statement yesterday to talk about the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan. I just had a couple of other things I wanted to ask

the Minister in this forum. I know it falls under the ENR mandate, wildlife management. I'm just wondering if the Minister has heard from any community, and that's any community in the Northwest Territories, that is currently having any difficulty harvesting caribou. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this point, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe we're aware of any community specifically having difficulty this season in harvesting caribou compared to, say, last season, if that's the Member's question, I don't believe.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess if we were to call any community and community representatives in any community in the Northwest Territories today, I believe they wouldn't tell you that there was a caribou crisis or a lack of any caribou available for harvest. That gets back to the management plan. The numbers that are in the management plan are causing some concern amongst outfitters, amongst local hunters and even harvesters. I don't know why it was done in the way it was without a plan to monitor, to track the other herds that are in the area. It's almost impossible when you have one herd in the middle of four other herds to know which caribou is which. I asked the Minister yesterday if he'd take a look at putting this plan, I called it shelved yesterday, but just putting it aside until the department comes up with a plan to manage the entire caribou population on the mainland here. Today the department doesn't have a plan to manage the entire caribou population. It's so hard to manage one without knowing what's going on with the other ones. The calving grounds change from year to year and I know the Minister's own biologist will tell him that. The calving grounds change, the herds are changing and are interspersed. So again, where are we going with this management of one of our greatest resources? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously we do have these eight herds that occupy a very large geographic area. There is some intermingling. We do our best to count and assess the strength of the herd and do our counts at the calving grounds, as the Member has acknowledged. While those grounds may shift, they are generally in the same area. The Bathurst herd I believe is named because they calve in the area of Bathurst Inlet. So we're doing our best to understand herd dynamics. We have some of what I believe are the foremost experts in this field in the world working for RWED. We do collaring, we rely on traditional knowledge. The names of the herds and the differentiation has changed over time, as we've identified genetic differences, we believe.

But having said that, I don't think the management plan needs to be shelved. I don't think it is suggesting that the herd is in a state of crisis. I think what it is suggesting is that there's a fluctuation in the herd numbers that we need to better understand. If it was 300,000 in the past, we believe, and it's 186,000 or some odd caribou now, I think

we need to know if that's a normal or routine fluctuation in the herd strength over time or if this is the result of something else; potentially development or over hunting. All these things at this point we have not established and we would not purport to establish or impose restrictions on hunting without sitting down and talking to all of the users of the resources. I think that's the comfort I can give the Member that includes outfitters.

So step one, if we establish that because of the calving ground counts the herd is in serious decline or very low and we have to implement a management regime. Step two is to sit down with the users of the resource and the stakeholders. If we were proposing some sort of limitation on outfitters in a certain area, I'm sure they would question us about how we could prove or in fact suggest that it would make a difference, those restrictions, and would ask about our ability to differentiate between the various herds. At that point we'd have a discussion around these issues. I think much of this is in theory, at this point.

The management plan is out there. There are some suggestions potentially if we can determine that the herd is low or in decline. These are the kinds of things we need to talk about. So we're moving forward with this plan. It is a plan that was presented to government; it's not government's plan. I'd like the Members to keep that in mind. But there was involvement from a broad range of stakeholders who have responsibility for herd management, but not all the users of the resources; that would be the next step. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the concerns that's out there is if you look at the numbers of the Bathurst herd specifically, from 1986 there were 470,000 animals and in 2003 there were 186,000. You'd better stand up and pay attention; somehow 300,000 caribou disappeared. But I don't think that's the entire story because we don't have management plans for all the caribou that are there. I think what the management plan does is cause some unnecessary concern out there that the Bathurst caribou herd is in danger, when I don't believe it is. Until you count all the caribou and you have a management plan in place for all the caribou that have the habitat of the central mainland, you have no idea what... How are you ever going to dream up restrictions or bring in restrictions or even think about having restrictions until you count every single caribou from the Hudson Bay to the Mackenzie River? It's impossible. That's what I'm trying to get at and I don't know if the Minister agrees with me on this or not, but it's important to the livelihood of a number of people who live in the Northwest Territories and it's an important issue and one that I think the department has to pay close attention to.

The sooner we have a management plan for all the caribou, the better off we'll be and the more at ease people will be. Because I do believe that if you count up all the caribou, there are more caribou today, from the folks I've talked to, than there were 30 or 40 years ago. That's got to be substantiated somehow. Instead we have a management plan that looks like we've lost 300,000 caribou. Like I mentioned yesterday, any caribou taken from Yellowknife north to the Arctic Coast are deemed to be a Bathurst caribou, when in fact it might be one of three or four different herds. It's just not 100 percent

accurate until you know all the figures. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is indicating that we have a plan. I think we should be very clear that the Bathurst Caribou Management Planning Committee has a plan with some recommendations. The membership again, besides government, Dogrib Treaty 11, Yellowknives Dene, North Slave Metis, Lutselk'e Dene, Kitikmeot Inuit, Kitikmeot HTA, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, and NTI. These are the groups that combine their general knowledge, keeping in mind their mandate for management of the herd, to make these recommendations. I don't want to dismiss what they've done and shelve it or throw it away because anecdotally other people are saying that there are more caribou than we ever know what to do with and are further suggesting that if we can't count every caribou in the North then we'd better not even be talking about a management regime. I think that doesn't make any sense.

We do have management plans for other herds. We were through this yesterday, but I can go through it again. The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Plan was prepared by those two caribou management boards. There's a management plan developed for Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West and Bluenose East herds. In 1998 that plan was accepted as general direction by the YMAC, by the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board, the Sahtu Renewable Resource Board, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board. There are plans underway to determine the current status of those herds and update these plans in summer of 2005. I will acknowledge that there hasn't been a management plan yet drafted for the Ahiak herd, but this is a difficult task.

If the Member is insisting that we have counted every single animal in the Northwest Territories before we start to acknowledge that potentially there may be a problem, I don't think that makes sense. The 400,000 to 180,000 herd strength numbers, as the Member has indicated, would raise alarm bells unless that's a fluctuation that's been going on over time for centuries. We don't know that at this point. We're trying to work with people who live and have lived in this area for a long time, to assess that traditional knowledge and better understand the strength of the herd. So before we're able to do that, I don't think we can jump to any conclusions that would be well founded. So we're undertaking that activity.

I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, is there's a lot of work that needs to be done here. We think it's important work. We think it's worth funding and that's why we're proposing to come forward and are asking the Members to approve \$275,000 for additional Bathurst caribou monitoring. We wouldn't be doing that if we thought we had all the answers and we're just going to impose some restrictions on a certain range of hunters and start restricting tags. We have no plans to do that at this point. I'm not really sure where the alarm bells are ringing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. General comments. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of quick questions with respect to the Environment and Natural Resource department and the new formation of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Just in reference to some of the hunters and trappers assistance programs that will probably go through the ITI department and other trappers programs are going to be managed out of the ENR department. Without the Wildlife Act coming into legislation prior to the split of the department, what reviews or consultations with respect to the trapping industry did the department incorporate into the new model and with these reviews and consultations? Is the split of this department going to make things easier for the hunters and trappers in the NWT? Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: I guess, Mr. Chairman, I mostly have to talk about what is not in the ENR department. If you will allow me to do that and to go back into some of the programs available in ITI, we can do that.

The support for the traditional economy is in ITI and we have chosen, when splitting the department, to make that distinction, because we thought it was very important to focus on this activity as a legitimate activity, in terms of economic development.

We believe that it can be a sustainable economic development and can help to provide for many people who want to continue to live a traditional lifestyle. We were afraid that if it was housed with other wildlife issues it would simply be characterized or treated as a subsidy that is nice to have. We believe that it is not that. We are trying to promote the proliferation of the traditional economy and ensure that people are more able to sustain themselves through these programs.

We do have support for trappers in ITI. I think the Member is aware of our grubstake program (sic) to get people started at the beginning of the year. I think the Member is also aware of our prime fur bonus, which is paid on good quality furs coming forward. We also help trappers get their furs to market and provide them advances on that fur. We undertake a lot of education initiatives in the regions. Our renewable resource officers accept and collect the furs. These activities are housed now in ITI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the Wildlife Act that is probably going to be coming around pretty soon, what is the Minister's opinion on... You know, this is ongoing for 10 plus years, the development of the Wildlife Act and the amendments and the revisions and all this kind of stuff. How is this going to affect the progress toward the Wildlife Act coming into legislation? Is it going to slow it down because there is going to have to be some amendments that are going to have to be incorporated into the new Wildlife Act to accommodate the ENR and ITI initiatives? How is that going to affect the whole development process of the Wildlife Act?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The programs aren't tied to the act. We don't believe it has any effect on the timing of the drafting of this legislation. What has had an effect is our need to adequately consult with Land Claimant organizations. The Chairman, earlier had questions about YMAC and IGC involvement. It is important for us to take into consideration the suggestions coming forward from these organizations and other land claimant organizations and work very closely with them, to make sure that the act that we are proposing doesn't run afoul of land claim provisions and to have a joint management approach. That really is what has taken the time. We don't believe the split of the department will affect the drafting of the legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that reassurance, because it has been a long time in the works to just develop that legislation.

With the formation of the new Environment and Natural Resources department, that will be an amendment that would have to be required in the Wildlife Act to accommodate the environment and the natural resources section of this split, not so much the ITI portion of it. Have those been considered?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Can I ask Members to listen to what is going on here? Thank you, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the good chairmanship.

The issue that the Member is referring to would be simply limited to where in past it might have referred to RWED in the legislation, it would now refer to ENR. Not a significant change and we have not finalized the drafting of this. I don't really think that it will cause any sort of delay. We still have the Environmental Protection Act, the Forrester Management Act, the Forest Protection Act, they just now, are the mandate of ENR as opposed to RWED. It really hasn't had any effect on those pieces of legislation; I don't think it will have any effect on the Wildlife Act. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just getting back to the hunters and the trappers in the NWT and with the new Wildlife Act coming into effect, hopefully in the next year or so and with changes to that. Would this split in the department allow the hunters and trappers to do some window shopping when it comes to trapping programs; fur programs, trapping assistance, compensation for cabins that have been lost in forest fires? Is this going to make it even easier for them to deal with the government? In a lot of cases a lot of hunters and trappers really have a limited ability to read and write. How are the new departments going to help the hunters and trappers deal more effectively with government programs?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: The split shouldn't have a bearing on the level of service that the hunters and trappers are receiving. It will be the renewable resource officers, under the new department that will be delivering the programming. Save for the one program, which the Member referred to, in terms of compensation due to fire or other natural disasters for hunters and trappers. That program related to fire would come under ENR. The other programs that the Member was referring to come under ITI and would be administered by a renewable resource officer.

We are vastly improving this program and have had a lot of positive response from hunters and trappers over the past few years. We have put some resources and some effort into this area and we will continue to do so. We think it is a priority. I know the Member is aware that the support for traditional economy and the diversification for the economy was one of the main tenants of our strategic plan. We think it is of critical importance to support this industry.

I have had a number of discussions with the federal Environment Minister. We were successful in getting some additional funding this year, federal funding, put toward the Vegreville facility, which does humane trapping research and I indicated the importance of that in keeping the agreements that we have with the EU open. I think the premise that we have arrived at, is that the traditional economy is very much a part of the legitimate economy of the Northwest Territories. It shouldn't be pushed off to the side and characterized as something different, tucked away in a wildlife section. This really is about economic development. We want to make sure it gets the focus and support it deserves and that is in fact why it is housed in ITI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we are talking about program delivery, are the renewable resource officers that are now in the regions and the communities going to be the same people who are going to be manage the ENR aspects of the whole project?

I just don't see the point in splitting the department up. In the regions you are still going to have just a sole source, one point of contact for both departments through renewable resource officers. How does that make it a little more visibly split, for people who are dealing with the GNWT?

A lot of people have issues with the renewable resource officers in their area. If they go to that same officer with an issue that has something to do with the environment or natural resources, I think they will probably get the same level of feedback that they currently are not getting. What is the Minister's opinion on that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't believe that the trappers will notice a negative impact on the level of service delivery. If anything, we think the heightened focus will stand these programs in good stead when it comes time to budget negotiations and business planning time. We think the potential for

additional resources is heightened by the fact that there will be additional focus on this segment.

The Member I think is asking the question, since you've divided the department will it be the RROs delivering the programs from two separate departments. We will be able to do that and we are very cognizant of not wanting to disrupt service delivery in regions and not having to have people learn all over again where they go with their furs and who they talk to about trading in their traps and these kinds of things.

It will be the same people, but there will be protocol arrangements if there is a program that an RRO is in charge of delivering for ENR, as opposed to the bulk of them with ITI, then we will have a protocol arrangement, much the same way we do with -- the Member will be familiar with the Business Credit Corporation -- contracting RWED for service delivery in a region. We have a number of protocol arrangements.

There was no other way to do this, other than add a lot of administrative capacity and create redundancies all over the place, which would have been very, very expensive if we had to add additional staff to just deliver one or two programs in a region. It made much more sense, we believe, to have some sharing of resources between the two departments and that is why we set up these protocol arrangements and agreements.

If there are issues, where the Member believes, from hearing from his constituents, that service has not been adequate in a region, that is something to bring to our attention, so that we can in fact deal with it and ensure that hunters and trappers are getting the level of service they are entitled to, and are comfortable with the support the department is providing, from both our current department and the department going forward.

I think it is important that we recognize the importance of hunting and trapping. We are, and do intend to be, very client focussed. This is a department that has spread and has most of its resources on the ground in regions, so we think we are effectively able to deliver programming. But where we can improve, we certainly aim to do that and I hope the Member will work with us in bringing some of these issues to our attention. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. General comments. Next I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the new positions that were created with both ITI and ENR, I think there were 23 new positions. How many of the 23 positions actually went out to an open competition and weren't excluded to only indeterminate employees? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was the senior management positions that were kept as indeterminate and we went internally first, to try to fill those. I'm not sure if all those positions have in fact been filled internally. The ones that aren't will go to an external process and in terms of what numbers that constitutes between ITI and ENR, the total number is 23, as the Member noted. I don't have the information here readily in front of me, in terms of which positions.

I guess I could go through the positions and we could make a determination on each position, position by position, as to whether that is a senior management position, whether it went to internal competition. I don't know that we have the information to tell us if in fact that has been filled or if we have had to go to plan B.

Is that the level of detail the Member is looking for? If it is, I can certainly provide it.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What I am really looking for is a rationale on why the decision was made to go indeterminate only, on the senior management positions in both ITI and ENR. From strictly a transparency and an accountability and an openness, and you name it, you can say it here, I believe the job competition should have went out and been open to anybody, not just indeterminate employees. I am just looking for a rationale, which is fine. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: The quick answer is we believe that there are a number of competent people in the regions and we are mostly talking about the superintendents in the regions, who are probably more qualified or better qualified for these positions in many instances, because they have been through and understand the current management regime in RWED. Obviously, where that wouldn't be the case, we would then not have a successful internal applicant and go to an external competition. Where we don't have to spend money on an external competition, because we feel that the best candidate is internal, we would go with that internal candidate. That has been the aim here.

We think that this is a good opportunity for some of our current staff. I have traveled extensively in the regions and met with our regional staff and I am certainly convinced that there are some very, very competent people on the ground. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay. Thank you. General comments, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a comment and a question about the point that is being raised here. That has to do with the hiring of these new positions being done internally and open only to indeterminate positions. The Minister just indicated that that only applies to senior management, but even with that I don't really understand why that is the situation.

One would think that when there are openings like this, those that are within the system probably have had a heads-up, because they are familiar with the department, they are well known in the department and if they are good at what they do, they are probably going to get a pretty good response throughout the selection process, right from the beginning at the screening stage to the interview process and in terms of getting references from people that they are known to already. The people inside the system already have a heads-up or leg-up, so I don't understand why, because if this were wide open, preference would have been given to those who are

already a long-term northern employee, affirmative action candidate and such.

I would like to know, for these new positions, what would have been a pool of people that would have been eligible to apply then, because it was for the senior management positions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell, sorry.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to confirm this, but I believe the senior management positions, primarily the superintendent positions, the competitions were first internal GNWT. Obviously, the next step after that is if you don't have qualified people, then you go to a full-blown competition and advertise north and south. It is more time consuming and costs more money.

As the Member has indicated, we do believe that much of the expertise does reside in the department. Potentially people in an open job competition, we think, many of these employees would have won the competition at any rate. We have had a difficult time staffing many of our positions in the department. There are currently a number of unstaffed positions. It is very difficult to fill positions. We wanted to make sure that there was a minimum of service disruption and we were able to roll this out effectively as of April 1st. That really was our motivation in this regard. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask where the hiring process is at? Is the department hiring internally already? Or is all this in a plan, subject to approval in this House? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe we have advertised now and the competitions close shortly -- I don't have the exact dates -- and then we would begin the screening process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: So how could we be advertising for positions, if we haven't approved a budget? I guess it really doesn't matter, because it is assumed that it is going to be passed.

Mr. Chairman, another point about this closed competition is the fact that, from my past experiences or information that I have had, with respect to RWED, it is one of the departments with less representation by affirmative action groups in senior management, in terms of aboriginal employees in the senior management as well as women in management. One of the concerns of having the senior management competition open only internally is that the pool of people already have under-representation of aboriginal employees, as well as women in management. It would have a high possibility of perpetuating that under-representation. Could I ask the Minister whether he has given any thought to that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Braden. I'm sorry, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the first comment I wanted to respond to is we're not making the assumption that this is a fait accompli these jobs start April 1st; that's when the funding would be approved for these positions. Obviously, we have to advertise and go through the competition process prior to April 1st in order to staff positions on April 1st.

The other point that I would make is that, even in these internal competitions in government, the affirmative action policy of the government still applies. So candidates who are a higher priority under affirmative action would have an advantage in this hiring process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Taking that one step forward, Mr. Chairman, would the Minister not agree that if you are choosing a successful candidate from a pool that already begins with under-representation, even if everybody there applied, you are still operating with a disadvantaged pool from which to consider affirmative action candidates, whether they are aboriginal employees or women in senior management or long-term PY or P2 candidates. The logic would dictate that that's what's going to happen and that will be one of the downsides of opening these positions internally only. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, many departments of the government are challenged and do need to get their representation of minorities increased and make sure that those who are under-represented are more adequately represented. RWED is one of the departments where the regional staff is very well-equipped and very representative. This is something that we've been working very hard toward.

So, on that premise, I think we have a lot of qualified candidates in the regions who are, in fact, aboriginal and would be probably best qualified for some of these positions. I would say that the larger issue is twofold: We have to take very seriously our hiring practices and look to address any issues which are systemically discriminating against adequate representation; at the same time, we must also be working with people internally in our workforce to ensure they have the training to be promoted.

I think we've found that our affirmative action numbers are certainly better in the lower levels than they are in senior management. I think we need to certainly work with people who are potential candidates for senior management to get them the training and skill development to move up the ladder, and that is one of the approaches that we've taken. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to state for the record that I do not agree with the policy of looking at senior management and hiring internally, but I think that's already been registered and I guess the process is already on the way and it's going to be concluded that way. So I'll have to leave it at that.

Having said that, I used to sit on the Governance and Economic Development committee and I do recall that the statistical information that we got in terms of representation in senior management of affirmative action employees showed they were under-represented. But I'm willing to accept that these stats might have changed over the last two or three years. Could I get the Minister to make a commitment to provide me with the information on what the ratio of affirmative action candidates or employees is, in terms of their representation of the total employee pool? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm certainly prepared to provide the Member with a comprehensive report on our overall employment numbers, broken out by region. It will delineate between headquarters and the regions as well. But I can tell the Member that in the new ENR, we are currently, I believe, sitting at 68 percent affirmative action employees. So we feel that that is a very good number. I think it's 161 of 236 employees in ENR are affirmative action employees, but I'll provide a more comprehensive report for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, at least two other Members have brought to the floor this aspect of hiring and the practice where the new departments here are seeking to staff new superintendents initially, and this is my understanding, by only casting the net among our indeterminate employees. The situation has been reflected by my colleagues, but I do want to add my voice to this, Mr. Chairman, just to make sure that this department and others know that, like Ms. Lee, I agree that we are inappropriately restricting at least our initial search to only indeterminate employees.

One thing that we maybe aren't appreciating well enough here is that the competitive environment for good, qualified people is extremely vigorous in the Northwest Territories. An employee who may be interested in looking elsewhere is going to have lots of temptation out there every day for other places to go to work; other levels of government. Certainly, industry is offering some pretty tempting employment packages.

We know we need to build our own workforce, especially here in this case when we're rebuilding these departments, and yet we are using an older approach to hiring to get people into these positions. I think we're leaving ourselves exposed to other employers. There are employees within our grasp, those term and casual employees who cannot apply for these positions just may get picked off and attracted elsewhere.

So, Mr. Chairman, we're not being as aggressive, as inclusive and as open as we should be to building our workforce. Certainly, where there may be those casual or term employees who are in a department because they want to be there and who are hoping for indeterminate jobs. We're cutting them out of the loop, if you will.

So I don't know if I've brought anything new to the floor, Mr. Chairman, but I at least wanted to add my voice to this policy which, I think, is not at all appropriate for our times or our situation, and we should open up hiring practices to

every possible candidate that we can. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Bell, would you like to comment?

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you. Again, I appreciate the Member's point. He is echoing the concern of several other Members here in the House. I certainly hear them. I guess, to put it in context, I want to make sure that people understand that we're talking about six of the 23 total positions are gone to internal competition first. If there aren't suitable internal candidates, we will cast the net much more broadly and go north and south.

I guess we felt that it was most likely that these senior management positions were people who would be found internally. That's been our experience. Now, it does happen that we find people from other jurisdictions or from the private sector but, for the most part, we feel that when filling senior management positions, we tend to do that. So the successful candidates tend to be from within. Again, I take the Member's point and we'd just like to reinforce that we are talking about six of the 23 competitions being internal. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: That's all from me on this on general comments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Next, for general comments, I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I don't have a general comment, but I just have a follow-up question to what I had asked the Minister earlier, in terms of the statistics for affirmative action employee ratios in the department. I do accept and understand that ENR, as a wing of RWED, would have a higher-than-average representation by aboriginal employees in that section as a whole. The question that I was getting at was on the senior management of the department, which I think would show different stats. I would like to know aboriginal representation in senior management of ENR currently, as well as the ratio of women in senior management of ENR. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm certainly not in any position to dispute the Member's assertion that maybe our numbers wouldn't be as good in those categories. She may, in fact, be entirely correct, but what I've committed to do is come back with a comprehensive report to the Member; in fact, I will provide it to all Members. That will be broken down by category. I do have, as I've indicated, our numbers overall at 68 percent affirmative action.

I can't provide immediately the breakdown, but I will commit to provide it for her. I think it does warrant a discussion if our numbers aren't as good in senior management for affirmative action candidates, and we'd be prepared to discuss that and talk about an approach that might deal with some of these issues going forward. So we can certainly have that discussion with the committee, if that is what the numbers bear out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one more clarification on top of that. Could I have the stats that I had asked for, for the last three fiscal years, so that we are very clear about what time frame we are trying to get information from? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will provide the information for the Department of RWED for three years going back and also the split between ENR and ITI, so the Member can have a better understanding of how this will play out in the two new departments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee. Thank you. General comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): General comments on ENR, I have Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of follow-up questions. We talked quite extensively about the hiring practice. The Minister, a little bit earlier, said that we have a 68 percent affirmative action ratio. Does that go back a few years? Are we looking forward to increase that number? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. This information I am providing is current; 68 percent is what we've determined for ENR. I don't have the ITI information here in front of me but, if Members are interested, I can provide that as well. I've already indicated to Ms. Lee that we would make that information available for the entire RWED department and then also show the breakout. The 68 percent I'm quoting is as of right now, or the last time we updated this information, which would have been very recently; 68 percent affirmative action. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister indicate how many of these people were hired from the Renewable Resource Technology Program that they have ongoing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No, Madam Chair, I can't do that, but I can certainly get that information. We'll look at that program and assess the number of graduates we have. I believe we should be able to track that and give the Member some information as to how successful those grads have been in gaining employment with the department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It will be good to get that information. Will it be considered, as far as the hiring practice for the new graduates coming along? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Most of the people in that program, I understand, end up as renewable resources officers for the department. I think that's the point the Member is trying to make. We do believe it makes them uniquely qualified for those positions. So, of course, again, they would have an advantage over somebody who didn't have that training for those types of positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one last question, Madam Chair. Earlier, the Minister talked about the 24-hour spill line. I'd like to ask the Minister, when entrenched on private land, who takes the responsibility with regard to emergency oil spills? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, I just want to clarify. Did the Member say on private land?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Yes, he did. Thank you, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. On private land, the land owner would be responsible for dealing with that spill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell, and thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Any further general comments on Environment and Natural Resources? Okay. I'll ask you please, if you would turn in your main estimates book to page 12-13, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$8.983. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Madam Chair, this is a new department. With regard to communications, how is the department going to sell itself to the general public? We've changed the name and functions and separated them. How is the department going to do that for the general public? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. As Members know, we've shared and had this discussion with the committee, the RWED restructuring plan has a communications strategy attached. We have, I believe, provided that to committee and had a good deal of discussion around that. There are a whole range of aspects to the communication plan and we can talk about that or I can just provide the Member with the communication plan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$8.983 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay, thank you. At this time, we're going to take a break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. We are on Environment and Natural Resources. We just concluded page 12-13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$40,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Information item, corporate management, active positions. On 12-17, a continuation of active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Page 12-19, environment, operations expenditure summary, \$2.292 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Environment, grants and contributions, contributions, \$460,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Environment, active positions, pages 12-22 and 12-23 as an information item.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I am now on page 12-25. Forest management, operations expenditure summary, \$29.098 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I wish the Cabinet was this agreeable in question period. Page 12-27, forest management, grants and contributions, grants, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Total grants and contributions, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Information item, forest management, active positions on pages 12-28 and 12-29.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Wildlife management, operations expenditure summary, \$11.742 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Wildlife management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$280,000 on page 12-33.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Information item on pages 12-34 and 12-35, wildlife management, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Information item, lease commitments - infrastructure on page 12-36.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Information item on page 12-37, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): On pages 12-38 and 12-39 and 12-40, for a total of \$3.558 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Please go back to the beginning. Department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$52.115 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Active positions by region, 12-8 and 12-9. By region and community allocation. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Revenue summary on page 12-10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Volume II, under ENR, page 10-4, corporate management, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$229,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Page 10-5, forest management, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$8.489 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): On pages 10-6 and 10-7, infrastructure acquisition plan, forest management, tangible capital assets, \$945,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Page 10-8, wildlife management, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$3.49 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): On page 10-9, infrastructure acquisition plan, wildlife management, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$140,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Total department, \$1.085 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Infrastructure investment summary on page 10-3, total net book value and work in progress, \$12.208 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Does committee agree that concludes the consideration of Environment and Natural Resources main estimates?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bell, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Kennedy. Thank you.

Does committee agree we will proceed now with Education, Culture and Employment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I will ask Mr. Dent, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, if he would please provide his opening remarks on Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The 2005-2006 Main Estimates we bring forward today for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment total over \$245 million. Priorities include addressing additional requirements for kindergarten to Grade 12 student assessment, new and expanded high school curriculum, enhanced support to the arts, and building capacity to support resource development activities across the NWT.

The main estimates also include ongoing funding for language nests and Aurora College's Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Program. Funding for these activities were initially approved during the 2004-05 fiscal year. In other areas, it responds to the government's need to reduce spending. Most significantly, the improved economic status of many northerners has allowed the government to decrease the budgeted requirements for income security.

The net effect of these changes is a one percent decrease in the department's main estimates over what was budgeted last year. I would like to highlight a few key activities of the department.

First, within the education and culture activity of the department, we propose to spend \$136.1 million on programs and services to residents of the NWT. Spending in this area includes monies for early childhood development programs, schools, as well as cultural and heritage programs.

For 2005-06, we plan to spend \$4.8 million on early childhood development activities. These activities will add to the early learning provided at home to help provide children with a healthy start in life and give them the learning tools they need to succeed in school and beyond.

As Members are aware, in 2004-05 the department received supplementary funding for language nests. The 2005-2006 Main Estimates include \$727,000 to continue this initiative.

On October 5, 2004, the Government of Canada committed to develop a national system of regulated early learning and childcare programs. Canada has suggested that programming should be based on principles of

quality, universality, accessibility and development. The federal government's plan supports the department's current direction and activities in the early childhood development sector. By linking the use of available federal funding and GNWT monies, we can build a stronger system of early childhood programs.

Over the past decade, we have made steady progress in strengthening the school system. Increased access to high school programs in NWT communities has resulted in more aboriginal graduates from smaller communities. We know the link between educational achievement and employment is very high. We must ensure student success continues to improve.

For the 2005-06 fiscal year, the department is budgeting nearly \$125 million to support our schools. Most of this money will go directly to education authorities at the regional and community level.

- The main estimates for the new fiscal year include an additional \$742,000 to assist educators in monitoring and assessing student achievement. This will cover the costs of implementing the Alberta achievement tests at grades 3, 6 and 9, as well as the costs for the use of Grade 12 exams.
- As well, \$480,000 will be spent to develop new high school courses to prepare students for trades and other skilled occupations. These courses will be in addition to the existing courses that prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. The introduction of new high school English language arts and science curricula, under the western and northern Canada protocol, is also budgeted for in 2005-06.

The introduction of the aboriginal language and cultural-based education directive in September 2004 reaffirmed our commitment to the languages and cultures of aboriginal people in the NWT. The directive promotes the integration of language and culture throughout K to 12 programs as a basis for culturally appropriate learning and provides direction to education authorities with respect to the \$6.7 million contributed annually to support aboriginal language and culture programs.

This government is also committed to supporting students who choose to be educated in the French language.

- During 2005-06 the department plans to spend \$1.8 million on French first language education.
- The \$242,000 received in supplementary funding during 2004-05 for the administration of the Commission Scolaire Francophone de Division has been added to this budget.
- Canadian Heritage is also expected to continue its support for French language instruction in NWT schools with an \$868,000 contribution.

During 2005-06 we will continue to follow up on recommendations made in the last Assembly regarding official languages. We have made considerable progress during the past year with the establishment of the language boards, adjustments to school funding and increased coordination of efforts. We will continue this process with the establishment of an official languages division reporting to the deputy minister. This division will

become a single point of contact and strengthen the government's activities associated with official languages.

We propose to spend \$2.2 million on official languages activities in fiscal year 2005-06. Most of this funding will be used to support the plans and activities of the official languages communities. As well, we are currently working with the language communities to prepare for a negotiation with the Government of Canada to renew the Cooperation Agreement on French and Aboriginal Languages. The current agreement is expiring at the end of March and we have contacted Canada with the intention of initiating negotiations in the immediate future.

A strong and vibrant arts sector is integral to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the residents of the NWT. During the current fiscal year, Education, Culture and Employment, through the NWT Arts Council, provided funds for 62 projects to enhance the arts across the NWT. Another 14 projects were funded under the Performing Arts Contribution Program. In 2005-06, the department plans to increase funding to this important sector by \$75,000. This amount will be added to the \$50,000 reallocated to the arts in 2004-05, bringing the total increase to the Arts Council annual budget to \$265,000 over the last three years.

As land activity associated with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and other resource development escalates, it is critical that we act to protect and preserve heritage sites and resources in the NWT. The 2005-06 Main Estimates includes \$200,000 for the additional staff and resources required to meet our obligations for heritage resource management under the Historical Resources Act.

Within the advanced education and careers activity, the department proposes to spend \$41 million. Programs and services in this area provide northerners with access to career development, skills training and post-secondary education needed to successfully participate in our expanding economy.

The GNWT, the Government of Canada, aboriginal governments, Aurora College and industry are working together to help northerners access the training required to qualify for careers in our growing economy. Last year, a major collaborative effort was announced. The four-year Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership, or ASEP, projects in support of the oil and gas sector and the mining sector will train nearly 800 northerners for jobs in these two important sectors. The federal government contributed nearly \$24.8 million to these efforts while the GNWT, aboriginal governments and industry pledged \$28.4 million of in-kind contributions and support from existing budgets.

To support this initiative, the department proposes to fund \$3.8 million from its existing program to support ASEP projects. As well, it will fund an ASEP coordinator position in 2005-06 to work closely with its partners to plan and deliver critical training under the ASEP projects.

The rapid expansion of resource development in the NWT has increased the demand for certified tradespersons. While the number of NWT apprentices has increased by nearly 20 percent over the past four years, we still need more trained northern tradespersons. With this goal in mind, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will spend \$480,000 more of its training budget on apprenticeship activities in the 2005-06 year.

The 2005-2006 Main Estimates proposes to consolidate labour functions currently located in the Department of Justice with the employment functions located in Education, Culture and Employment. This will increase the coordination of labour and employment activities to provide better support to northern workers. Funding for labour functions have been restated within the department budget and operational responsibility will be transferred on April 1st.

During the next year, we plan to support our northern college system with an expenditure of \$26.4 million. This year's main estimates include an ongoing \$662,000 investment to implement a bachelor's degree program for nurses. This will help to ensure that we continue to increase the supply of northern trained nurses to serve in our communities. A further \$110,000 is being added to the college's budget to support the Aurora Research Institute's responsibilities for the licensing of research activities. Overall research related to the proposed Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline project has increased demands on the licensing processes.

Madam Chair, within the new income security activity, the department proposes to spend \$61.4 million during fiscal year 2005-06. Spending in this area includes monies for the Student Financial Assistant Program, Income Support and public housing subsidy programs.

In our government's strategic plan, we stated that improving our income security system is critical. With limited resources, we need to make sure those in the greatest need receive support and we must work to support the self-reliance of all northerners.

In 2005-06, we will introduce a consistent policy framework for the GNWT's income security programs and work closely with the NWT Housing Corporation to consolidate the \$31 million currently expended for public housing subsidies within the department's budget. This action is the beginning of a process that can be expected to take a few years but should result in a simplified system that is easier to understand and is targeted to support those in greatest need.

As part of the overall GNWT efforts to restrain spending, the department plans to make some changes to current programs. Changes include the reduction of the programs to pay special additional post-secondary remissible loans to students in health and social work programs. This change will reduce costs by about \$334,000 annually in the long term and will only be applied to remissible loans received beginning in the 2005-06 fiscal year. It is important to note students in these programs will continue to receive all other benefits of the Student Financial Assistance Program.

Other income support reductions shown in this budget reflect lower expenditure requirements resulting from the buoyant NWT economy. The current level of support provided to clients will not be reduced.

Finally, the departmental business plan is supported by a request for continued investment in suitable education facilities over the plan period. With more than 65 educational facilities across the NWT, a number of which are nearing the end of their operational life, it is not surprising that we will need to make significant investments in educational facilities, even in this period of fiscal restraint.

Madam Chair, we are proposing to spend \$80 million over the next three years on capital infrastructure. Most of this is for schools in Tulita, Inuvik, Fort Good Hope, Gameti, Yellowknife and Ndilo. These projects will address some of the most pressing needs and are part of a long-term plan to modernize our educational facilities. Thank you. That concludes my opening comments.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Now for the Standing Committee on Social Programs review of the main estimates on Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Pokiak, please proceed.

MR. POKIAK: The Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the Minister and his officials on January 17, 2005, to review the draft main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The committee made note of \$245.003 million in spending related to operations and \$18.19 million to be spent on capital projects.

Major changes since the last year's main estimates are related to the transfer of funding for social housing subsidies from the NWT Housing Corporation in the amount of \$30.95 million and \$610,000 related to the transfer of labour programs from the Department of Justice.

A wide-ranging discussion was held on a number of issues, which are summarized in this report.

Reform To Income Security Programs

One of the major government initiatives underway in this Assembly is the reform of income security programs. As it stands right now, there are 17 income security programs, administered by seven separate departments who use four different delivery systems. It is obvious that there needs to be a rationalization of these programs and delivery systems to ensure fairness, equity and ease of access for those people who require income security programs.

This process is just beginning, and as such the committee is reluctant to comment until such time as the department has had time to formulate a course of action, Madam Chair. Comments on the work accomplished thus far and suggestions on possible future directions have been forwarded to the Minister under separate cover.

The committee looks forward to working with the Minister over the life of this Assembly to overhaul income security programs and delivery mechanisms to ensure these programs meet the needs of northerners and are delivered in a fair and equitable manner.

Youth Employment, Apprenticeship And Training On-The-Job Programs

Members of the committee are disappointed that the Youth Employment Program, which provided subsidies to employers to hire young people to give them work experience, has been reduced by \$480,000 over what was available in 2004-05. This means there is only \$300,000 left to subsidize employers willing to give youth work experience.

In light of the fact that the Northwest Territories economy is outperforming every other jurisdiction in Canada, the committee is forced to admit there is not as much need for

a targeted program designed to give young people their first job experiences. However, there is a hidden cost to eliminating the Youth Employment Program in that aboriginal organizations and community government will lose access to this source of funding to hire people to deliver programming and services.

This is where committee's concerns lay and where discussion during the main estimates review on whether or not to reinstate full funding to the Youth Employment Program will focus.

Mr. Chair, Members were pleased to see that the Training on the Job, TOJ, and Apprenticeship Training on the Job, ATOJ, were both spared cuts though this latest round of government belt-tightening. It should be noted that these two programs are different in that they actually ensure that a person has marketable skills in a trade or occupation upon completion of a training program. This program provides a subsidy to employers to hire trainees or apprenticeships and recognizes there is a cost to training skilled employees.

With the increased need for trades people and other skilled employees as a result of increased activity in the non-renewable resource sector, committee cannot condone or support the erosion of training programs for northerners that can lead to long-term meaningful employment.

Committee was pleased to note that an additional \$480,000 was added to the Apprenticeship Training on the Job Program as a result of our discussion with the Minister.

The Northwest Territories has the best apprenticeship program in Canada, from both the employers' and apprentices' perspectives. The standing committee is pleased that this statement will remain true for 2005-06.

Social Worker Program At Aurora College

Members of the standing committee are concerned with the difficulties Aurora College has had in attracting students to the Social Work Program. There seems to be a lack of understanding as to the root cause of the lack of uptake by students.

There were only six applicants for the first year of the Social Work Program last year, despite Aurora College heavily advertising the program prior to the start of the 2004-05 academic year. It makes no economic sense to run a program with only six students.

The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College must, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services and the territorial Association of Social Workers, be more proactive in trying to figure out why the Social Work Program is not operating at capacity.

The need and ability of the health and social services system to hire all graduates clearly exists. We need to address the problem and move on.

Student Residence At Aurora College In Inuvik

The committee has been made aware of the need for a dedicated singles' student residence in Inuvik. The current model of modified townhouses in the Blueberry

Patch, with locks on the individual bedroom doors, is not acceptable as a long-term solution.

Members of the committee have been told of students who have dropped out of school because of problems with the roommates with whom they were put in the Blueberry Patch townhouses, or because of the lack of available singles' housing in Inuvik.

The situation for singles accommodations, or for any accommodations for that matter, will only get worse in Inuvik as pipeline development and oil and gas exploration continues.

The committee endorses single student housing for the Inuvik college campus and would be interested in examining the business case outlining the need and costs of such a facility.

Student Success Centres At Aurora College Campuses

As part of the targeted cost-reduction exercise, Aurora College was expected to bear its share of the cuts. The decision was made by the college to eliminate the funding associated with the Student Success Centres at each of the three campuses of Aurora College. The college believed this cut would have the least impact on the programs and services that the college offers.

The Members see the need for the Student Success Centres as the support they offer students can mean the difference between success and failure.

Considering the college's total budget of approximately \$25 million and the reduction of \$150,000 that will be achieved by closing the centres, Members see no reason that other cost efficiencies could not be realized over the course of the year that will allow the college to continue funding the Student Success Centres.

Aurora College is strongly encouraged to fund the Student Success Centres from within their existing expropriation. Mr. Chair, with your permission, I would like to turn it over to Mr. Braden. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Braden.

Volume Of Income Support Cases In Yellowknife

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To continue on with the report of the Standing Committee on Social Programs in the area of the volume of income support cases in Yellowknife.

The majority of MLAs' time working on constituency issues is spent in helping people access programs like Income Support. Members have heard of delays in accessing income support in Yellowknife because of the workload in the Yellowknife income support office.

In discussions with the Minister, it became apparent that it was not a matter of an increased number of persons applying for income support, but rather a matter of the complexity of the cases of the persons applying for income support.

The more complex the case, the more time an income support worker must spend in dealing with the file. This makes sense to Members, given Yellowknife's tendency

to be a magnet community for NWT residents with health or social problems.

The Yellowknife income support office is presently conducting a review of its operations, and the standing committee would appreciate being made aware of its findings and recommendations prior to consideration of the business plans in September of 2005.

Aurora College Lease At The Northern United Place In Yellowknife

With the lease set to expire in August of 2007, there is a need to determine the adequacy of the Northern United Place as the home of Aurora College in Yellowknife. The department is presently reviewing its options and will have a report on Aurora College operations in Yellowknife ready in the spring of 2005.

Members of the committee would appreciate being briefed on this report when it is available.

The committee also believes that it is time to examine the role of Aurora College in northern society and hopes that the strategic planning exercise that is underway will take this into consideration.

Committee members look forward to further discussions on future directions of the Aurora College.

Teacher Education Program (TEP) Hiring

Members of the committee have heard complaints from constituents who have graduated from the TEP program or from the University of Saskatchewan and have been unable to secure meaningful employment as teachers upon their return to the Northwest Territories.

Committee members are aware that some education authorities refuse to consider hiring any graduates from the TEP program, and that other school boards have hired southern students straight out of university over graduates of the TEP program and the University of Saskatchewan.

This raises questions of whether there is a bias against graduates of our TEP program and whether the program is adequate.

Members understand that education authorities and boards have some measure of autonomy in deciding which teachers they should hire, but strongly believe that this "autonomy" must be tempered by adherence to their funding partner's policies and procedures.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs would welcome further information from graduates of the Teacher Education Program on their successes and failures in getting a teaching position.

The committee will also be following up with the department and the district and local education authorities, including the Yellowknife boards, to try to determine whether there are any systemic barriers to hiring the graduates of the Teacher Education Program to teach and to hopefully find some sort of resolution.

We strongly encourage all education authorities in the NWT to hire graduates of the TEP program to ensure that northerners are teaching northerners and to reduce teacher turnover.

Métis And The University College Entrance Program (UCEP)

Members of the standing committee remain concerned that Métis are not eligible for funding under this program. It is understood by the committee that this is a federal program administered by the GNWT on their behalf and that it is the federal government that determines the eligibility requirements.

The committee agrees that returning the program to the federal government is not a viable option, as it is doubtful that the program would continue without the GNWT's participation. At least in its present form, some treaty beneficiaries have access and can benefit from the program. It should be noted that the present funding is insufficient to meet the demand from qualified applicants.

Métis rights have been recognized in the Northwest Territories, and the federal government has also acknowledged their rights. What the federal government seems reluctant to do is acknowledge that Métis people should be eligible for the same or similar programs as treaty Indians.

The Premier and all government Ministers are encouraged to raise this issue with all of their federal counterparts to ensure that Métis aboriginal rights are enhanced rather than ignored.

Student Financial Assistance Remission Rates

The Standing Committee on Social Programs noted that the department has shown a steady increase in the amount of money booked for student loans that are forgiven.

This is a good news story as it means more northerners are returning or choosing to stay in the North once they have completed their post-secondary studies.

The committee will be watching to see if the department's projections bear out.

Full-Time Kindergarten In The Northwest Territories

There is more and more evidence that children enrolled in quality early childhood education programs do better in their future schooling. Those education authorities that have decided to fund full-time kindergarten out of their existing appropriation, have shown marked improvement in their students' academic performance in future years.

The committee supports this approach and believes it would be a strategic investment on the part of this government to fund educational authorities to deliver full-time kindergarten.

The Minister also supports this approach and is directing work on developing programming standards for a full-time kindergarten program.

Members look forward to reviewing the new goals and expectations that would be attached to a full-time kindergarten program and hope to see it included in the 2006-2007 Business Plan.

Western Arctic Leadership Program (WALP)

Members were pleased to note that WALP survived the cost-cutting exercise. The majority of committee

members believe the program provides a valuable outlet for promising students to reach beyond the opportunities available to them through grade extensions in our smaller communities.

It is important to note that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is not responsible for the delivery or operation of the Western Arctic Leadership Program. In fact, it is run by an independent society, based in Fort Smith, and operates a supervised residence for students attending PW Kaeser School. There are several other departments and private industry partners that provide funding or services in kind to ensure the continued viability of the program.

The committee will continue to advocate for the Western Arctic Leadership Program's core funding from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to remain the same but notes it has little influence on the decisions made by other departments or industry partners.

Day Care In The Northwest Territories

Every community in the Northwest Territories has issues with the quality, quantity or availability of day care. In smaller communities, there is need for day care programs that will allow parents to take advantage of resource development employment opportunities. Single parents cannot contemplate taking a job if there is no quality day care available they can trust.

Mr. Chairman, the fly-in/fly-out nature of some employment and shift work has created a need for 24-hour day care in some of our larger centres. The level of pay that can be offered to childcare workers and early childhood educational specialists often pales when compared to the money that is being paid in other sectors of our economy. Consequently, the retention of quality staff is an issue affecting the viability of many day care centres across the NWT.

Members understand that there is an internal review of our day care programming in the Northwest Territories presently underway. This is important given the developments on the federal front, and Members look forward to being kept apprised of the results of the review.

There has been much made in recent weeks of the increased federal funding that will be available for day cares in 2005-06. When \$5 billion over five years is spread out over an entire country, the likelihood the Northwest Territories will receive enough funding to meet our immediate day care needs is unlikely if it is based on any per-capita formula.

The Minister is strongly encouraged to work with his northern counterparts and the Minister from Prince Edward Island to ensure there is base funding on top of any per-capita formula. This is the only way any federal funding will make a difference in any of the smaller Canadian jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman, I have two short items remaining in the committee's report.

Labour Standards Board And Enforcement

As part of the 15th Assembly's vision for the future, the issue of a stand-alone Department of Labour was examined.

At this time, the committee agrees with the government's assessment there is insufficient authority and activity to justify the formation of a stand-alone department.

However, the Members did support the transfer of the Labour Standards Board and enforcement functions from the Department of Justice to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment as a good interim step. It is important to note that no other Canadian jurisdiction had placed responsibility for labour in the Department of Justice. Moving departments does remove any perceived conflict in which the Department of Justice could find itself.

Infrastructure Replacement

The committee made note of this government's aggressive plan to replace or renovate aging infrastructure within the NWT. The department has targeted those schools that have outlived their usefulness. There is little choice but to make these crucial investments in replacing these aging schools now.

Over the next three years, this department alone will spend some \$80 million on capital investment for schools in Tulita, Inuvik, Fort Good Hope, Gameti, Yellowknife and Ndilo. This level of investment is exceeded only by the Department of Transportation's plan to invest \$140 million.

Mr. Chairman, that ends the committee report on the Department of ECE.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. I would now like to ask Minister Dent if he would like to bring in some witnesses.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort in the witnesses? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Mr. Dent, would you please introduce your witnesses, for the record?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me I have deputy minister, Mr. Mark Cleveland; and, Paul Devitt, director of management services for the department.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, Mr. Devitt. Welcome, Mr. Cleveland. I will now go to general comments on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. I have Mrs. Groenewegen and then Mr. Hawkins. Mrs. Groenewegen.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every time it's my turn to make general comments, the Premier says detail.

---Laughter

I think I am becoming too sensitive. Mr. Chairman, when we talk about Education, Culture and Employment, I understand that it covers a very broad range of topics, programs and services. This is quite a comprehensive department in terms of the number of things it covers. But, Mr. Chairman, I want to narrow some of my general comments down to education and how we educate our

children here in the North. Maybe it wouldn't be fair to say we are in a rut, but there is something about our education system that I have been thinking about and I have heard some commentaries on not so long ago on CBC. Maybe not everybody will agree with me on this subject, but I think when we think about the success of our children in school, we need to change the way we do things. For one thing, I think there is too much emphasis in our school system put on homework. I think we are trying to turn parents into teachers and sometimes teachers into parents and social conveners. I think we need to, as a system, and I don't know how much the Minister can bring to bear in terms of the way we go about educating our children, but there is so much pressure on kids these days in many areas and not the least of which is to succeed in school. I would like to see an education system where everybody puts in a good solid day's work, 8:30 to 5:00, if necessary, but I don't think kids should have to go home in young grades or even in older grades with a great big stack of books and homework.

Most people work a regular day, why should kids go to school and then have to go home and work at night as well? By assigning these volumes of homework, you don't only assign the kids to work in the evening, you also dictate the schedule of the parents. Again, there are a lot of stresses these days. Maybe they don't want to spend their evening doing homework.

I think that we would take a lot of pressure off of students and families if we could get the work done during the day. Get the education done and if the kids need to learn how to study on their own independently in some fashion, have some kind of a study program that takes place between 3:30 and 5:00. People say maybe the school day should end at 3:30, well maybe in some places it should, but there is another complicating factor for parents. School gets out at 3:30. How many parents get off at 3:30 if they are working parents? Parents get off at 5:00. Why not have the school day coincide when parents are finished work? Why not do the homework between 3:30 and 5:00 instead of sending it home and expecting the parents to grind on the kids all evening to get their homework done? Anyway, I have some issues about homework.

---Laughter

In fairness to the teachers though, I don't think teachers should have homework either. I really don't. I think teachers should put in a day like any other kind of employment that maybe starts at 8:30 and ends at 5:00, but they shouldn't have to take home homework either.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I don't know how exactly to arrange this. I know there is preparation time required and marking and things to do, but I think teachers should be paid and they should be paid well but they should be able to confine a day's work and not have to be doing homework.

I think we are in a rut. We put a lot of emphasis on take-home assignments. The other thing it does is it disadvantages some children, Mr. Chairman. We expect that parents are all equally capable of helping their children with their homework or having the discipline to make sure their children are disciplined to do their homework. That puts some kids at a distinct disadvantage. Some homes are single parent homes or

maybe their home is where there are a lot of children and they don't get the kind of one-on-one or the kind of attention they need to help with their homework. We are assuming that when they send them off at the end of school day with their books under, that everybody is going to get the same attention. That's not necessarily true. I also think we discriminate against children whose parents are uneducated. Did you ever notice that teachers' kids do really, really well in school?

I am telling you myself, personally, I don't consider myself uneducated, but there is stuff that my kids bring home for homework and I couldn't help them if I had to because I wouldn't know how to do it. I think that we have too much emphasis on what kids are expected to do independently and away from the classroom and not enough focus on getting the basic training in during the school day and in the classroom. I think we could do a lot less socializing at school and a lot more attention on the basics and academics.

There is time after school for extracurricular things like sports, drama and all those kinds of softer subjects, shall we say. Maybe that's something else that could take place between 3:30 and 5:00 as part of that day. I think kids need the basics. They need a good, solid base and a foundation for their education, that will equip them for whatever they choose to do later on in life.

Maybe it's just because I am getting older, but now we are talking about full-day kindergarten. Oh, my goodness. When do you ever get to have fun? You are born and now you are going to be shuffled off to day care and now you are going to start school when you are four and you are going to graduate when you are 18, and then you are going to go to post-secondary or get a job. When do you get to relax? It just seems like we are trying to get kids engaged younger and younger. I think we should give parents who stay home to look after their kids a great big fat tax credit. We should figure out ways to be creative like they are in some Scandinavian countries. Maybe we should pay grandparents to look after their grandchildren.

We need to be more creative. I just think we are in a rut in how we do things. We don't ever think outside the box. I just think life is too short to have kids in a structured environment taking homework home when they are four years old. It's the younger grades. Maybe some of you don't have kids and don't know that, Mr. Chairman, but kids are taking home homework at a really young age and I don't know what's to be accomplished by it. Anyway, I would like to know if the Minister in his capacity for being responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, ever has an opportunity to affect the culture of our education here in the North and to bring any kind of creativity to that. If he doesn't have any ideas, maybe he could convene some kind of a dialogue with people to find out how we best and most successfully educate our children without having to stress them out before they even get into their adult years.

Mr. Chairman, there are so many things that could be said about Education, Culture and Employment. I think I will just ask the Minister if he could respond to that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hadn't expected this start for our discussion. It's an interesting issue. I know I have learned a lot about Grade 5 math this year.

---Laughter

And I know that my son is concerned that I am not home tonight helping with the science fair project. There is an awful lot of homework, but it's not the ministry that sets that. It's done by the individual school boards. That's local parents passing on what they think is important to the people who run the school system in their community.

No two school boards seem to have the exact same philosophy. I know there are some who say that by starting to send work home and start in Grade 1 usually with a very small amount coming home in the second half of the year, the theory is that they are setting up good study habits for the future, so the work that comes home isn't hard work, but is something that is designed to set the standards.

If there is a concern about the amount of homework that's coming home, the proper venue to deal with that is through the local DEA. They can discuss how much needs to come home and how much is being done because often it's being done as a philosophy. The schools and the boards often think it's important to set that example.

The Member talked about wanting to have schools and teachers work perhaps from 8:30 until 5:00. It would be impossible to accommodate the teaching and the prep and have the students there at the school for the same period of time. You couldn't have the teachers and students there for the same length of time each day or you couldn't possibly accommodate the preparation and the marking of the report cards unless we are going to substantially increase the numbers of teachers. That is, of course, an option, but you can't do it any other way. You would have to have more teachers, so the teachers who are in the classroom could take time out from the classroom to do their prep work, marking and report cards during the regular day.

We've got an awful lot of dedicated people in the education system in the Northwest Territories. I think that most teachers are there for the kids if they are needed, as late as 5:00, because most teachers take work home and do it in the evenings and on weekends. I think that in general, they are there for the kids.

In terms of the length of the day, our act doesn't stipulate how long the day has to be. Our act stipulates how many minutes or hours in a year that a child must receive education. So, again, it's the local DEA that can set the different length of day. There are some DEAs that have longer days and a shorter school year in order to accomplish local reasons for having more time out of school.

There would be a limiting factor through the Collective Agreement. That's something we have to work with through the negotiation process. You have to respect that.

I guess the bottom line, Mr. Chairman, is that some of what the Member is interested in discussing can be discussed first starting in a PAC with the school and then carrying on to the DEA. Those two agencies can have a significant impact on how the school day is structured

throughout the year. That flexibility is there, but we do leave it up to local parents to control the school through the DEA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, far be it from me to outright agree with Mrs. Groenewegen on an issue of homework, but I have a three-year-old and I realize how smart these little sprouts are and I am not really looking forward to the homework day, as Mr. Dent is already talking about Grade 5 math. I am just waiting until I have to deal with Grade 5 math. I am a little nervous.

I just want to pick up on one point only and then I will go on to the issues I have concern with. I think the Minister was actually wrong. I am sorry to be so blunt about it but the reality is, with comfort I say the philosophy comes from the department and not the boards. The department sets the mandate on what education is and about. It's the boards that interpret and then implement. The Minister does play an oversight role because I have, on many occasions, heard the Minister speak in favour of boards and how they are independent and they act at arm's length and implement the act they are given. So although I don't necessary agree with Mrs. Groenewegen's point, I think the Minister is wrong in that it's the philosophy of the department that sets the goal. I agree, yes, there are prescribed times and rules that things have to operate under, but if Mrs. Groenewegen's point needs to go one step further, we need to be talking about the philosophy of education in the Northwest Territories. That needs to be implemented on a territorial level. I suspect the Minister will rebut, but probably now is a better time to allow him to do that before I get into my questions. I will let him do that before I go on, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no question that the department sets out, in broad strokes, the mandate. We have the mandate to set out what the curriculum is and what has to be achieved in the course of a year, but do we stipulate that there has to be homework in the early years of school? Absolutely not. I can tell you I have seen documents from school boards that say our philosophy is that children should start homework in the earliest years so that they get good habits set up. That's their philosophy. That's not the Department of Education's philosophy. I am not a teacher. I am not a professional educator, but I would sincerely doubt that it would be required for a child to bring home homework in the early years of school. I don't think they have to bring home homework to achieve what is set out in the curriculum. I believe that when it is being sent home, it's being sent home because there is a philosophy of developing a standard of good study habits.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not really interested in debating this point, so I am going to move on.

My questions have more to do with the Department of ECE's commitment towards the NACC centre in the

Northwest Territories and how the Minister can maybe prescribe the dollars that we put into this centre. When we compare the culture of the Northwest Territories, it doesn't get the same emphasis that it would in the Yukon. For example, the Yukon Arts Council, YAC, get \$1.5 million of support. I think that territory embraces their culture in a much stronger way and NACC is a territorial facility and not just a Yellowknife facility. Can the Minister explain the dollar amount and why it's so low? I believe it's in a small range, but I am lost at the moment for the exact number. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Within the last year, the core funding for NACC has increased from \$30,000 to \$80,000 from this government. So it's more than doubled within the last year. The Member is probably right that the Yukon contributes more to its facility in Whitehorse, but we haven't had the ability to put more money into the arts than what we have.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, we have increased by close to \$300,000 that amount that we put into grants to the arts in the last few years. You add this in an extra \$50,000 here, it's not small change in terms of what our total investment is, but it's at the limit of what we can afford to do. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Minister acknowledging in a round about way that we contribute a very small amount compared to the very large amount the Yukon government does. Is the Minister committed to the arts and the development of the arts in the Northwest Territories? If so or if not, I'd like to hear his thoughts on his commitment in a very short explanation, as I'm running out of time here. How can he help demonstrate that commitment by moving forward? What can we do to help increase that commitment through this arts centre? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before asking if Mr. Hawkins could repeat that question quickly, I need to correct myself. I had said we'd given an extra \$50,000 to NACC; it was an extra \$30,000 in this current fiscal year. I'm sorry; in getting that explanation, I missed the last question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think then that if the Minister is correct, that would be a total of \$60,000 towards NACC. Thank you, but the question really was, is the Minister committed to arts and the growth of arts in the Northwest Territories and how can he demonstrate his commitment and show that he can support it over the long run noting that the very small commitment is in the budget at this time for the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre, it being a territorial facility? How can he demonstrate what he's doing to help increase that over the long term? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will do what I can. I think in the last year I've managed to find ways to increase the funding to the Arts Council and to provide some extra funding to NACC, although it's been a challenge. I think that we've demonstrated that there is that willingness to try to find money when it's possible and that's all I can do is say that we will continue to look for opportunities to strengthen our support to the arts.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, could the Minister confirm that that was actually core money increase or was that just an extra one-time grant? Could the Minister give me something a little more than hopes for the territorial facility? I know that they're quite hungry.

That extra \$30,000 probably barely covers the cost of the power bill for that facility; it doesn't cover a PY position. If the Minister could demonstrate his thoughts on moving forward to help increasing their funding. Again, it's a territorial facility; he's seen documentation that it is a facility unlike any other in Canada whereas it has more bookings, more community participation than anywhere else in Canada. It's been compared nationally as one of the busiest centres for the arts in Canada, yet it's in little old Yellowknife and it just seems to do a fantastic job on the existing budget it has. That being said, in comparison to roughly the \$1.5 million that the Yukon government gives, I'm not suggesting we'll fix that overnight, but if the Minister could comment on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Yukon also doesn't have 33 communities that have schools and airports. We have in the Northwest Territories a number of extra costs that you wouldn't find in a jurisdiction that doesn't have a population as dispersed as ours. It's more of a challenge to fund programs in the Northwest Territories. The Member also mentioned the cost of power not being met by the \$30,000 one-time extra grant that we provided this year. I'd just like to remind the Member that the GNWT picks up the total cost of power for the facility, all utilities, in fact, and all maintenance. We spend approximately \$48,000 a year doing that. So that's in addition to what's provided to the centre in terms of an operating grant.

I am committed to working with the department to see if we can continue to maintain the grant at the level it is and we will do all we can to do that. I would encourage all Members to support NACC. It's a good facility and I know I purchased two season tickets this year, as did the Premier and Mr. Bell, and I would hope that all Members would do that to keep the facility as liquid as possible. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. I have Mr. Braden next for general comments and then I'll go back to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. NACC certainly is a great value. I think my family is in for a total of four

season tickets here, so we're really upping the ante for NACC. Mr. Chairman, there's a very interesting opening discussion led by Mrs. Groenewegen on homework. I would volunteer a short comment on that. I am a supporter of homework. I have been the very fortunate father to have seen my two daughters come through the Yellowknife school system for their entire 12 years very successfully. One of them is now engaged in post-secondary studies and if it wasn't for the work habits and the discipline that she was able to learn through her homework studies, that her ability to survive in a post-secondary environment would be quite diminished. So there is a very different world out there after high school and I think homework is part of getting used to it. I just put that on the record as a bit of a contrast to it.

Mr. Chairman, to general comments to the department, yes, there are many areas to this department and overall I'd say a well-run and conscientious department that really takes to heart its responsibilities here. I want to put that on the record too. The thing that I think is the most significant piece of work that lies ahead for this department is the overall review of the income security programs. Many of them, in fact a growing number of them, are falling into the bailiwick of this department, especially with the transfer of the responsibility for public housing or social housing, as some people call it. For the coming year the delivery of the service will remain with the old Housing Corporation, but even then that's going to sunset and this department will have responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, in the department's business plan and in other places we are reminded, I've almost got this memorized now, that the NWT income security system is rated as one of the best in Canada. It provides \$100 million in assistance. But here's where we start to appreciate where the difficulties are.

We do this via 17 different income security programs and services that are administered through seven different government departments using four delivery systems. Mr. Chairman, the analogies are all over the place there, but we have an extremely complicated system that has obviously got issues and areas in it of duplication, of overlap, of inefficiencies, and that is just from an internal point of view. More to the point, Mr. Chairman, and as an MLA this is where I can bring my experience to the table, is that from the point of view of the client, or the customer, or the person out there, the single mother, the elder who may have a number of different social and life issues going on, trying to connect the dots between 17 different programs and seven different departments can be a daunting challenge.

So the review of our overall system is one that I really anticipate. I look forward to participating. The department has already started to go into this with the survey, a territory-wide survey that I participated in. I understand many other northerners did. Maybe this is where I'll stop now, Mr. Chairman, to ask my question. That is, related to this income security review, what was the nature or the success of this survey and the response that you've gotten so far from it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We had a total of about 1,800 responses to the survey. As the Member will be aware, there were different areas that you

could participate in, five different areas. Not everybody chose to participate in all five, but I'm sure we had 200 or 300 at least on the income security side, plus there were a number of focus group meetings and regional public meetings that were held so that the folks running the consultation would have heard from more people, particularly stakeholders in this area who have been consulted.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if you have any sort of initial or quick response or report on how this survey is going. Is it giving you the kind of information you were hoping to get? What are the trends? What's the general tone of the responses, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually don't have that information yet. We're still doing some of the regional consultations, so we aren't totally finished. There were some areas that because of weather or other issues we didn't get concluded as quickly with the consultation as expected. So we're not yet at the point where we're analyzing the data.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, in the sense of general comments and the level of income security and the supports that we provide, yes, it's the best in Canada and the best might be a descriptive word. It's certainly one of the, if not the richest in Canada, but that is not necessarily, in my books, a good thing. We, I believe, have set up some dependencies and expectations. We're seeing that now in the debate we're having here right now in the rent scale for social housing. There are many aspects of this that over the years, almost decades in some cases, these programs have become institutionalized and are almost seen as a given, almost a right or obligation of government rather than a decision that's made for the improvement or betterment of some people.

So I am not a fan of bringing in subsidies or supports or assistance unless they can be justified as amply warranted that there are no other options, and, Mr. Chairman, that they are sustainable. I think the old story that we've heard many times in government, various programs or taxes are brought in. The most infamous one, of course, is personal income tax. It was brought in for a short time to help pay for World War I. Well, guess what? We've still got it. I do not like to see these kinds of things brought in and, in fact, there was discussion just recently of some other type of program that might go toward, I think it was homelessness. Again, are we about to introduce or create another dependency that's just going to keep on growing on us? I hope not.

So those are some of my views, Mr. Chairman, on that overall income security area. I really do anticipate some strong and progressive work out of this area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member's comments. We agree and if you'll notice in my opening comments I did say that this would take some time for us to work through. I was only talking about those that we have in the hopper right now. I wasn't talking about all 17 of the programs that the Member was talking about. We have a limited scope that we're dealing with right now and it will be a challenge to rationalize our approach to them, but that's the goal and if we can start with a good policy base, a good understanding, good acceptance of what the underlying policy of all of our programs are, I think we have a good chance of affecting a change that will mean that people understand why we're providing supports, where we provide supports and how to get them. That's important because right now with so many different places to go for them, people get frustrated because they don't know how to access programs, they don't know what they're supposed to be able to get and they don't know what is expected of them when they graduate from a program, for instance.

So I think that we are on the right track. It's going to take some time and I'm going to have to work closely with my colleagues in the House, the standing committees, to make sure we're headed down the right path. But I am committed to doing that, consulting regularly with Members and we're going to use the information that we get through the strategic plan update and once we have our policy in place then we'll start the work on consultations with NGOs and public groups to make sure that we're doing things that we should.

There's one thing I forgot to mention early on. The Member, when he first started his comments, was quite complimentary of the staff and the department. I'd like to thank him very much for that. I would agree that we have a very dedicated and hard-working staff and I appreciate the Member putting that on the record. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Dent. I've got Mr. Hawkins next.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I can pick up only where I left off just quickly on NACC and our NACC investment. I think the Minister left out a couple areas. Can you emphasize if we are going to commit to make that \$30,000 that was additional core funding to top up last year's core funding to \$60,000? Is he going to work to commit to make that ongoing core funding? I didn't hear his commitment towards the arts. I had asked him the question if his department was committed to the arts. Essentially that's a yes or no, but I'm sure it will come with more than just yes or no. I didn't hear about the vision about trying to help put more into it. What I said earlier about the \$60,000 paying the power bill, I think I was just trying to put it to a size of where that \$60,000 goes. The Minister was right saying on the side here that the territorial government does pay the power bill and maybe he should mention from his perspective the whole scope of what we pay in regard to our commitment to NACC, just to qualify the whole numbers together. Essentially, is that going to be core dollars, the \$60,000 moving forward? How are we going to work towards increasing that over the long term? His commitment to the arts. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my opening comments I said a strong and vibrant arts sector is integral to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the residents of the Northwest Territories. I believe that personally; that's not just the statement that's in my opening comments. I did say that I am committed to working with the department to do what we can to assist NACC in its operation. We have not identified the money at this point. It does not show up in this budget. But we are going to work on it to try and find it and I have made that commitment to NACC as well. So, yes, I am committed to the arts, the department is committed to the arts. We're going to do what we can to follow through on our commitments, both to organizations like NACC and to the Arts Council. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for that clarification. Mr. Chairman, if the Minister could help me in the area, switching gears of course, to Aurora College. Aurora College is our premier education; the highest level that we offer in the Northwest Territories, that is. Right now there is a review going on as someone had pointed out, maybe it was in Mr. Braden's comments, but with that review on it's present location in the building downtown, what is the mandate of that review? The reason I ask that is I personally believe that Aurora College needs to create a vision based on a five or 10-year plan, approximately a 10-year plan that works towards vitalizing the college in such a way as an independent function, it has its own location and we should be working towards that type of mandate, establishing a self-contained college that could work for all students on different levels. So that being said, what is the mandate of that review of its present location? Is it to reorg what's being presently offered there? Is it to review whether it should be there? Is it to review the possibilities of extending the lease and moving towards a new facility within five years? Maybe the Minister could sort of speak to the scope of what are we looking at and reaffirm exactly when we should be able to get the contents from that final report or the results from that review. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The goal is to have that finished by June of 2005. Right now the immediate project is part of the overall review of education facilities in Yellowknife. So what we are trying to develop there is a 10-year plan. I believe that I've sent copies of the draft terms of reference for that review around to all of the Members from Yellowknife and I will send another copy around to make sure everybody has those. Part of that overall review is looking at a 10-year type of situation, but we are also looking at, in terms of the college alone, even a longer term review of where we are going with our campuses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to receiving that document. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I really believe firmly a stand-alone college could do a lot for us. I also believe our college needs the opportunity to grow and experience new things. That being said, is there

any review before you in your department to look at and give the college the ability to move forward in its mandate to become maybe a mini university or to step up to the level of a full level of a university? Again, emphasizing I really believe a stand-alone institution is best. That's my opinion, although I realize it doesn't happen overnight, but I believe that the decision to go in that direction needs to start happening and that decision and discussion needs to happen almost immediately because these things take years to discuss, plan, evolve and be addressed. That being said, is there any type of evolution process that looks at addressing moving forward our education as it exists into a larger institution? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are already, at the college, offering two degree programs. So we have moved in concert with universities down south to that level in nursing and in teaching. We are exploring opportunities to work with the other two territories in creating a pan-territorial university type of body and the presidents of all three colleges are going to be meeting in April to take that discussion a little bit further.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was an excellent answer. That's the kind of thing I'm looking forward to hearing that that discussion is going on. It's certainly not meant to solve the problem, but it's certainly to look at it and start talking about it.

The last area at this time that I'd like to talk about is a matter I brought up before in this House. I directed my questions to the Premier because it was a commitment made by the last government and the Premier's office. It was a commitment reaffirmed by the Premier in regard to the hiring of our teachers. Our students who enter the TEP program, students that go through the education program and who have been promised opportunities to become employed teachers in the Northwest Territories and it's a significant problem.

The Premier at the time had mentioned that there were incentives, but it has also been alluded that these students are being educated maybe at a lesser level, if there's some stigma that comes with them or whatnot. I really don't know and I would like to hear what the Education Minister is doing to work through this problem from an education point of view, whereas he's reaching out into the regional district education authorities, he's reaching out to the local education authorities and seeing what needs they need in order to, say for example, take serious these new grads and help get our northern students teaching our northern students.

So what is this Minister doing in that regard? Stats aren't necessary at this time, but I think we're all well aware most of them are not being hired and I think it's not a question of was it 10 out of 20 hired or 11 out of 20. The fact is we've got a huge number of these kids that are not being hired and what is this department as a whole, pushing forward the education mandate, doing to assist these regions, district education authorities?

I think it's a real problem out here that the kids are traveling to these schools, putting their hearts and souls

into their dreams to teach the children, become these new educators of our future and that being said, they're hitting a stone wall when they get there and say I'm ready to work and no one wants them. I imagine that's quite stressful for them knowing that they've emotionally committed to something, financially committed to something, our government has committed through SFA to help support these kids go through this process and we put a lot dollars, efforts and emotions into this and our kids are not given the chance. So time is running out and I think really I just would like to hear what he's doing to help address this problem. Obviously I won't have time for a follow-up, but that being said I'd like to hear what the Minister is doing to solve this problem. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have sent a letter to divisional education councils reminding them of this government's commitment and our expectation that they will help us live up to that commitment. I have discussed the issue with the chairs of the divisional education councils and DEAs in Yellowknife and encouraged them to remember that we expect that they will follow through on that.

We support the DEC's to hire our grads by providing an incentive. We support the mentoring of recent grads with, again, incentives to assist the boards and their staff in mentoring new teachers, particularly northern teachers. We are continuing to look at ways that we can continue to make sure that we can live up to our commitments. We have written to all of the recent grads asking them personally what they are doing and we're trying to collect that information to verify just how many have been able to work or have been able to find work or have not been able to.

Since we started hearing about the concern, we're trying to follow through on that. I can give you the information that we have right now, which doesn't include what we've gotten back in this most recent round of letters because we gave people a deadline of February 28th, I believe, to respond. So we're hoping that within the next 10 days we will be able to have some specific names ourselves and some information from those names, but we know right now from our information before that comes back is that of the grads from 1991 to 2004 in the Northwest Territories, these are TEP grads, in the teaching year 2004-05 there are 57 teaching in the Northwest Territories. There is one who is a college instructor. There are 18 who are in other college related professions. There are four teaching outside the Northwest Territories. There are 13 who are in full-time university studies, for instance, either completing their B.Ed. or their master's of education after completing the TEP certificate in the North. There are 10 who are employed in other fields and there are 15 who are either unemployed, retired, diseased or that we are not aware of, and two who were originally from Nunavut and have gone back to Nunavut. That gives us a total of 120, which accounts for all of the grads during that period of time. We will be able to report more specifically on the last two years, which is where the area of concern is, hopefully within the next 10 days.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, and Committee Report 11-15(3) and would like to report progress and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do I have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Thursday, February 24th, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. 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

- Motion 28, Tabled Document 108-15(3), "Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy"
Moved into Committee of the Whole

- Motion 29, Addressing Housing Needs

17. First Reading of Bills

18. Second Reading of Bills

19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 15, Tlicho Community Services Agency Act

- Bill 17, Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act

- Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006

- Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005

- Committee Report 9-15(3), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

- Committee Report 10-15(3), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

- Committee Report 11-15(3), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

- Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures, Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election

- Minister's Statement 86-15(3), Northern Strategy

- Minister's Statement 88-15(3), Update on Oil and Gas Development in the NWT

- Minister's Statement 89-15(3), Community Leaders' Conference Report: Preparing for the Pipeline

- Minister's Statement 90-15(3), Social Impacts of the Mackenzie Gas Project

- Minister's Statement 91-15(3), Preparations for the Mackenzie Gas Project

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 February 24, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

