



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 21, 2007****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, Mr. McLeod, Hon. Kevin Menicoche, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve, Mr. Yakeleya

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 75-15(5): Tlicho Road Studies**

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to report on a number of studies the Department of Transportation has or will be completing under a new agreement that will help move forward the planning to improve road access into the Tlicho.

As we all know, the only year-round access to the three Tlicho communities of Whati, Gameti and Wekweeti is by air. Access is augmented for approximately two months during the winter road season. The provision and reliability of this seasonal access is being increasingly challenged by climate change and resulting warmer winters.

Mr. Speaker, the department last year completed a Tlicho Corridors Options Study which looked at winter road and all-weather road corridor options in the Tlicho. The department also completed an economic analysis of the benefits and costs of both realigning the Tlicho winter road to an overland route and upgrading the seasonal route to an all-weather standard. The economic analysis established that improved road access would have a number of direct benefits to Tlicho residents including:

- enhanced inter-community travel and access to services for residents;
- reduced resupply costs and improved resupply options;
- employment, training and contracting opportunities during winter road and all-weather road construction and maintenance; and
- improved opportunities for road-based tourism travel.

Improved road access could also reduce costs for resource development projects in the Tlicho and possibly other areas of the Northwest Territories.

This earlier work has set the context for two new studies, one to detail environmental impacts and the other to identify engineering issues including what alignment a road would take and at what cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise that these studies are not being initiated through a partnership involving the

Department of Transportation, the federal government, the Tlicho Government and private industry. The federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has agreed to provide \$460,000 towards the estimated cost for these studies. Matching funding will be provided by the Tlicho Government, industry and the Department of Transportation. These studies are expected to be completed later this year. Once completed and assessed, they will form the basis of our next steps and approach to the federal government to improve road access to Tlicho communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region**

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is about candidate protected areas in the Sahtu: Sayou and Edacho and the Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta ramparts and the wetlands, Mr. Speaker, of Fort Good Hope.

Mr. Speaker, delegations from Deline and Fort Good Hope travelled to Ottawa last month to meet with the federal Minister of Environment, the Honourable John Baird. The delegations from Deline included Chief Charlie Neyelle, Raymond Taniton, Morris Neyelle, and Andrew John Kenny. The delegation from Fort Good Hope included Arthur Tobac, acting-chief Lucy Jackson, Henry Tobac and Harold Cook. I congratulate them on their hard work in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, their message to Minister Baird was clear, with the fast pace and scale of development taking place and being proposed for the NWT, communities need their most important lands protected before it's too late. Conservation priorities must advance at an equally fast pace. We urge the Minister of Environment to move forward on the permanent protection of Sayou and Edacho and interim protection for Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta ramparts and wetlands.

In 1998, the Minister of Canadian Heritage designated Sayou and Edacho as a national historic site. This designation recognizes the contribution of these areas to our collective Canadian heritage, but it does not protect the values for which the areas were designated. It does not protect the land.

Mr. Speaker, there has been important progress; however, Deline and Parks Canada have been unable to secure the budgetary support necessary. Last month, the

community of Deline urged the Minister of Environment to work closely with his colleagues in the federal Cabinet to secure the necessary long-term funding to permanently protect Sayou and Edacho.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Fort Good Hope has been working with the NWT Protected Areas Strategy to move the Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta to protection since 2001. In 2006, Environment Canada submitted an application for interim land withdrawals to Indian and Northern Affairs on behalf of Fort Good Hope. The community is waiting for approval for interim protection.

Mr. Speaker, I heard Premier Handley speaking on the radio on February 7th about the most recent trip to Ottawa. He is saying that he spoke with Prime Minister Harper about the shared belief that there must be a balanced approach to developing the Northwest Territories and some areas must be protected for environmental...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Yakeleya, your time for Member's statement has expired.

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

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, share this belief, Mr. Speaker, but belief is not enough. It is time to put some actions behind this belief. I urge all levels of government to move forward with concrete actions to implement their protected area commitments in the Northwest Territories including the Sahtu region completing interim protection for the land parts of wetlands in securing federal funding for permanent protection and cooperation of management of the Sayou and Edacho. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On Lessons Learned From Resource Developments In Nauru

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories, we are struggling to better balance the issue of resource development in a strong economy with protection of the environment. This is a critical issue. Around the world, there are examples of what happens if you don't do this right. There is one island country in Oceania, a small island country by the name of Nauru. It used to be called Pleasant Island when it was first stumbled across by the western sailors. It was everybody's idea of a tropical paradise with lush forests, water, plentiful fish, wildlife, very self-sustained. The islanders had been living there for over 3,000 years.

In 1907, it found out that the island was rich with phosphates. Since that time, deals were made with industry. Australia played a very key role in this. They effectively strip mined the island. Eighty percent of it has been virtually destroyed. Twenty percent of it is under enormous pressure. At one point briefly, the islanders

were given money. At one point, they were at the highest per capita income of anybody in the world. They had a bank account of about \$800 million. But now, in 2007, the money is gone. The island is basically destroyed. The vegetation is gone. The water no longer exists. The wildlife is gone. The surrounding fish and ocean has been so badly polluted by the dust and the strip mining that it no longer sustains much effective life. The islanders are broke. They are becoming, with a few dollars that are left, dependent on the good will of another country, Australia, to survive. They have traded their heritage for money. The money left was spent, bad decisions were made and other costs. They lost sight of the need to protect the value of their environment, the value of the trees, the land, the water, the fish, the game, and their heritage where they lived for thousands of years is gone.

There is an important lesson for us there, Mr. Speaker. We have a big territory, but we can't take for granted that the environment will be there if we don't look after it, if we don't protect the water, the land, and balance those pressures against resource development. That is a lesson that Nauru can teach us. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the wonders of modern technology, Google Earth, if you go on there, you could actually go to this island and you can look and you can cross-section across it. Take a look at what has happened. So this is not just an abstract issue. It is one that is real and you could actually go on and take a look at what people have done and what happens when bad decisions are made. It is something that we have to keep in mind as we forge ahead. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Member's Statement On Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Legislation

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice advised the House in October 2006, he would consider introducing legislation to implement the bill on Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, SCAN, in the February/March 2007 session. In late November 2006, the Minister provided a consultation paper on SCAN to the Members and public for review and comment on the discussion paper. Mr. Speaker, subsequently, the Department of Justice held public hearings on the consultation paper on SCAN in the larger centres in late November and December of 2006. It should be noted that the communities outside of larger centres were invited to send two delegates to attend the public hearings, but given the time of this to travel, the Beaufort communities could not send any delegates to participate.

Mr. Speaker, this concern was raised by the leaders of the Beaufort-Delta at the annual Beaufort-Delta Regional Council meeting in Inuvik in mid-December 2006. I also received an invitation from the Hamlet of Tuk to attend the

regular council meeting on February 7, 2007, but because session was to begin, I committed to discuss the consultation paper with them at a later date.

Mr. Speaker, at first glance, the front-line workers and non-government workers in Tuk are in support of this proposed legislation on SCAN through the consultation document. So they should be, Mr. Speaker, for it does address concerns in the communities. I understand the Department of Justice has reviewed and compiled what they heard at the public hearings and may be preparing a legislative proposal during the February/March 2007 session. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move forward on the legislative proposal on SCAN, but would like the Minister to ensure the Standing Committee on Social Programs has ample time to take the legislation on the road for full public review. We owe it to the residents of the Northwest Territories to further comment on the proposed legislation should it come before us.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Residency Requirements Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concept of residency is something that we consider in many different aspects of our business, law-making and our program development here, Mr. Speaker. A few come to mind, and there is quite a range of qualifications here depending on what kind of a program or what kind of criteria we are setting up. For instance, Mr. Speaker, if you live in the NWT for three months, you can become qualified for a health care card. In one year, you can become eligible to vote in territorial or municipal elections. But it takes you two years' residency, I understand, to get a resident hunting licence. One of the other aspects of residency, Mr. Speaker, is that we have tried to use it as a basis for helping grow our population and get stability in the onset of bringing new development up here. One illustration of this, Mr. Speaker, is that the Snap Lake agreement that the government has negotiated calls for people to be residents of the NWT for six months in order to be counted as a northern hire to go against the commitment that De Beers has made in their socio-economic agreement with us. But it is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that in this context of enabling the North to truly benefit from some aspects of big development, the socio-economic agreement that we just signed off with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline proponents sees us yet again toying with the aspect of residency. One of the criteria here, Mr. Speaker, is that there essentially has to be no proof of residency before someone can be declared a northern hire.

Mr. Speaker, here again, we have lowered our standards. We have given in to the needs and the demands of the world's biggest corporations. We have compromised the interests of northerners and our communities in the name of expediency. Why, Mr. Speaker, are we playing so fast

and loose with things that are so important to our communities?

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand again today to speak on the subject that I have become quite passionate about. That subject, Mr. Speaker, is our lack of resource royalty sharing deal. Mr. Speaker, it is said that surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer in his lifetime for the good of the community. We are in possession of a sacred trust, and we have to administer it in our lifetime for the good of our community, which is the Northwest Territories and its future.

Mr. Speaker, last year, the Government of Canada spent \$3.8 billion in foreign aid. This year, it is proposed at \$4.1 billion. Where does the Northwest Territories line up to get some of this money, Mr. Speaker? We continue to have money taken out of the Northwest Territories every year. As a matter of fact, by the end of today, we will have \$750,000 again leaving the Northwest Territories. We get \$764 million in transfer payments. Out of that, \$250 million is our own money. They are just giving us our own money back, Mr. Speaker. I think it has to be time for the leadership of the Northwest Territories to put our differences aside and realize that we are losing money every day. There is money going in foreign aid that should come to the Northwest Territories. It is not a fair deal, Mr. Speaker. I think it is time that this government, the leaders of the Northwest Territories, took out their ulus and cut the strings that are attached and being pulled by Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Member's Statement On Special Needs Of Children Born With Autism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with my colleagues today a situation that is currently at play with a constituent and her two children. My constituent is a single mother who has two children, a daughter who is two years old and a boy who is three. Her son is autistic. Because of the needs of her son, she cannot work. His care is a 24-hour-a-day job. Obviously, without the ability to work, she and her children are in need of social housing. Social housing is not designed nor does it allow for special provisions when a child with special needs is involved. Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention some examples of what my constituent is up against each and every day in her household.

Her son bangs his head on the walls. He knows no pain, and just last week, he put his head through her patio door. His mother has asked for Plexiglas to be installed to no avail. The boy eats the paint off the wall in his room. In fact, he needs constant supervision as he will try to eat

non-food items including toys, batteries, coins and paper. Mr. Speaker, stairs are very dangerous to the boy and to his little sister who is in constant danger of aggression from her brother. The boy needs a bar or special locks on his window as he throws anything he can get out of the window of his room which is on the second floor. So he is always in danger of jumping out of his window. His mother must keep a constant vigil and watch on him.

My constituent needs help from a number of different angles. Her housing situation is inadequate. No safety upgrades are available for her children and it would appear that, for children diagnosed with autism, there is little to no help between the ages of two and four. The prevalence of autism in birthrates has grown from one in 2,500 births in 1970, to one in 285 in 1999. Today, Mr. Speaker, those rates are even much higher. As a government, I feel it is important that we recognize this and begin to look at options to help families deal with the special needs of children born with autism.

The Department of Health and Social Services has to be able to work with the Housing Corporation to come up with a workable plan to address the special needs of my constituent. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of the Housing Corporation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened, with interest, to the emotion that was raised in the House yesterday in response to the recently publicized socio-economic agreement from the Mackenzie gas project. Some would argue that we should use the pipeline as a lever to wrestle control of our resources in the share of royalties away from the Crown. Perhaps our frustration with the lack of response from Ottawa to our aspirations is misdirected if pointed at the private interests that would like to develop the resources in the North. I appreciate the response of industry to our requests as a government for formalized commitments to ensure northern employment, training and business opportunities, even if those agreements aren't perfect.

Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. Here is a news flash. The resources of the North are currently owned and controlled by the Crown. The North is a huge treasure chest of natural resources and precious non-renewable commodities. Imagine a treasure chest for a minute, overflowing with gold, diamonds and riches. The process of getting to the treasure chest is fraught with challenges but it is a path that an explorer can pursue if you have the time and the money. When you get to the treasure, you can then decide if it is worth the cost of hauling it out. You will have to pay the Crown and their castle their share, but the custodian standing guard over the treasure say that some of it is rightfully theirs because they have been guarding it for hundreds of years. They have been living right beside it. The Crown was happy to leave him standing guard to retain the sovereignty of the Crown's holdings. The custodians can see that the riches might be hauled out. If they can't have a share of it, maybe they

can catch a few of the crumbs if they help the explorers haul the riches back to their ivory towers and their masters in Calgary and Houston. The custodians protest. They fight amongst themselves. They can't agree on a plan to keep some of the riches and share it amongst themselves. The explorers are only looking for treasures to keep their masters happy. They don't make the rules, but want to enjoy a friendly relationship with the custodians. But alas, one day a leader emerges and organizes the custodians and articulates a plan to unify them in their efforts to get what is rightfully theirs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Member's Statement On Property Tax Arrears

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to use my Member's statement today to raise an issue that seems to come to the surface every time around this time of year, and that being the mailing out of property tax statements by the Financial Management Board here in the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, I have been bringing up this issue in this House on numerous occasions in the last three years and it always seems to get swept under the rug only to be raised again when statements are mailed out around February. The outstanding amounts are still going up in everybody's statements. Interest is accumulating and stress levels are peaking in Fort Liard, Fort Providence and Fort Resolution because of the property tax issue. Soon the ads will come out in the News/North listing all the people with these outstanding property tax arrears in the NWT and raising the anxiety levels even more in the communities because of the notice that the government does have the authority to seize their properties and publicly auction them off to recover some of these outstanding arrears.

The Minister of MACA publicly stated here in this House that he will set up a working group to address this outstanding issue, but I have yet to see any action that has been taken to address this concern today. I have seen nothing happening in Municipal and Community Affairs or FMBS.

Mr. Speaker, I have a statement right here from a constituent of mine dating back to 1991, Mr. Speaker. It is coming up into the \$20,000 mark. That causes a lot of stress for this constituent because he just doesn't have any money to pay any of these arrears. He is disabled. He has a large family. It is funny to note here, Mr. Speaker, that, on the bottom of these statements, it states, "note that your account is 120 days past due." Mr. Speaker, this is like 17 years past due. I think that this government's inaction on this issue is way past due. I encourage this government to address it soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Workers' Compensation Board Chronic Pain Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, the Members in this House brought forward a plethora of issues pertaining to the WCB, not the least of which are the deficiencies in the chronic pain policy and another long-protracted file dealing with grievances filed by workers who are not receiving the benefits or fair practice from the WCB that they're entitled to.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: In answering my latest written question on this topic, Mr. Speaker, I was advised of two things: one is that the Governance Council will be considering the new chronic pain policy, or the issues surrounding that, at their February 13 to 16 meeting; the other one is that the new legislation will make sure that WCB remains independent from political influence.

Mr. Speaker, as we have not been advised, I don't know what the outcome of this latest meeting is. I am also aware, Mr. Speaker, that the WCB is pressing injured workers hard to settle the long-outstanding files as we speak. Mr. Speaker, I'm willing to give the WCB the benefit of the doubt that it will finally do right by these workers and do what is best for them. If they are entitled to their benefits, they should get the full extent of the benefits that they are entitled to. They should not in any way be forced to get anything less just because it's in the interest of cleaning up longstanding files. Mr. Speaker, if there are shortfalls in the WCB policies or legislation in addressing these files, I would expect that the WCB would include them in the upcoming introduction of WCB legislation for our review.

Mr. Speaker, as well, I'll be looking very closely at the Governance Council decision on the chronic pain policy to see that they meet the interests of the workers and reflect the progress required by a series of court decisions on the substance and procedure of chronic pain policy that they have been advised of.

Mr. Speaker, lastly, I must tell you that I'm clearing up my desk and my schedule for the summer to be completely ready to receive the WCB legislation that is set to be introduced in March. I also believe this will be, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for this House to once and for all address many of the long-outstanding WCB issues that we have been grappling with over the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

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, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, lastly, contrary to the written question that I received from the WCB, I don't believe this is a political influence exercised, or political interference that might be implied on this matter. Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly that this is what we do as legislators and I look forward to doing that job with this new legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone in the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience. Oral questions. The Member for Hay River, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in keeping with my Member's statement, I have a few questions for the Premier. I'd like to ask the Premier, when you look at the evolution of the autonomy in the other jurisdictions in Canada, like the provinces -- and I don't think I'm an expert on the subject and probably don't know that much about it -- but does the Northwest Territories, as a government, as we are known, have any legal right to stand on with respect to our negotiation with Ottawa over the resources contained in our territory? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you. I'm not a legal expert either on exactly what our rights are through the NWT Act and other legislation, but certainly it is limited in that the federal Minister of DIAND holds a lot of the authority for the Northwest Territories and also for Nunavut; somewhat less the case in the Yukon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if we don't have the legal authority, then, in our control now to control the land and resources of the Northwest Territories, surely we have some moral authority when you consider the vast percentage of our population which have unusual and extraordinary connections and rights with respect to the land. With that moral authority, is there any -- and I guess, again, looking at legal precedent -- is there any way that we can advance our case for control of our resources through the courts? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as a territorial government, and given the provisions in the NWT Act, unless it was a very specific instance, then I think we're limited in what we can do in advancing it through the courts. Now, Mr. Speaker, there have certainly been court challenges taken forward by aboriginal people who have inherent rights, who have treaty rights and so on. They have a much better case and we certainly do track what they are doing. In some cases, those are advancing the

rights of northerners in a way that we can't, because we don't have that kind of same status ourselves as a territorial government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another source of potential support for our aspirations is the other jurisdictions in Canada who already have provincehood. I'd like to ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, if he could share with us what his sense of that level of support is from his meetings with other Premiers and other Ministers of various portfolios. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier think that there is support for what we would like to achieve here in the North? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 380-15(5): Legal Authority To Control NWT Lands And Resources

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that there is much stronger support with the other jurisdictions, and I'll speak specifically about Premiers. I've been through this issue with them and they shake their heads and just find this totally unfair and unbelievable that today we would have a situation like ours where we're generating wealth, making decisions about protected areas and trying to get that balance and we don't have any authority. Mr. Speaker, I'll say further that even with talking with bankers in Toronto or talking with the public across the country, there is definitely a growing awareness that this situation cannot continue this way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week in this House I asked the Minister of Justice questions about the proposed changes to the judiciary appointment process at the federal level that affects Supreme Court judges and Appeal Court judges and he indicated that he would take that matter back to Cabinet and would return to this House before the break, which is tomorrow. I'd just like to ask the Minister if he would be prepared, or is he ready, to report back on the discussions and the position that Cabinet may have? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government doesn't have a position. Cabinet doesn't have a position on something that is largely under the federal authority and is a federal matter, but I'm more than

prepared to give my opinion about what I see as a lack of change in terms of the appointment process. The one change, I think, that has legitimately been identified is that the police will have a voice on the nomination committees, there will be a seat, I think it's one of the seven or one of the eight that will be reserved for the Canadian Police Association. Aside from that, I don't see a change, personally, Mr. Speaker, but again, I'll make the point that we don't have a Cabinet position or a government position on something that's largely outside our authority. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that we're the creatures of the Northwest Territories Act; we're heavily influenced by decisions of federal judges both at the Supreme Court level and the appeal level. I would just like to ask the Minister, I mean, clearly there's a difference of opinion where those on the right say this is a good idea, there is a change and there is going to be an ability to put all sorts of party faithful, good Conservatives on the new committees. I want to ask the Minister, are there not issues of great concern to us in the federal courts that would advise us to have an interest in how judges are appointed so that we can ensure that there is an impartial system and one that's not going to be so politically driven? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my feeling that there isn't a significant change aside from the voice that the Police Association will have now. I think the police play a significant role in our justice system and their voice should be heard in terms of the nomination committee. I'm happy about that. I'm supportive of that. There will be critics, as there have been critics in the past. However, in the past there were too many Liberal faithfuls making up these nomination committees. There will be those who criticize now and say there are too many Tory faithfuls that make up the nomination committees. Mr. Speaker, I think the point is, in my opinion, and again I've made the point there's not a government position on an issue that's largely federal. I don't see a significant change. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MR. MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister himself is publicly on record indicating that these changes were done specifically so that the Prime Minister could have greater influence on who gets on these committees to control the appointment of judges, something that's not there currently. So the final question to the Minister then is, is the Minister saying in his own...Is the government saying that two wrongs necessarily make a right in this case? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 381-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is not saying anything. I guess, for the third time, I'll tell you that this is my opinion that not a lot has changed in terms of the nomination process. Mr. Speaker, I think the important thing to keep in mind here is that we want good, competent judges in the Northwest Territories and I think as best indication of that we go back to the last judge appointed by a Conservative Justice Minister. I think we have a very competent woman who was appointed to the Bench. I'm proud of her appointment. I think she's serving us very well, Mr. Speaker. That is, in fact, the critical issue here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Joe Handley, in terms of the protected areas that we are suggesting in the Sahtu, as I stated in my Member's statement. Also, that the Premier has stated with the Prime Minister that they need a balanced approach in terms of our lands in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Premier what is his government doing to protect these lands that our people in the Sahtu have so passionately asked that these lands be protected from resource development? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. JOE. HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government position has been that development has to be a balanced approach. That is consistent with the aboriginal leaders. I can say that, Mr. Speaker, I've raised this issue publicly in speaking across the country; I've raised it with the Prime Minister; I've raised it with Minister Baird; and I'll continue to raise it. The group who met with Minister Baird, from the Sahtu, were very effective. He referred them to me. He had the message. I gave him maps. He asked to keep them. I think he understands the situation. Now we have to get the system, the federal system, to work this through. The Sayou and the Edacho areas, in particular, have been sitting on the shelf for, I think, practically 10 years now, and for the sake of a little bit of money we're not following through with the federal government on it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it's a crying shame that for 10 years land that has been so passionately requested by our people in the Sahtu and other parts of the Northwest Territories that, you know,

we're having a balanced approach that this government can't persuade the federal government to put the disbelief into action, yet the federal government is a strong proponent of resource development. We should just, you know, at one point say enough is enough, no more resource development. Protect our land, air and water first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier ensure that the federal government hears this loud and clear from the Northwest Territories?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. JOE. HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have made that message to the federal government that we cannot continue the way we are. At some point we're going to have to say enough is enough and say that we have to take a firm stance on these things. I did say to Minister Baird that for the sake of \$500,000 one-time money, \$500,000 ongoing money, this area was identified 10 years ago by then-Minister Sheila Copps as a heritage site. Let's do it. Five hundred thousand dollars is not much for the federal government. It was 10 years ago since that. The ramparts area west of Fort Good Hope, the Horn Plateau, the proposed park in the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, the expansion of Nahanni, those are issues that are out there. I don't understand the reluctance by the federal government to move on some of these. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also share the sentiments of the Premier. I just don't understand this federal government system. You know, we're asking for resource revenue sharing deals and we're asking for many things. Mr. Speaker, I would again ask the Premier in terms of protecting these areas, this land from resource development, can the Premier, again, reinstate, reinforce the federal government to put some money behind this belief and put their money where their mouth is and start seeing some things done here? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 382-15(5): Candidate Protection Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. JOE. HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say that I have a very brief meeting with the Prime Minister on Friday. I will, if there's opportunity, raise this issue again, because I think it's a win for everybody: for the federal government, for us as a government, for aboriginal people, and simply as a responsible way to develop the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for the Honourable David Krutko in his capacity as the Minister for Public Works and Services. Mr. Speaker, it concerns interruptions in the supply and the resupply of fuels to the Northwest Territories. It has been well publicized in the media in the last couple of days that the mines are concerned. I wanted to pursue this a bit more, Mr. Speaker, because if the mines are suffering interruptions in their fuel supply because of the CN Rail strike, and I understand a fire at a refinery in southern Canada, what does this mean, Mr. Speaker, for the security of resupply of fuels to our northern communities on the ice roads? We're operating on the same restrictions as the mines are and I think we're in the same boat. Do we have cause for concern, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Public Works and Services, Mr. Krutko.

Return To Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been following this issue but at the present time there is significant supply of diesel fuel in Hay River right now to resupply the 11 communities if we have to get it there this winter through the winter road system. Again, we feel that we are not drastically affected by the strike because the majority of our fuel products are already in the Northwest Territories. We are not greatly affected by this strike. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. I would like to ask what action the Minister or the government is taking on the national front? This is something that's affecting industry and consumers across Canada. What actions are we taking to bring some remedy to this so that at least the mines up here can get some certainty about their supply of fuel, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue that's hitting especially eastern Canada is the fires that happened at a couple of refineries. The western part of Canada was not affected because the majority of our fuel products come from Alberta. Because of that, we're not drastically affected in the context of what's happening nationally. So again, we do get our resupply from Alberta which, at the present time, that link has not been affected.

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

Supplementary To Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know from watching some of the media accounts on this that this is causing some price fluctuations at the pumps. Is it anticipated that these interruptions may result in any cost increases for northern consumers, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 383-15(5): Security Of The Re-supply Of Fuels To Northern Communities

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we already have our fuel purchase agreements in place; we have signed them off so we are already tied into a price. We signed them off before this increase has happened so we're not affected again by this national strike or national increase, because we already have our contract signed off for the price that we agreed to. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. I'd like to ask Mr. Handley what, if any, programs does the Housing Corporation have in place to help families with autistic children in the home? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have two programs. One is ours; that is the new CARE program that is to provide funding for repairs and enhancement to existing units. There's also the RRAP program, which is the CMHC program that does repair specifically for situations like this where there are special needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituent had raised this issue with me about six months back requesting some pretty standard, basic renovations to her unit, such as locks on the windows, Plexiglas, and also a unit with, pretty standard, a unit with no stairs. They had moved her to another unit and the other unit has stairs. It wasn't addressed then and what the Minister said doesn't give me any comfort that it will be addressed going forward. So I'd like to ask the Minister how a single mother in social housing can get some help from the Housing Corporation to make her unit more friendly for a child with autism? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to speak about this individual's personal situation, but we do have programs that are there. The new president of the Housing Corporation shares the same attitude that I do, that we need to be responsive to these kind of situations. I hope that this individual has talked to the Housing Corporation. If not, following this question and answer, I'm sure she will, and we'll follow up on it. But there is money in the Housing Corporation to deal with these kind of things and some of the problems may be a major challenge for us, but we'll do what we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to hear the Minister say, and I know there's a new president there, a new Minister of the Housing Corporation, and it's nice to hear that they're interested in doing something about this. The most pressing thing, I think, is to get her into a unit without stairs. Is that a possibility? I'd like to ask the Minister that. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 384-15(5): Housing Programs To Assist Families With Children Suffering From Autism

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we'd have to work with the housing authority and, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming this person is in Yellowknife. But we'd have to work with the housing authority. I don't know the availability of units without stairs, but if there is a way for the Housing Corporation and the Yellowknife Housing Authority to work together to resolve this, then we'll do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up on the question by my colleague from Thebacha to the Minister of Justice in regards to the federal government's attempt to colourize the judiciary that should always remain neutral. I think that's the hallmark of one of our strengths of Canada's democracy that's respected around the world. I also believe that the cohorts of people who believe that the courts should do less law-making and stick to the strict interpretation of the law fails to understand the power of Charter. If it wasn't for the Charter, we would not have gained all the progress we have made in regards to aboriginal rights. If it wasn't for the law-making of the court, that would have never gained anything or any disadvantaged group that needed legal assistance to get their even playing field.

So I'd like to ask the Minister, I'm quite alarmed by the answer he gave in which he said that the latest appointment of the judge by the Conservative government was a good one. So I'd like to know if he is suggesting that all three other Supreme Court judges that we have that were appointed by the previous government are not as good as the latest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy with all of the judicial appointments. My point in making that comment was that if people believe there's been some significant change in the way we appoint judges, it certainly hasn't been apparent to me because I think we're still getting good candidates appointed to the bench. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he's keeping up with the reading of what government's policy is in this regard and I would suggest to him that it's in our interest, in our jurisdiction's interest to make sure because we're very affected by court decisions. Mr. Speaker, he mentions that, and I know he mentioned earlier that this is not our jurisdiction, but I am aware that the Minister has met with Minister Toews, when he was Minister of Justice, about father's rights and other law and order items, strengthening youth offender issues and such and keeping kids in jail, I don't know what it was. So why is it that the Minister will not address his mind to see what the impact of this federal policy would be on our policies? I don't understand why he will not address that. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I don't see a change in policy. We've still got judicial nomination committees that will look for the best candidates and appoint judges. The one change is that the Police Association of this country will now have a voice; one of seven or eight seats or whatever it is. One of them will be held by the Police Association, which I think is a good idea. Again, let me remind the Members, we don't have a government position, as it were, on something that's largely a federal matter. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for the Minister to speak to the police, but I think that in this matter I think he has a lot more to learn and I'd like to suggest to him, I'd like to ask him if he would meet with the judiciary and talk with them about what it means, or academia, or read on some stuff about

what the impact will be and not just go by his own opinion about what should be at the NWT table and not. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 385-15(5): Appointment Process For Federal Judges

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not clear as to what the question is. Will I read the media opinions on both sides of this issue? Sure. I have and will continue to do so. But, Mr. Speaker, again let me reiterate, since the Members are interested in my opinion, clearly, because this is a federal matter, I don't think there's been a significant change. Do I think it's a good idea to have the police have some voice because of their involvement in the judicial system? Yes, I do. Do I think there's been a vast departure from the way past governments operated the process? No, I don't. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 386-15(5): Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Legislation

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke in regard to the consultation paper on SCAN and my question is for the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Brendan Bell. I'd like to ask the Minister when and why did the Department of Justice decide to propose legislation on SCAN for the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 386-15(5): Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Legislation

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, as to the exact date that we sent the legislative proposal to the standing committee, where it currently sits, I can't give you that exact date. It is a matter of record and it is in correspondence to the committee. But I can tell you for certain why, Mr. Speaker. It was a huge public concern around the state of our communities, and the safety of our communities, and the need to improve safety for our residents. Obviously we recognize the RCMP we think are doing a very good job, but we believe, in our experience and from watching what's gone on in other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan and Manitoba and now Yukon, that a tool like safer communities legislation can be a very effective tool in helping us deal with bootlegging operations, drug dealing operations, and seek to put them out of business. So that's the why, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 386-15(5): Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Legislation

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering, if we move forward with this proposed paper, consultation paper on SCAN, I'm just wondering when that will happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 386-15(5): Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Legislation

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, the legislative proposal sits before the Standing Committee on Social Programs. They had asked me to come in and respond to some questions that had arisen. I have done that. There are still some bits of information that we have promised to provide committee. I will do that before the end of this week. Then, Mr. Speaker, it's really a matter of committee coming back to me and saying we're interested in taking this bill out on the road and seeing what people think. We await the introduction of first reading of the bill. I'd be prepared to do that in the March session and that would allow committee to go on the road and hear from residents and understand better what they think of this legislation. So I'm ready for a March 1st reading, Mr. Speaker. It's just a matter of the Social Programs committee coming back to me and giving me the okay. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Louis Riel believed in a cause with so much passion that he wasn't concerned about his future, but the future of the Metis. He was fighting for their rights. We're fighting for a different kind of right here, Mr. Speaker. We're fighting for the right of the future of the Northwest Territories to benefit. Prime Minister Harper said it himself hundreds of times: we should be the primary beneficiaries of our natural resources, and we're not. The Premier mentioned that he is having a meeting with the Prime Minister on Friday, and enough is enough is another term that I heard from the Premier. Would he relay that message on to the Prime Minister that enough is enough and don't just talk about what we should have? He's in a position to give us what he knows we deserve. Would he relay that message on to the Prime Minister? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very direct answer. That's the kind of attitude that we should have with Ottawa: direct, to the point, and leave the...Would the Premier commit to bring in a contingent of aboriginal leaders to Ottawa to negotiate directly with the Prime Minister? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will raise this issue. It's at the top of my list for discussion with the Prime

Minister on Friday. Mr. Speaker, the lead Minister on this issue is Minister Prentice. I have already suggested to Minister Prentice that we have a joint meeting between myself and representative aboriginal leaders to deal with the issue of a devolution AIP at the minimum. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary To Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another meeting; we've been having meetings for 20 years. We all know what these meetings are about. They know what we want. We know what we want. It confuses me as to Ottawa's reluctance to give us what they know we deserve. I'm getting to my question. I'd like to ask the Premier if he would commit to expediting the negotiations on the political level and try and have something agreed to very soon? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 387-15(5): Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in this House before, we are in the middle of negotiations. The federal negotiator is meeting with ours. The next meeting I believe is, in fact, I know it is next week. It's tough. The federal negotiator, of course, is looking after federal interests; our negotiators are looking after our interests. There are outstanding issues they have to resolve. It's not going to be easy. I can tell you we are focused on achieving what we want, an agreement-in-principle, but at the same time we are not going to accept a bad deal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are addressed to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, we're all very concerned about the development that's happening in Alberta, and the rampant development in McMurray, and the fact that after seven years working together, the federal government and Alberta government have not been able to come up with any kind of cumulative impact position that would govern how they move forward, yet they continue to expand. In the North we are no better off in terms of our ability to ascertain the cumulative impact. In the Deh Cho they've put a lot of time into a land use plan, and what seems to be required for us so that we can speak clearly on this issue is regional land use plans encompassed by an umbrella territorial land use plan. I'd just like to ask the Premier whether he has thought about that issue and how he would see us moving forward on this very fundamental issue of us being able to decide, as a territory, the best way to deal with resource development and protection of the environment? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the first step has to be to have the regional land use plans that work for the people in those regions. We need to have that. But, Mr. Speaker, we need to also, and I agree with the Member, we need to have a territorial plan for the whole Northwest Territories that serves as a framework for all of the regional plans. We already have, I think, the basic elements, even though they're not put together into one document, of the overall framework, and certainly our approach to develop it and to protection is very much similar to the aboriginal leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of the fundamental questions we have yet to ask as a territory is how much development is sustainable, how much do we need, what's in the best interest of the territory, what's the value of the resources that we look to have extracted, what's the value and benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories? Does the Premier see those types of questions as fundamental to the issues of regional land use planning? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, certainly those are all good questions. But we also have to work with our neighbours, because a lot of development protection and so on affects geographical areas. So if you take the Mackenzie River basin, for example, it takes in the Yukon, B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. We do work with them, but we need to know where they stand as well. We need to know what their development plans are. So it's bigger than just us as a territory developing our own in isolation as if we were an island on our own. I think the Member is very aware of the approach that it has to be more than us. I've certainly championed the idea of a western energy strategy, a western energy alliance and so on, as a way of dealing with these broader issues than just our territory.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary To Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Premier clarify a bit further how he sees those broad initiatives moving forward in the time this Assembly has left and in the meetings that he may have available with his colleagues as Premier? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 388-15(5): Territorial Land Use Plans

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the biggest challenges we have on development, I think everyone would agree, are probably coming from Alberta, given the amount of development happening and the importance of what they do to the Mackenzie basin, which takes us all the way down the Mackenzie Valley to the Delta. Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that we have to do is collect better baseline information. I don't think we have the information we need and we're going to do that. Second is we have to, as part of the Mackenzie basin study, begin to work more bilaterally with Alberta than has been the case in the past, and I intend to start that as soon as I have time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I just have a question I was going to ask that probably should go to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, but since he's not here I think I'll ask the Minister of Finance. I guess the Minister of Finance should be working in concert with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to address this taxation issue, the property taxation issue of arrears that people are accumulating and continue to accumulate to this day. I just want to ask, the last time I spoke with the Minister he talked about setting up a working group to address this issue, working with the communities. I just want to ask the Minister of Finance, who probably should be involved in this working group, if any progress has been made to develop a working group, if there is a working group, and what progress is being made in this area, if any? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. I'd like to remind Members of the rules of the House; making reference to people who are not present in the House. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of the property assessment and taxation is one that has, yes, indeed, plagued a couple of the communities in the Northwest Territories and not all taxpayers in those communities. It's been an issue that's been ongoing. We've worked with the Member for Tu Nedhe, as well as the community, trying to get a process under way. Much contact has been made between the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs in coordination with Finance. On the Finance side of it, we follow the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, which clearly sets out guidelines of informing residents of taxes due and arrears that get calculated at a percentage. It is all within the act. We follow that process on an annual basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there are rules that this government has to abide by, but it seems like the aboriginal governments or the aboriginal people who get these arrears aren't abiding by the acts themselves. So I guess we have to ask the question, how far do we let this go? We have property tax statements here dating back to 1991. Do we let it go another 15 or 16 years, Mr. Speaker? When can we actually sit down with these aboriginal governments, the Department of Finance, Municipal...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. I heard a question there. We will allow the Minister to answer. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of arrears is a troubling one. Again, it is not just aboriginal people in communities. That has been one of the issues from one of the communities, is the fact that aboriginal people in that community should not have to pay taxes, but quite clearly, within our act and the fact that that community is not on a reserve, the Taxation Act applies to each citizen in that community. We have aboriginal people in that community paying taxes as well. The issue is, should we act on it? We should be following our act. In fact, it should have stepped in many years ago and initiated the process that is there, and that is to recover the losses.

In municipalities where there is a taxation authority existing already, that does happen. When communities do not receive their property taxes, they put that property up for sale after giving the owner due notice. We have been trying to work with the communities. The table there has been left open. Quite clearly, the last correspondence with Minister McLeod in that area has been informing the fact that the act applies and that the GNWT does have that authority to work through that area. Of course, we hope to come up with a solution with the individual taxpayers. That is the preferable route we would like to go. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the message is let's all get in on the act, I guess to all these residents with \$20,000 outstanding. I just want to ask the Minister if he can commit to actually getting a working group established, that people with \$20,000 in arrears can actually pick up the phone, phone them, set up a payment plan, a work plan that would work for them so they don't have to hang onto these letters? They are actually working with the government to try and resolve the issue. Can the Minister commit to getting some committee working group set up in the NWT so people can contact them and get this issue out of their way? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 389-15(5): Property Tax Arrears

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, part of the assessment that goes out, the notification there, is that property owners have an opportunity to appeal the assessment that has been given through an appeal board. That is one of the processes that is available immediately. We have tried, for example, in one of the communities in Tu Nedhe, to work with them for more immediate assessment, a physical assessment. That was, again, working through the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and myself, and the staff, and the Member, and meeting with the community leaders to set up a process. Unfortunately, that did not proceed. That option is there as well, but, gladly, I will sit down with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and work out a process where we can contact those in arrears and try to set up a payment plan. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for Mr. Bell, the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment. It relates to the socio-economic agreement that was recently signed with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline proponents. Mr. Speaker, this agreement goes to great lengths, and so it should, to stipulate the hiring advantages that should be given to aboriginal and indigenous northerners. Mr. Speaker, there is another category identified, that of NWT resident, that I think is left out quite high and dry in this, Mr. Speaker. This is the point of my question where, in agreements with the diamond mines, we have stipulated at least some residency requirement in order to be counted. However, Mr. Speaker, the socio-economic agreement says only that... This is the definition of an NWT resident: it means any individual who makes a representation or provides evidence that in any case can be relied on by an operator or contractor. I won't get any further. The point is any individual who makes a representation can be counted as a northern resident.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government betray the interests of long-term resident northerners in signing away their advantage to get hired on ahead of just about anybody else?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, the Member indicated that he wouldn't go any further, but I think he should go further. If we compare it to the De Beers agreement or Diavik agreement, we have NWT residents that are very similar. It is about providing proof, as one has to do in the MGP SEA, that one is a northern resident. So the standard has not been diminished in that respect. You are still required to provide proof, just as you are in the Diavik agreement, just as you are in the De Beers agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the Minister to pick it up and have a really close look at it because there is a very small two-letter word in here. The word is "or." Let's get into it then. The NWT resident means any individual who makes a representation or provides evidence that is in either case reasonably relied on, et cetera, et cetera. It is that, or that is the betrayal, Mr. Speaker. So anybody can walk in and say I am a northerner. Bingo. They are hired, but the guy who is invested and his family has been here perhaps for generations is on no better terms. Mr. Speaker, does the SEA set any hiring targets for northerners by contractors or operators, as we have done with all other major development projects in the NWT?

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

Further Return To Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, the Member knows the answer to the second question. He knows that 3,000 jobs will be made available for northerners. I think he probably also knows that fewer than 2,000 people in the Northwest Territories are currently unemployed. Mr. Speaker, it is important to keep perspective. This project is so massive, anybody in the Northwest Territories who is prepared to build the capacity and take the training required is going to get work on this project, Mr. Speaker. That was the aim of this government; to ensure that, in fact, would be the case. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

MR. BRADEN: And so is everybody else in the country and the world eligible on an equal footing with northerners. That is the part that the Minister does not get, Mr. Speaker. I have one more question here, Mr. Speaker. We are already seeing jobs and revenues literally flying out of the North, flying out of our communities from the diamond mines. Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing that our government has, in effect, agreed in writing that northerners will have no advantage. Will the Minister be readdressing this betrayal of northerners in further agreements on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline?

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

Further Return To Question 390-15(5): Residency Requirement Under The Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Agreement

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric is incredible. We would be prepared to brief the Member again, as we did a couple of nights ago, if that is required. Anybody from around the world on equal footing. Well, unless they live in Deline, unless they live in Fort

Resolution, they are not going to get their travel paid to the worksite, Mr. Speaker. If they are not a northern resident, they are not going to be eligible to participate in our \$21 million training fund, Mr. Speaker. It is just ludicrous that this has been a betrayal. This is, in fact, an unprecedented agreement in the energy industry. We take what we have learned from the diamond agreements and we have ratcheted it up, Mr. Speaker. It is an incredible agreement that we should be proud of, that we spent a lot of time working on and, if the Member chooses to only see the glass half full, then that is his choice, but it is a shame. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Protected Areas Strategy of the Mackenzie Valley five-year action plan, the GNWT has committed to protecting a network of culturally significant and ecological representative areas prior or concurrently with the development of the Mackenzie gas pipeline. The Territorial Parks Act allows for the designation of wilderness and cultural conservation areas. Does the Minister of ITI intend to use the Territorial Parks Act to meet its commitment under the action plan?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a good question. I appreciate the question. As Members know, it was this government that took the lead in funding the PAS, some \$17 million with the NGOs, with the federal government, but we came out when it was apparent that somebody had to make the first move and committed the funds. It is certainly something this government is proud of.

---Applause

We are not imposing any one solution on communities, Mr. Speaker. We are going to be flexible. It is key, though, that it is driven by the desires and the wishes of the communities. That is, in fact, what we are willing to work with. So if territorial parks legislation can assist as the folks in Wrigley believe it can, we are prepared to sit down and talk about how. I know in the Sahtu, there are some arrangements being made with Parks Canada in terms of an interim land withdrawal. So whatever the vehicle, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to get this done. Protected Areas Strategy support is critical. We will provide that support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the Minister be able to commit to meet with the Sahtu representatives within the life of this government? Next

month, next week? How soon can we get that commitment? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. ENR has funded a regional coordinator position. I think that funding started in 2006 as a pilot to help us work better as a government in the Sahtu region to make sure we get some of these protected area strategies and some of these ideas to fruition. So we are prepared to sit down right now, Mr. Speaker, as soon as a delegation from the Sahtu, as soon as a committee from the Sahtu is prepared to sit down with our officials. I suspect it would be led by ENR and the coordinator would play a role, but we are more than happy and prepared to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why has the department failed to participate as an NWT PAS sponsoring agency? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 391-15(5): Candidate Protected Areas In The Sahtu Region

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to act as a sponsoring agency in any number of cases. We want to sit down, though, and talk with the communities about whether or not that is, in fact, the most expedited, the best course of action going forward. I think there are a number of aims, objectives and goals to be achieved in each of the regions, in each of the sensitive eco areas. We just want to simply make sure that territorial parks legislation used, and ITI as a sponsoring agency, is the most effective way to do that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Question 392-15(5): Legislative Priorities

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. It is in follow up to these answers earlier that seem to suggest that the Standing Committee on Social Programs is very powerful and the Minister will follow the direction accordingly. Mr. Speaker, SCAN legislation, as we know, went through consultation from November 1st to January 19th. We did not receive the legislative proposal until February 5th. We had our long evening meeting last night. The Minister is stomping at the bit to see our response even though there are at least three remaining questions. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Social Programs reviewed a legislative proposal on the Maintenance Enforcement Act which would prevent some of the parents, both Mom and Dad, who are not paying child support from obtaining a licence. We did that review on February 1st, 2006. We responded on March 7th, 2006. As of now, we are told that this legislation will not see the

light of day. I would like to know why it is that that committee response has not been heard in almost a year when SCAN legislation, the Minister wants a response in a week. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just caution Members not to make reference to legislation that is before the House. I will allow the Minister to respond to the question. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 392-15(5): Legislative Priorities

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government, as Members know, has been working with committee members, with Caucus, to iron out the legislative priorities and legislative agenda. It has been pretty clear from our discussions -- I am not going to get into them in detail -- much of them in Caucus. It is probably not appropriate that I talk about that forum and the discussions here, but suffice it to say we did get the message very clear from committee as to what some legislative priorities were. I think we all recognize that there will be some delay in some of the smaller bills so that some of the bigger priorities can move forward and we can be assured that we will be able to deliver on those things in the life of this government. We are talking about things like the Liquor Act, Mr. Speaker. So we do aim to bring the priorities forward and move forward. Will the entire legislative agenda be accomplished before the end of the life of this government? I doubt it will, but we will certainly work as hard and as diligently as we can to get all of the bills brought forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. I will caution Members if they are going to speak or ask questions on a document, that they should table it in the House before. Ms. Lee, do you have a supplementary question? Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 392-15(5): Legislative Priorities

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that exercise of waffling and avoiding, I did not hear the answer. I would like to know why, Mr. Speaker; a very specific question. I would like to know why a legislative proposal from the government that had responses from this side of the table has not received a response for over a year when he is willing to push every other thing? Is he saying that it is the fault of the entire Caucus that can't make that push, or does the Minister not have any power to control his legislative agenda? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I am going to rule that question out of order. We are asking questions on a document that is not before the House.

---Ruled Out of Order

Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to Mr. Braden's questions about the reference to northern residency in the socio-economic agreement, I am at a bit of a loss to understand exactly what the issue is, but I think, for the benefit of the public,

we should try to bring it to light. In developing the socio-economic agreement, the Minister must have used his experience and knowledge of former agreements of this nature and also probably some legal advice as to what could be included in this agreement. As a background, can the Minister tell us if he knows of any reason why a resource development company operating in the North desperate for skilled and unskilled labour in a highly competitive labour market would not consider a capable northern candidate to be a prime candidate for employment in their operations here in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine why a company wouldn't want to use northern labour, especially given the fact that the labour market is so tight in Canada, especially western Canada. They have to look north first. It only makes business sense. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his capacity as Minister of ITI, I would like to ask the Minister if he has any documented evidence from northerners who want to work for resource development companies in the North who have been unable to obtain employment? If there are such instances, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of them. I would like to ask the Minister if he is aware of any. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I can think of maybe a couple of inquiries over the course of the last three years of my capacity as Minister of ITI of people who were concerned that they lost a job at the mines, or weren't able to get a job at the mines. I can't speak to every case, obviously, but I think invariably one of the things that we find is the people don't have the required skills or training oftentimes, Mr. Speaker. That is not always the case, but I think there are also sometimes lifestyle challenges or choices that people have made. It is our job, as government, to work with people to make sure they get the training they need to be successful and take part in our economy. Obviously, the Minister for ECE and I are very much involved in trying to make that happen. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In conclusion, for the record, Minister Bell can confirm that this government and the companies involved in resource development in the Northwest Territories are committed to hiring northerners, training northerners and moving northerners on career development paths within their corporations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 393-15(5): Resource Development Employment Opportunities For Northerners

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, my discussions with the mining companies and the oil and gas companies, they very much recognize that this is in their best interests. They are here in the North, are going to ensure that the benefits stay in the North, that they hire northerners, that they are involved in training northerners. I think we've got some very good corporate citizens in the North who are, in fact, adding value.

I should point out that there are differences between this SEA and past SEAs with the mines. The past SEAs with the mines came under the auspices of the Fair Practices Act. We now have human rights legislation and we have to see these agreements through that light. We have to make sure that the agreements are legal. There are mobility provisions under the Charter; we couldn't run afoul of those, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you, the test is much higher. We now have to prove that any hiring preference is being given to a disadvantaged group. That was one of our challenges with the blanket of NWT residents, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are, once again, for the Premier as a follow-up to discussion of the previous question. Mr. Speaker, clearly we have to get organized as a territory to deal with the issues of development, cumulative impact in the territory. There's a lot of trans-boundary issues as well, that we have to address. Right now we have the Deninu...(inaudible)...people and people from the Deh Cho striking out on their own to try to protect what they see are pressures on their water interests. I'd like to ask the Premier, as we look at these land use plans dealing with all these complex issues, how does he see getting folks together, the various governments, to, in fact, advance the work on this file? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been appealing to aboriginal leaders, as have other Members in this House, that we all have to work together, that there's a bigger issue that we have to resolve than our own community or regional issues, that this has to happen. Mr. Speaker, I have had meetings with the regional leaders. I intend to have another one as soon as we can get it organized. That has to be the starting point, Mr. Speaker. As I speak today, I know our people are out in the communities talking about the common issues around resource revenue sharing and devolution, in particular. Devolution means having our own responsibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, devolution and resource sharing are important issues as cumulative impact is, I believe, of equal importance. We are going to have to be involved in very many tables. The issue of a common strategy with the aboriginal governments in the time that is left, does the Premier envision the ability to be able to come up with a position? For example, to go to Alberta as they proceed with the expansion of the McMurray oil sands when there are all these great concerns. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Devolution means control and responsibility over our land and water both for development purposes but also for protection purposes. Mr. Speaker, it's not all just about getting more money out of the system; it's also protecting our land that we've got to work together on.

SOME HON MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this is bigger than just a territorial issue; that we can't just look within our boundaries. We also have to look at the whole system in Western Canada, particularly in the Mackenzie River basin, and I intend to meet with the Premier of Alberta as soon as I can. I intend to have our people meet with others in Alberta to try and get a handle on what is happening, what their long-term plans are and how we fit into that; whether it's the hydro projects, oil and gas development, or whatever it may be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The time for question period has expired. I'll allow the Member a final supplementary. Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary To Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final question. Could the Premier clarify, since he didn't quite get to that particular part of my last question, how does he see us addressing the continued rapid expansion in the McMurray tar sands when we'd have aboriginal governments there on their own and we have so many concerns as a downstream jurisdiction? How does he see us working more effectively with the aboriginal governments to address those concerns?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 394-15(5): Corporate Efforts With Aboriginal Government To Address Impacts Of Resource Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have to work on two major things. One is we have to work with Alberta to understand what their vision is, what their plans are, what their aspirations are, both for protection and also for development. Second, Mr. Speaker, we have to work more effectively with the aboriginal governments to make sure that they also understand their responsibilities, the authorities that they have.

Mr. Speaker, what happens in McMurray has an impact, potentially, on what's happening as far down the river as the Delta, so we all have to pay attention to what's going on here. I am equally concerned with potential hydro projects that could be controlling the waters that flow into Great Slave Lake and all the way down the valley. That's important that we understand where we can legitimately intervene and where we may not be able to. Mr. Speaker, there's existing claims; there's existing processes that are in place. Those have to be respected. There are land and water boards that we have in the Northwest Territories. Those have roles to play and their authorities and responsibilities also have to be respected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Question 50-15(5): Income Support Clients

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

1. What is the number of income support clients between the ages of 18 to 30?
2. What is the breakdown of gender of income support clients between the ages of 18 to 30?
3. What are the levels of education of the income support clients between the ages of 18 to 30?
4. What is the average length of time a client is on income support?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Written questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 51-15(5): Sahtu Region Protected Areas

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Given that the mandate for the action plan extends only until 2009, could the Minister please provide a date of when the department intends to use the Territorial Parks Act for new protected areas that will meet the representation objectives of the PAS?

Question 52-15(5): Sahtu Region Roads And Bridges

My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

1. Can the Minister outline a concrete plan that shows how the Sahtu winter roads will improve road access, including safety and maintenance?
2. When does the department plan to meet with Sahtu leaders to report on the details for approving winter roads?
3. Can the Minister provide to me the various offices outside the Sahtu region that have transportation responsibilities like the Mackenzie Valley winter road and marine services?
4. When will the Sahtu Bridge be completed?
5. What is the Transportation Minister's strategy to develop the Mackenzie Valley road to the Mackenzie gas pipeline?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Written questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the chair of Yellowknife Education District No. 1, and a trustee with the division, Mr. Duff Spence; Terry Brookes and Duff Spence in the audience today.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Returns to written questions. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 11: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**Tabled Document 103-15(5): Northwest Territories Law Foundation 24th Annual Report**

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Law Foundation 24th Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 18, 19, 21, Committee Reports 7, 8, 9 and 10, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 16: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'll call Committee of the Whole back to order. We have several items in front of us. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee would like to continue with Bill 21, Appropriation Act 2007-2008, and our review of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Should we conclude that, to start the Department of Transportation, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. We'll do that right after lunch.

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CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. I call Committee of the Whole back to order. We have the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to conclude. I will ask Mr. Dent if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, Madam Chair, please.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please escort the witnesses into the Chamber?

Mr. Dent, Mr. Daniels, Mr. Devitt, welcome back to the witness table. We are on page 8-39, information item, detail of funding allocated to education authorities, agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Information item, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, on page 8-39, I would like to pursue a little bit more detail. Madam Chair, the

information presented on this page details the funding that is provided to the one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine different education authorities plus the Western Arctic Leadership Program in Fort Smith. It details the number of funded positions.

Madam Chair, we note that our allocated positions for this current year are 1,051 jobs among those authorities and that is increasing to 1,077. That's 26 new positions. The information for each agency or council or authority is before us in terms of where they are going, but I was wondering if the Minister could give us any kind of comment about what is driving these increases in staff. I am wondering if there is a trend here. Are we seeing more positions created for administration or classroom assistants or specialties? Just what is the driver here for the 26 new positions that we're funding, Madam Chair? Which, by the way, are adding \$12 million onto the allocation here.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The driver for the increase in the number of teachers is the reduction of the PTR that we are proposing to accomplish by bringing in physical activity and trades training.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. What is the capacity of the labour force, Madam Chair, to enable us to hire, to recruit these new positions? Is the availability of teachers or qualified people relatively in our favour? How are we doing on the staffing side in general, Madam Chair?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are always areas in which there are challenges to find teachers. Sometimes to find the right match between a teacher and a community is a challenge. In general, there are more applicants to teach in the Northwest Territories each year than there are positions.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know in working on aspects of recruiting staff in the small communities, Madam Chair, the more isolated communities, one chronic challenge has been housing and supplying good quality housing that teachers can afford and that suits their needs. I was wondering, Madam Chair, if the Minister could advise if this was still one of the barriers that we're experiencing in small communities when it comes to recruiting and retaining teaching staff, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is no question that housing is a challenge, in particular in our smaller communities, for GNWT staff, teachers included. Over the past couple of years, I have worked with our partners, the DEC's and the NWTTA, to make sure that on their websites and when they are

talking to potential hires that they are making people aware of the kind of housing that will be available and what the costs are. We are finding that, while there are still challenges, we are finding that there are fewer shocks and less surprise when people arrive in our communities.

There are sometimes significant challenges. We had one or two communities this fall where there was quite a bit of work that the DEC had to undertake to make sure that housing was available. Through ECE and the Housing Corporation, we were able to resolve that, but it does remain a challenge.

One of the things I have asked DEC's to do as early as possible when they know they are going to have new staff come in, is identify areas where there is a problem so that I can work with the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation to see if there isn't some way we can ensure that some market housing is available in a community where it might be needed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dent. I have a question on this page. I am going to ask Mr. Pokiak if he would take the chair, please.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the Western Arctic Leadership Program, I wanted to ask the Minister a few questions about that. I see there is a \$275,000 line item in there for that program. I would like to ask the Minister how students are selected for the Western Arctic Leadership Program. Is the \$275,000 their entire budget? Is it offset by contributions from other sources? How many students does this program serve? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't believe, or I wouldn't expect, that the \$275,000 is the entire budget for the Western Arctic Leadership Program. I don't have it with me what other funds they might be getting. I know in the past they used to get funding from one of the oil companies. As well, I know they undertake a significant amount of fundraising. In terms of how students are selected, this is a non-profit organization, a registered society. The board will be responsible for choosing the students who attend that program.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, \$275,000 going into this program from public money, not that it's not a worthwhile program, but one would think that the process for applying or referring students would be a little more transparent than that. Is the Minister saying the department has no role whatsoever or schools in selecting or suggesting participants for the Western Arctic Leadership Program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department has taken a look at the process and have felt

on previous reviews that the process was reasonable and balanced. So the manner in which students are selected has been reviewed, but the department is not active in the review of each potential student. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. How many students are enrolled in the Western Arctic Leadership Program in a given year?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am advised that a typical year would be between 12 to 16.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I assume that the purpose of the Western Arctic Leadership Program is to identify...I don't even know what the vision or mission statement is. I am assuming that because it's called the Western Arctic Leadership Program that it has something to do with selecting students that have potential for leadership and adding extra activities to their education curriculum that would result in that occurring.

If the department funds this and has done for many years, it kind of begs the question of whether or not the department would entertain proposals from any other non-profit organization that would be interested in educating students for emphasis on different things. For example, an elite athlete's education program or perhaps some non-profit organization that wanted to train students to go into certain areas of profession, maybe people who would like to integrate religious training into an education program. This is one, it's a stand-alone. Would the department entertain proposals from other interest groups, NGOs, non-profit organizations, societies, that would also like to train or educate students with a particular emphasis? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This program isn't built around a certain emphasis as much as it is built around supports for students to ensure success. The program is one where students attend a regular school. They attend a school in Fort Smith. What the program does is it ensures the students have supports in the evenings for ensuring they can get...if they need tutoring or support for doing homework, ensuring that those kinds of supports or additional supports are available. There are some extracurricular activities that they raise funds to participate in; going on the land trips is certainly one of the things I have seen the students do.

The curriculum that the students follow is the main curriculum. This is providing extra supports to help students generally from the smallest communities to have access to a broader range of programming than they might in their home community.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It sounds like a pretty nice arrangement for some students, for those 12 to 16 students who get to participate in it. When you talk about the program, and after-hours program and that being created to put emphasis on success, does the Department of Education, Culture and Employment do anything to monitor the success of the students enrolled in that program? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the obvious ways that we would monitor success would be in graduation rates, and the graduation rates are good from that program.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I were a parent of a child that fit this criteria from a small community and I wanted my son or daughter enrolled in this program, how would I go about gaining access or entrance into such a program? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Typically in smaller communities, the applications are made available through schools. The school counsellor would know how to get an application in. If that isn't found, you can contact the Western Arctic Leadership Program and they'd be, I'm sure, prepared to send you an application form.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one final thing and I'm sure the Minister probably doesn't have it at his fingertips, but I would like to know if he would commit to provide to me not the names, but the communities asked by those who are currently enrolled in the Western Arctic Leadership Program. I'd like to see what communities they're from. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my final question.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I'll do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. We're on information item, page 8-39.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Detail on funding allocated to education authorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we go to 8-42? Information item, college programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. POKIAK: Page 8-43, information item, college funding allocation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 8-44, information item, work performed on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 8-45, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued, \$6.479 million. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. On page 8-45 is a little bit of detail on work performed on behalf of others, so these are contracts or services that we agree to deliver through our system, and one of them is on behalf of the Government of Canada. It's called the Millennium Scholarship Foundation Agreement, whereby the department administers awards made to post-secondary students through the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. We see \$40,000 is budgeted to continue in the new year, Mr. Chairman, but I wanted to ask the Minister about the continuance of the Canada Millennium Scholarship. I understand it has been discontinued or cancelled by the new federal government, and I'm wondering how this is going to impact northern students through the delivery of this scholarship allowance, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to make it clear, this is the money we get to cover the administrative costs of delivering the scholarship on behalf of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

The issue of the foundation's funding coming to an end in the year 2008 has been something that has been up for discussion among Ministers of Education for some time now. At our meeting two weeks ago, Ministers agreed that we would send a joint letter, on behalf of all Ministers of Education from Canada, to the federal government encouraging them to recommit the funding for non-repayable scholarships to Canadian students. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. BRADEN: So all Education Ministers in Canada are appealing to the federal government to continue this program. It is expiring in April of 2008. How are we doing? What are the chances that, indeed, the federal government will continue to come around, Mr. Chairman, and if not, would this Department of Education look at filling in, or taking over, or helping out with the loss of this program if it's not restored, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Education Ministers are, at this point, confident that the federal government is sincere in the comments it's made, that it really strongly supports post-secondary and that it has a role to play in ensuring that Canadians have the opportunity to attend post-secondary studies. So from

that we're hoping that they will continue some kind of program.

There is not unanimous support among Education Ministers for this specific program. So the Ministers have agreed that the letter should say we would like to see Canada recommit to a program that ensures that Canadians have access to non-repayable funding, grants as issued by the foundation. But the mechanism by which they may be delivered, many provinces, such as Quebec and Alberta, the money flowed to them to be handed out through their system rather than going through a foundation. So there isn't a unanimous push for the foundation being there.

The position of the Northwest Territories is one that we want to see the money come to northern students, whether it's through a foundation or directly through a contribution that we get from Canada, that we provide their flag or recognition for them on the cheque when it goes, or on the statement that goes to the student. We're open to either approach. But we, like the rest of Canada, are at this point trusting that the federal government will follow through on its commitment, or its public statements to support post-secondary education.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to hear about the efforts to continue this. I know of a number of students in the NWT who have received and benefited from this. My own daughter was one of them, and it makes an enormous difference to a young person to be able to get some help this way. So I certainly endorse the efforts that the Minister has talked about and I look forward to seeing the federal government come back to the table on this one. That's all, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): We're on page 8-45, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued, \$6.479 million. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman, I want to raise an issue that I had talked to the Minister about but I would just like to put it on record here, and that has to do with the shortage of labour for employers in Yellowknife and I'm sure in other places in the Territories where there are a lot of activities happening. Especially the fast-food places, franchises that operate in Yellowknife. Not the highest paying job, but nevertheless I think the employers are making their best efforts to stay competitive and they are falling victims of a really heated market, and competing with places like Alberta where we often hear of employers giving incentives like buying I-pods or sending young people to programs after so many months of employment in order to attract young people to work in these places and to keep them there. There's a bit of that going on here in places like A&W, or Tim Horton's or Pizza Hut. I'm just saying all the names in general are really challenged to find people who could be fully employed to ensure that the operations can continue, especially during holiday times. I know that one of the businesses, the owners had to cancel pre-planned holidays because a lot of employees quit before holidays. They have a hard time finding people in the summertime, and a lot of them are resorting to using, I don't know, by word or mouth and informally, by previous visitors, they're using student visitors or university students from abroad who come to Canada on a yearly visa with a limited

eligibility to work and make a little bit of money to help them with visiting and some of them make a stop in Yellowknife and work in these places.

I do appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that that is not exactly the jurisdiction of the NWT perhaps, but it's something the Minister is responsible for labour and I see here Labour Market Development Agreement. I realize it's to do with the Employment Insurance Act, but this is an issue that I would like the Minister to pay more attention to.

Another thing is, I was at a all-day meeting, I think Walk a Mile, Walk a Mile With Me or Walk a Mile in My Shoes. It was Walk a Mile. A conference where a lot of immigrants and the people who serve immigrants in our community were there. I know that ECE staff was there and there were lots and lots of questions and concerns being expressed there from people who are Canadian citizens but are new to Canada and none of them are really able to work in the fields that they're trained at. There was one lady who has, I think, a Masters degree in Engineering and the best job she could get in Yellowknife is working in an office. There's nothing wrong with that, it's just that if you have skills and education that you can contribute, I think the government's...I think our government can do more to play our part in working with our federal counterparts to address that.

So, you know, the labour market as a whole, I'd like to ask the Minister what work he's doing to address the...I guess those are two separate questions, but maybe I could just give it to him to see if he could update the House as to what he's working on in those two files. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've asked the department to canvass employers in the Northwest Territories; not all employers, but to try to hit a cross-section to find out where there are labour shortages so we have a better idea of where those might be. I'm hoping that through conversations with some individual employers and with the chambers of commerce we'll get an indication of where there may be some need for us to look at more immigration.

We've also taken a look at what the Yukon does and they have a contract with the federal government to deliver more expanded immigration services than what we're doing right now. We're taking a look at their contract and exploring whether or not it may be wise for us to expand into that area. We're also working with the federal government to become more aware of some of the work that they're doing by having one of our people work with a committee in Alberta to gain an understanding of another area where we can expand into immigration.

I had hoped to meet with the federal Minister to talk about immigration. The meeting was scheduled for early January, but when the federal Cabinet shuffle took place and the Minister changed, that meeting got postponed and we have not yet been able to get it back on. So we are interested in following up on this. We think there may be some room for our government to expand in the area of immigration and I'm hoping to have some better answers within the next two months. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to be clear that I don't think...I'm not asking for our resources to be necessarily put toward attracting more immigrants. Although, being an immigrant myself, I think that they're Yellowknife and NWT's best kept secret and more in Canada should come here and find their opportunities. But I'm just talking about the ones that are here already. I knew of a case where a student who's here because her father works for one of the companies in the diamond industry, and in the southern jurisdictions immigration, well, student visa or temporary visa for people like her have been adapted for those students to work while they're studying here because they are foreign residents still and her dad is here to work for a temporary time. All she needed was a change in policy, I think, in Aurora College to make it possible for her to take one of their jobs on campus, because I think that's the limited opportunities that allow her to work.

Second thing is, there are a lot of people already here. We don't have to concentrate on attracting more people from other parts. That's the federal government's jurisdiction. But there are a lot of immigrants here in Yellowknife already who have education and who all qualify to do a lot of jobs that are available to us and they can't get their credentials. Just a lot of things that you need as a first-time immigrant to get into your society and become productive citizens and be able to offer everything that they have to offer. So I think this is more than just one labour situation issue. It involves students, professionals, there may be nurses and doctors and engineers who we desperately need in Yellowknife who could take on those jobs if they could only get through some of the red tape.

So I would like to encourage the Minister to look at the possibility of either taking on those services, also get involved with the federal government to push that agenda along, and I'd be happy to hear from him on any of the findings or results that he could report to us. I know our social programs agenda is really getting filled up with all the commitments he's made already, but I think I'll add that on the list of it. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be happy to meet with the standing committee to talk about what we see as opportunities in the immigration field. Not that we're going to be recruiting; it is more to deal with employers who may need to, or there may be a niche in the market that needs to, be accommodated, or there may be people who want to join friends and family who have already moved to the Territories that we would like to be better accommodated than is happening right now.

The department was briefed last week on a process by which the federal government is hoping to improve the prior learning and recognition of credentials. That is an area that it would be very difficult for us to get into, because typically it's going to be one where, for instance, a doctor has to have passed the Canadian boards and that's a federal, or not a federal, but it's a Canadian standard, not one that we can sort of interfere in. But there may be some ways that the federal government can, through their process, help to ensure better access to foreign, paying professionals to get their credentials examined.

In terms of employment or in terms of employment for students, it's the similar process in the Northwest

Territories. There is an issue, I understand, with the college's own rules only allowing Canadian citizens to be employed by the college. I believe they'll also take landed immigrants. It would be an issue where the college would have to take a look at their rules and make some changes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister on this page here about the reduction of the University and College Entrance Program for status Indians or for Inuit enrolment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: I was hoping nobody would notice that, Mr. Chairman. In fact, we have written to the federal government and advised them that we will not deliver that program. I guess the only reason that we can say that the figure is here is that we're hoping the federal government will come to its senses and agree that they should give us the money and allow us to administer it under our rules. But at this point, we are not prepared...If the rules don't change we're not prepared to deliver that program through our offices. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I also hope that the federal government comes to their senses on many other issues, but this one, particularly in this case here, in that the federal government allows the Northwest Territories to give some flexibility in terms of how this program can be and should be administrated to include the forgotten people, the Metis people into this program. I think the Minister has spoken in the past about his difficulty, and a lot of people in the Northwest Territories have spoken to me in my region about the discrimination of this program in terms of the policies, and I certainly will support the Minister on this in terms of his position because I think it's flawed, it's wrong, the federal government has got it wrong and we should give it back to them. So again, this program I want to ask the Minister, the reduction, but he's also indicated that his department were into administering this program. Is there a deadline here, or just as of April 1st, or when will we see that the federal government will assume the responsibility of this program that does not recognize Metis people in their program as advertised in the News/North as use a program that encourages all aboriginal people. They forget the Metis people, so it's bad advertising on behalf of their part. So I'm not going to say anything further on that. I just want to ask the Minister on this shameful program.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We gave notice to the federal government that as of March 31st we would no longer be responsible for delivering the program. About two weeks ago, I was talking to the parliamentary secretary, to Mr. Prentice, and asked him if he had any idea of how this program was going to be delivered in the Northwest Territories. He, at that time, couldn't tell me, but invited me to follow up with him by

phone to see if we could get some information on that. As soon as I'm able to find out how the federal government plans to administer the program, I'll endeavour to let Members know so that they can let their constituents know how to apply in the future for the program.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya, anything else?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the future conversations that the Minister is going to have with Minister Prentice, I'd like to ask the Minister, has he noticed any type of a shift in terms of the Minister's or the department's view, the Department of Indian Affairs view on this program in terms of its changing of the definition that will include Metis people that will be into this program? Or it's just business as usual and that they're going to just advise the Minister on how this program is going to be administered should the GNWT continue to be firm on their commitment not to have this program administered as part of our programs. I just want to know if there's any light or hope that maybe the department would reconsider on this specific definition on aboriginal that must include the Metis people. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The last letter I received from Minister Prentice clearly stated that the federal government was not prepared to change the definition or to change the parameters for how the program was operated.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I look forward to the Minister's, again, communication to us and so we can communicate to our people in our region. I hope we don't have to wait for another hundred years before he gives us an answer. Louis Riel must be rolling in his grave on this issue here, Mr. Speaker. I think a lot of other Metis people in the Northwest Territories are quite upset with Minister Prentice in terms of how this program is rolling out and no one is really speaking on it. I think the Minister is doing the honourable thing by giving it back to the horse.

---Interjection

MR. YAKELEYA: That's right. I think Metis people are being treated as second-class aboriginals in Canada. I'm going to leave it at that, Mr. Chairman, in terms of this issue here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent, would you like to make any comments?

HON. CHARLES DENT: I'll make sure that we report back to the Members as soon as possible.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. We're on page 8-45, information item, work performed on behalf of others continued, \$6.479 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can I ask the Members to turn to page 8-7? Department summary, Education, Culture

and Employment, operations expenditure summary, \$286.150 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Oh, sorry. I was just trying to tell you that I have questions when you get to capital. Sorry.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): At this time, Members, can you turn to 7-5, infrastructure (inaudible) capital, education and culture, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$24.253 million. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, one of the line items in this capital budget is Diamond Jenness School change room upgrade, \$250,000 for 2007-2008. This number and this project has been in the capital plan now for a while. I'm not exactly sure why it hasn't been, the work hasn't been performed yet. But I'd like to ask the Minister if he is still confident that that is a sufficiently high enough number to undertake those upgrades. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this point we think that the project should be able to be completed. There may be, we're talking just about the change rooms, but there may be some changes, but at this point the information that I have is that it should be going ahead with that budget.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With almost all estimates that are done on capital projects, this is a relatively small one, but almost all estimates on capital projects after they've sat for a little while seem to increase by 10, 15, 20 percent. I guess what I really want from the Minister is assurance that this small project is going to proceed if the estimates when it goes to tender come in for slightly higher. I just don't want to see this have to go back into the capital planning process. Again, the school in Hay River has been waiting for this for quite a while. So I guess what I would like from the Minister then is assurance that even though this number is a bit old that the work will proceed regardless. We won't be going back through another costing exercise. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd love to have the authority to make that kind of promise. Unfortunately I can't make the promise. It is our intention to proceed with the project and we are hopeful that it will come in close enough to the numbers that we won't have a problem meeting the budget. But if it comes in at three or four times the budget we would have to go to the Financial Management Board and seek extra funds. And it is difficult to say because at this point the architect's been hired, but there hasn't been a lot of work done on the drawings. So to see the project be completed for the

\$250,000, we're hopeful at this point and we'll continue to keep the project in the plan. We agree that the work needs to be done and we'll do whatever we can to make sure that it gets completed this year or in the coming year.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another capital question related to Hay River then, is the issue of the funding for the expansion of more classroom space and a gymnasium for the Ecole Boreale. I recently had an opportunity to meet with representatives of that school facility and I would like to know what the process is, then, to get something moving in terms of capital for that particular project as well in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that the commission has requested a meeting with me in the next couple of weeks. I expect that is one of the issues that they are interested in following up on. At this point, the department has been focussed on working to complete the expansion that is needed at Ecole Allain St-Cyr. Given the need for us to partner with Heritage Canada, we have tried to focus on one project at a time. We think that if we have the singular focus, it makes it easier to say to Heritage Canada, here is the priority, let's get this one done. As soon as we have the commitment, we can move on to the next priority. We are concerned that if we go to them and say we have two priorities, they are liable to start playing one off against the other saying, well, we can't make a decision. We haven't got enough money to do both; so unless you can tell us which is the priority, we can't move forward. We have seen that kind of negotiation take place in the past. So we are anxious to avoid opening that door and would hope that we can keep the pressure on Heritage Canada to move on Ecole Allain St-Cyr and conclude the expansion that is needed there, and then we will immediately be after Heritage Canada to expand Ecole Boreale.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. Just for clarification, Mr. Chair, and I understand what the Minister is saying about Heritage Canada and not to muddy the waters with more than one proposal. Two proposals going concurrently may result in delays. They may use it as an excuse to delay a response to anything. However, at first the Minister said that once they have a commitment to proceed with Allain St-Cyr, they would then get the proposal on the table for Ecole Boreale. In the second reference, he said that when the work is completed on Allain St-Cyr. For the clarity of folks in Hay River, I just want to know. Can you begin to work with Heritage Canada on the funding for Ecole Boreale once you just have the financial commitment in hand, in writing, for Allain St-Cyr? I just want that clarified. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister anticipate when the negotiations with Heritage Canada may be concluded for the Yellowknife project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point, I can't predict that. No.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One other matter, then, is something that is not in this capital budget but should be. That is the phone system at the Harry Camsell School in Hay River. I think the Minister is probably aware of the situation, but there are 19 classrooms there, or teaching areas, and two telephone lines. It is extremely important to the safety of the teaching staff and the students, and extremely important to the parents that they be able to communicate with the school and the school be able to communicate outside. Now, different things have occurred which have brought about a school policy whereby if a student does not come to school in the morning, the school does not automatically assume that the parents are aware of the child's absence. So there is a need to tie up the phone lines initially early in the day to confirm that absent students' parents are aware of the fact that they are not at school, make sure they didn't get lost on the way to school. There is also a need for students to communicate occasionally with their parents from the school during the day. There is a need for emergency contact should an incident occur. There are just a lot of good reasons why two phone lines in and out of a modern school with this many different areas is required. It is a safety issue, a security issue and a communication issue. In this day and age, I cannot think of a reason why you would have a phone system with only two lines in and out of a facility of this size.

Right now, the teachers in the classrooms are having to bring their own cell phones just so that they are able to communicate outside of the school. It is only about a year since this has been brought to the attention of the DEA and there was a cost estimate at that time of around \$20,000. I just don't know why a situation like this, for the amount of \$20,000, is being allowed to continue. I would like to get the Minister's comments on that. Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A project of that size would likely not be identified in the capital plan. It would come out of minor capital or O and M. We are aware of the issue. We will be working with the DEC to take a look at it in the near future.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one final thing, then. Recently, MLAs and the council of Hay River invited Mr. Dent to come to Hay River to personally

take a look at the damage in a secondary school. I understand completely why he was not able to do that. However, again, for the benefit of those folks in Hay River who are anxious for the Minister to see this school, I would like to confirm that the Minister will still, at his earliest convenience, plan a trip to Hay River where he could have a comprehensive tour of the school facility and see the kinds of challenges that are being faced there right now, which would then go to the issue of the functional review that has already been conducted and the need to get the Diamond Jenness Secondary School on the capital plan for a midlife renovation. Could the Minister commit to planning a trip at his earliest convenience? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to visit the community and take a look at the facilities. Visiting schools is one of the more pleasurable aspects of my job, so I look forward to visiting schools in the Member's community. Mr. Chair, I have already said, however, that I will do my best to ensure that the D.J. project is brought forward as we go into the business plan review this June.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to start off by thanking the Minister and the department for the inclusion of the capital dollars that are coming to some much desired projects here in Yellowknife. St. Joseph School that suffered the fire over the summer, I am really happy to see the capital dollars there for the renovation, as well as the money to complete the Sir John Franklin renovations that were started a number of years ago and, as well, the Sissons, although it is a couple of years out or a few years out, the money is in the capital plan for the renovations at Sissons as well. I would like to commend the Minister for the hard work in getting the capital dollars into these much needed projects in Yellowknife.

I wanted to ask the Minister if the \$964,000 that is scheduled to go into Sir John Franklin will complete the renovations. I know they were started a number of years ago. I am just wondering why it is taking so long to complete that project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We hope that this will complete the project. Any project we do, when you are talking about renovations to a school, we work with Public Works and they will give us the scope of what has to be done. They will then say, if you have the budget, these items would be nice to get done as well. We are at the point now, where we think that this is going to get the school to a point where it is ready to move on for another 20 years of good and useful life.

One of the reasons you don't do everything all at once is you just don't have enough money to do everything all at once. It has been a struggle, as the Member will know, for us to get the money that we need into the capital plan for all of our communities across the North. So it sometimes takes longer to get projects done than what we would like, but we recognize the need. The Members in this House

have been very supportive to making sure that we can get projects done as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I mentioned specifically the schools in Yellowknife, but I do agree that any capital money we can find and spend on schools throughout the Northwest Territories is much needed and well received. It is too bad that we didn't have more money to spend in the area of education and upgrading our schools for our children.

I wanted to ask another question about Ecole Allain St-Cyr. The Minister and I had a discussion yesterday regarding the need for physical activity in the school and the increased prevalence of childhood obesity and the fact that kids aren't getting enough exercise. I am under the impression that this addition to Ecole Allain St-Cyr here in Yellowknife is not going to include a gymnasium. This school is still without a gymnasium. I just have to wonder out loud. How could we, as a government, spend these kind of capital dollars and you couple that with what the federal government is throwing into the project, and it is still not going to have a gymnasium. Why can't we come up with some type of game plan to put a gymnasium in this school? I think it is a travesty that a school nowadays is without a gymnasium. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This goes back to the discussion that I was having with the Member for Hay River just previously. We have, with the funding that is in place now between this government and the federal government, enough money to put in place the two classrooms that we have been directed to put in place by the courts. The money is also there to complete the planning and get the first stage ready for the foundation that would incorporate a gymnasium as we are able to expand it. That is the stage that we are at right now with the federal government. We are trying to negotiate funding with Heritage Canada for that section that would include the gym.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wish the Minister and the department well in those negotiations because, again, a school without a gymnasium shouldn't be allowed to happen; not in today's day and age and not when we are talking the magnitude of capital dollars that we do have. I thank the Minister for his response.

Another item on the capital is the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. I see there is a little bit more money being spent on the heritage centre's sub-arctic gallery redevelopment. Last summer, as Members know, the museum here in Yellowknife, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, was shut down completely just in time for tourist season last summer. I just want to get a clarification from the Minister if that facility will be up and running at 100 percent for this coming tourist season. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to report that I took a visitor to Yellowknife through the heritage centre on Sunday and all areas of the building are open. So the renovation project is completed. We now have to work at redeveloping some of the displays, but I expect that by this summer the displays will be ready for viewing. They do have displays in all of the galleries right now, but some of the ramp areas haven't been set up for display yet and the orientation gallery still hasn't been set up. Those are planned to be coming, and visitors are going to be welcomed this summer.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I just wanted to thank the Minister for the work the department has done on putting this together. In a perfect world, I guess we would have more money and we could spend more money in the schools and getting things to a state where we need them. Certainly, I support the money that is being spent here today. Mahsi.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about the schools in the Sahtu. Certainly, as my colleague from Kam Lake has also expressed our appreciation for having the commitment to improve our schools, not only our region but also other communities in their due time. Regarding the Fort Good Hope Chief T'Selehye School in Fort Good Hope in terms of the time frame, I know that there are some issues that need to be resolved before we can have a firm date in terms of how we go about building a new school for Chief T'Selehye School. The Minister is expecting any type of delays that may put this project on a reverse track in terms of what time frame can we expect to break new ground for this new school in Fort Good Hope. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had hoped that we would be able to get started on this project next year, but because of the need to move the NAV Canada beacon, that is going to tip things back somewhat. We are still planning to start the planning process in this next budget year, but construction will likely be set back a bit. So construction probably won't start until 2008.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I certainly appreciate the Minister and his staff to work on this and keep focussed on the need for building this school in Fort Good Hope as is due. As the Minister is aware, it is desperately needed as any other community will make an argument for a need for their community to get a new school also. However, if the Minister could reassure the people of Fort Good Hope to know that this issue here is being looked at very carefully with his other colleague, the Minister of Transportation, in terms of how

do we get this issue in terms of NAV Canada and that result so that concrete planning and construction can happen in a time frame that would see a new school in Fort Good Hope being completed as soon as possible. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am quite confident that we will be able to move forward on the NAV Canada issue and get that space freed up. It is a good space for building a school. We are looking forward to replacing the school in Fort Good Hope.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Yes, I have one more question to the Minister, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the school in Tulita is taking shape and people are certainly very happy as the Cabinet has put funding into...(inaudible)...school in Tulita. It is taking ground in terms of we are seeing the results of the past work by this government in terms of putting our school there. Is this school here on time and on target in terms of opening up for its students that they are going to enter into this new Chief Albert Wright School in Tulita? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point, as far as I am aware, everything is on target and on budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is all I have for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a short question on an item that is not here but it has to do with the school in Yellowknife that went through some major renovations, and that is the Mildred Hall School. The work was done through a number of years between the last Assembly and I think the beginning of this one. I do recall that there were some extra expenditures that had to go through to work on some of their maintenance systems as well as other renovations. I was under the understanding that that work had been completed, but I have heard recently from the board that, in fact, there still remains a lot of work that needs to be done there. I understand that all the work in the front part has been done. It is a very, very old building. It's one of the oldest schools in the Territories. I understand that there is a lot of work that still remains to be done on the back and the windows were not replaced and such. So could I just get the Minister to tell me if anybody is looking at that to see what work remains to be done if there is anything? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was a project in this current year's budget for Mildred Hall. That money hasn't been expended because they weren't able to get the project undertaken last

summer. Our hope is that the Legislative Assembly will approve the carryover in our first supp in our next session and we will then have the money to be able to use this summer to complete that part of the project. It isn't replacing the gym, which is one thing that the school board would like to see, but it would replace, I believe it was dealing with most of the windows that need replacing.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. I'll wait for that carryover under the supp for further discussion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members, we're on page 7-5, infrastructure acquisition plan, education and culture, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$24.253 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 7-6, infrastructure acquisition plan, education and culture, infrastructure contributions, total infrastructure contributions, \$9.780 million. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the Ecole St. Joseph renovation, it's booked here for \$22 million, Mr. Chairman, over the coming three fiscal years, \$8.6 million in this fiscal year. Mr. Chairman, this project which is, of course, badly needed due to the fire at the school last year, has been advanced somewhat. It was originally booked, I understand, for about \$19.5 million; it's now clocked at \$22 million. Mr. Chairman, my concern here is...I'll ask the question specific to this project, but it also applies to all other capital projects. At the rate at which we've seen capital costs accelerate across the board, we seem to be looking at about 15 percent a year, which, when we get into these substantial projects is large amounts of money on our capital sheet, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask the Minister, especially in relation to this project here, it's already increased by \$3 million in the course of one year. What steps are we taking to ensure that the job stays at the budgeted cost? Are we really keeping a very sharp pencil on this and sharp controls to ensure that projects don't continue to escalate at such a costly rate, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have any particular expertise in building buildings in the Department of Education. We depend on the Department of Public Works to be the project manager to be those who are skilled at making sure the right decisions are made to bring a project in on budget or as close to budget as possible. What we do have is detailed standards, capital standards, that will say for a school to accommodate this many students you need to have this much circulation space, this many washrooms, this many square feet in gymnasium space, this much classroom space. So we set the standards, it's then up to Public Works to work with the architect and contractors to try and bring the project in for as low a price as possible. That's always a balance between the life of the building and the lowest cost. Clearly, you could build a building, I think we all know we could build a shed for next to nothing, but if you want something that's going to last for the 30 to 50 years that we seem to be expecting our schools to last,

you're going to have to put a significant amount of money into them per square foot.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Can I remind Members, Mr. Braden has the floor right now. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not arguing that we shouldn't invest and make substantive investment in this kind of infrastructure so that we get good value, it lasts a long time, and the lifecycle costs of running it are as low as we can get them. My question though, Mr. Chairman, is when we're presented with a budgeted cost for something, the experience of recent years has been that we can anticipate that the project is going to cost about 15 percent more by the time it's done than what we were told at the beginning. This project here, which is going to run over three years, from the \$19.5 million we were told about last year...We shouldn't kid ourselves. We're potentially looking at a 23, 24 or maybe \$25 million project by the time it's done based on our current experience. My question, Mr. Chairman, is what controls, what measures does the Minister have to ensure that the cost stays at the amount that we approve? Yes, I certainly understand when the Minister says the Department of Education doesn't have that expertise, but the Minister of Education is responsible for the dollars that are on the page here and that is where I'm asking for his degree of supervision, his control and responsibility for delivering the project as budgeted, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Minister, I depend on the Minister of Public Works to review the project and report to me what the prices are. The simple fact is that there isn't a lot of room to manoeuvre in our standards. We set the standards and we have to work to find the money to meet those standards. I recognize that growth in building costs is a significant challenge. It's been one that's bedevilled our capital plan for years. I hope that the Member is right, that it's 15 percent that we're looking at. I know that in Edmonton a public building there has gone from the price of \$50 million to \$87 million in the space of nine months. That's no change in plans; that's just what has been growth in the market because of the cost of getting construction done in the overheated Alberta economy. When you're building a public building, the expectation is that it's going to last for a substantial amount of time. There aren't that many corners that can be cut in the construction process without it impacting on that. We're a bit at the mercy of the climate and we have to hope that through the competitive process that we're going to get good prices.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Members, we're on page 7-6, infrastructure acquisition plan, Education, Culture and Employment, education and culture, infrastructure, contributions, total infrastructure contributions, \$9.780 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$34.033 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Turn to page 7-8. Infrastructure acquisition plan, advanced education and careers, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$6.312 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Infrastructure contributions, total infrastructure contributions, \$100,000. Mr. Braden

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On this page we have again more fiscal information about projects and equipment and things that we want to undertake. One of them, Mr. Chairman, was for the Deh Cho Complex Office/ Deh Cho Hall in Fort Simpson. Mr. Chairman, I seem to recall that this was a project of some attention in previous budget cycles and bills before this Assembly. Mr. Chairman, the appropriation that's being suggested here is \$5.8 million for the current year, \$2.3 million for the next year. We already spent a million on it so we have a total project value here of \$9.120 million. Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering if the Minister could just give us a quick snapshot on the history of this project, because I seem to recall that we went from a renovation to a demolition and I'm not quite certain just where we are right now with the Deh Cho project.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've been able to reach an agreement with the fire marshal that if we will do approximately \$525,000 worth of renovations to the existing hall and promise that we'll be out by May of 2008, that we won't have to spend the \$3 million that we had come forward for repairs previously. So we've been able to turn this project around from a short-term renovation into long-term replacement of the building. We expect to be able to have the new building in place to replace that before May of 2008. The total price for the building will be about \$8.6 million. We're hopeful that it will be in that range. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, I don't have all the history with me but I don't recall a number, a final number of \$9.1 million being discussed for a Deh Cho replacement project. I seem to remember something in the neighbourhood of \$4 to \$5 million. Could the Minister just fill me in a bit on the history of how this project has gone to \$9.1 million? Again, I regret if I've missed something. Perhaps the Minister could just bring me up to speed, but this looks like a new and substantially enlarged project, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we were saying the \$3 million was to start the process of renovations, it was going to cost, to renovate the building, would have cost somewhere between 12 to \$17 million, not four to five million dollars. When we were able to negotiate a bit longer period with the fire marshal, because we said it's not reasonable to put this much money into a renovation project that you're only going to get an extra 10 to 15 years out of at the most, we were able to reach an agreement that if we did some upgrades

to the sprinkler systems, some safety issues to make sure that those are dealt with in the short term, that we could invest in a new building for less money which should last us for, again, the 30 years that we expect new buildings to last us. So we think this is a far better way to spend the money.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps just a small correction and maybe I wasn't heard properly, I wasn't talking about a \$45 million project. The numbers I recall are maybe \$4 to \$5 million. I just wanted to make sure that the numbers that I was talking about were coming across clearly: \$4 to \$5 million, not \$45 million. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's all.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. That was a point of clarification for the Minister. Mr. Dent, do you have any comments? Thank you. Members, we're on 7-8. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: One comment and question to the Minister on this Deh Cho Hall. Is the department looking at other departments, maybe the feds or aboriginal organizations, that could be in this new office building, that base sort of the whole Nahendeh riding that's located in Fort Simpson? Or right now, is this the plan, the office that we have, is this the building that we're going with, to have this building be on time, on budget and on schedule to say that's what we planned? Is there any room there for an expansion? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this point we're reasonably confident that this project will move ahead with the budget we have. I've already seen sketches of what the project will look like and Public Works is working on the details of the contract. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I'm certainly glad that the old residential school is being torn down and putting something new up there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. That was more of a comment. Members, we're on page 7-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, advanced education and careers, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$6.312 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Infrastructure contributions, total infrastructure contributions, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$6.412 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total department, \$40.445 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does the committee agree that consideration of Education, Culture and Employment is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): At this time I'd like to thank Minister Dent, Mr. Daniels, and Mr. Devitt today. Sergeant-at-Arms. Thank you. Does the committee want to continue on with Transportation?

---Laughter

We'll continue with Transportation after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Next on the orders we have Transportation. I would like to ask the Minister of the Department of Transportation if he would like to provide the department's opening comments on the main estimates. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure today to present for your consideration the Department of Transportation's proposed main estimates for the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

Our core business is the operation of the territorial public transportation system. The overall proposed budget for 2007-2008 is \$88.3 million, including amortization, up from \$83 million in the current fiscal year.

The larger portion of the department's proposed main estimates for 2007-2008, \$62.8 million excluding amortization, is committed to funding O and M activities; that is, the day-to-day routine of operating and maintaining the system. This represents an 8.5 percent increase compared to the current year's main estimates.

The increase to the O and M budget is primarily a result of forced growth initiatives approved as part of the main estimates process. If approved, the department will receive an additional \$4.8 million to cover things such as the increasing costs of fuel, construction materials and maintenance contracts for highways and airports, Collective Agreement increases, preventative maintenance and rehabilitation and repair of airport facilities, and the reorganization of marine services.

Of the \$4.8 million for forced growth initiatives, \$1.2 million will address the costs associated with the reorganization of marine services and the regulatory requirement for first mates onboard the Merv Hardie, Lafferty and Louis Cardinal ferries. The reorganization was necessitated by a number of issues including the need to better manage the aging ferry infrastructure, the repatriation of ferry workers at Fort Providence and Fort Simpson, and federal transportation safety, security and environmental regulation governing ferries.

In response to an increasing workload and recognition of a shortage of skilled trade workers in the Northwest Territories, the Department of Transportation will receive additional funding to hire apprentices. A total of \$320,000 was approved for 2007-2008 for seven apprentices. This includes two electricians and five heavy-duty mechanics.

A total of \$890,000 in ongoing supplemental O and M funding was approved for two airport projects. The first for \$430,000 will cover the cost of implementing a building maintenance program at the Norman Wells, Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk airports. This will ensure that the buildings are maintained to industry standards and prevent premature deterioration that has resulted in an increasing requirement to carry out emergency repairs. The second for \$460,000 will increase funding available to address the rehabilitation and repair of airport infrastructure. This will help ensure that safety and Transport Canada certification standards are maintained. Increasing air traffic due to economic development, cost escalation and population growth are driving this initiative.

As part of this forced growth spending, the Department of Transportation will add 23 new positions in the 2007-2008 fiscal year. This includes 10 positions for ferry operations, including six first mates and four ferry workers in Fort Simpson. This also includes the seven apprentice positions just noted, four highway equipment operators required for the implementation of the 84-hour per week winter operations, and two in airport operations. The new workers will make a significant contribution to the operation and maintenance of our transportation system, enhance our response to resource development pressures and improve the overall level of service we provide to the travelling public.

The Department of Transportation's capital acquisition plan is focused on investments to improve the useful life and upgrades to existing infrastructure. For the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the plan has a total budget of \$47 million, which is approximately the same amount as the current fiscal year. The level of funding remains high due to ongoing federal infrastructure initiatives.

Non-renewable resource development including oil and gas exploration and development, the anticipated construction of the Mackenzie gas project, and diamond mining and other mineral exploration activities will continue to have a significant impact on the NWT transportation system. We are entering the fifth of six years of the Canada strategic infrastructure fund program. A total of \$24.5 million is budgeted in 2007-2008 for ongoing highway projects to address the pressures of resource development. Investments include \$2 million each for the Mackenzie highway and Ingraham Trail, \$2.5 million for the Liard Highway, \$5 million for the Dempster Highway and \$13 million for the Mackenzie Valley winter road bridge program.

The majority of the highways in the NWT were constructed in the 1960s and '70s and are nearing the end of their lifecycle. The department is rehabilitating and replacing aging infrastructure as capital funds are made available. In 2007-2008 the department proposes to invest \$10.5 million to continue with the fundamentally important programs of bridge repair, culver replacement and chipseal overlay.

The Department of Transportation proposes to expend \$9.1 million on airport infrastructure investment. Four million dollars is for the overlay of Yellowknife Airport runway 15-33. This project is being proposed with federal funding under the Airport Capital Assistance Program. An additional \$3.7 million is proposed for the Yellowknife Airport Combined Services Building to replace the existing structure, which is now 45 years old.

We are eagerly anticipating an announcement by the federal government of additional funding allocations under the renewed Canada strategic infrastructure fund and the new highways and border infrastructure fund. The additional investment will fund new capital projects as laid out in Corridors for Canada II to respond to both the pressures of resource development and to promote economic diversification. The Department of Transportation will continue to pursue the federal government to complete the Mackenzie Valley highway to the Arctic Coast as proposed in Connecting Canada.

---Applause

Very briefly, these are the highlights of the Department of Transportation's proposed main estimates for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. There are many other positive and exciting projects and initiatives that the department expects to accomplish. I am confident that the proposed budget will provide for the continued safe and reliable operation of the NWT transportation system. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to ask Mr. Ramsay of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development with regard to the Transportation department. Thank you.

Department Of Transportation

General Comments

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 25, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Transportation.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$88.3 million in operations expense and \$47 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Highway No. 3

After 23 years and \$200 million, the committee is disappointed by the poor condition of Highway No. 3 between Yellowknife and Behchoko.

Highway No. 3, in certain places, is more suited to a roller coaster than regular traffic. The department states the roller coaster effect, or heaves and dips, are a result of melting permafrost in the area. Repairs have had to be made on an ongoing basis. The department has no mechanism to go back and have the repairs made under warranty because the time period has lapsed. A longer warranty would have increased the cost of the road.

Although a considerable amount of federal dollars went into completing Highway No. 3, the committee is concerned continued repairs for Highway No. 3 will drain the budgets of other highways also in much need of repair.

Recommendation

The committee recommends the department supply them with a projection of future repairs and the costs that will be required to make Highway No. 3 safe to drive. The committee would also like a report on all of the challenges encountered in building and repairing Highway No. 3.

Those are the committee's comments, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. General comments. Sorry. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring in witnesses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No!

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No!

---Laughter

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Yes. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in.

Thank you. Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right I have deputy minister Russell Neudorf; to my left I have assistant deputy minister Daniel Auger.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few general comments before we get into the detail of the department. Again, I will start off with the subject that's high on my radar, and for my constituents in the riding of Kam Lake and in the city of Yellowknife, and that is to get the much needed access road into Kam Lake Industrial Park from Highway No. 3. I won't spend too much time on this, Mr. Chair, as I know the Minister and I have had discussions in the House as of late to the development of that road and the disposition of negotiations that are currently under way between the City of Yellowknife and the Department of Transportation. I will leave that there, but I just wanted to, while I have the chance, reiterate my support for negotiations moving forward and that road being constructed.

Public safety is the paramount concern in that, Mr. Chair. The other items that I wanted to touch on, I just wanted to back up the recommendation that the committee made, the state of Highway No. 3. It was completed just last year. Already there are noticeable dips and repairs that are required to that road. In fact, you could argue the fact about whether that road is better today than it was five years ago. I am not sure if lowering the speed limit would help, but the road and the condition it is in, if you are doing the speed limit and hit a dip on that road, it is unsafe. I think we certainly need to take a look at what it is going to cost down the road to maintain that road if, in fact, there are engineering flaws or whatever the case may be, poor construction or whatever, that needs to be seriously looked at.

I also have had discussions with the Minister in the House lately about the Ingraham Trail and the fact that the Government of the Northwest Territories has spent a

sizable amount of money, in the neighbourhood of \$25 million if you go back 10 years and you look at what the monies that they are looking at spending into the next few years. That is a considerable amount of money. The Ingraham Trail is obviously home to many people who call the area home throughout the year, also cottages, lakes, parks, campgrounds. It is a well used road and highway here in Yellowknife. I guess some of the discussion goes back to the talk of connecting the communities in the Monfwi region and the Dogrib region and where a road to resources would come from. I maintain that, given the fact we have a 70-kilometre artery that we spent millions and millions of dollars on, it goes 70 kilometres northeast from Yellowknife, that road, if it does in fact at some point in time connect the communities in the Dogrib region, should come out of Yellowknife. I have asked the Minister about this in the past. When we get to the page in the detail on highways, I will ask him again. What is the government's position on where a road to resources would come from? I think that is an important first step if you are looking at accessing federal dollars which will be much needed in constructing a road like that.

I am supportive, as well, of a road down the Mackenzie Valley. I think that is a much needed and much called for road. Also the Tuk-Inuvik highway, Mr. Chair. We need to find money, too, to get that project completed.

Those are some of the highlights, Mr. Chair. I know the position growth in the department, the majority of it is a result of the situation with the ferries and the fact that positions were repatriated back to the Government of the Northwest Territories. So you can't say too much about that, but there are a couple of positions at the airport itself for the new baggage handling equipment and the conveyor system. I said this last year. I am not sure why we would need to have two dedicated individuals looking after that equipment specifically, and we couldn't have looked at contracting that service out on an as and when basis or whatever. I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to offer a few general comments on the Minister's opening remarks. I will save any questions I might have when we get to the pages in the detail. There are a couple of things I would like to mention. The hiring of apprentices I think is a huge move. I am a big supporter of apprentices and the fact that the government is going to bring a few on, train them within the government department. I think it is a good move and it is a good opportunity for someone to take advantage of those positions. The \$47 million, I am a little curious as to this. It says the level of funding remains high due to ongoing federal infrastructure initiatives. Are they coming up with the ideas or the initiatives and we are paying for them? Are they matching the money? The way I read it, they came up with the initiatives and the territorial government continues to pay for it.

The money going into the Dempster Highway, \$5 million, much needed. It is an adventure driving the highway sometimes. I've driven Highway No. 3 and I have driven Highway No. 8. I will take Highway No. 3 anytime. Highway No. 8 can get very dangerous with all the loose gravel and everything, but the more money we can put into the repair to the Dempster, upgrading it...One comment here I found kind of confusing, or maybe I will

ask about it later on, is talking about the number of highways that were nearing the end of their lifecycle. I am curious to know how does a highway reach the end of its lifecycle? I know how buildings reach them. I am just curious about the highway.

As usual, I continue to be a big supporter of the Mackenzie Valley highway. I think it is something that is long overdue. I think it is something that is badly needed right down the valley. It will benefit everybody. I said it before. So I am looking to see what Transportation comes up with as far as a plan goes or how they plan to pursue the federal government. We all know that we are losing money every day to the federal government and some of that could be going towards a highway for our benefit.

Mr. Chair, those are just a couple of the general comments I have on the Minister's opening remarks. When I come to the page for it on the detail, I will have some questions for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Next on the list I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to offer a few comments on the Department of Transportation, as well. First, I want to speak about the highway issue. The first one is the Mackenzie Valley highway. I want to put on record that I think that is an important project that I would like to see advanced. I think one of the surprising things that I read in the budget statement was the fact that we have not seen one single new kilometre of road built since 1988. Given how much the North has grown since then, I find that hard to believe. Also, I don't think the Mackenzie pipeline of the socio-economic agreement includes anything about highways. I don't really know why that sort of thing would not be in there if we can't leverage resource revenue sharing or something like that into such an agreement, because it is such a larger project and it is dealing with other processes, but one would think...I think the proposal has been made that in order to build the highway, they are going to need access to it. I would think that Cece McCauley will tell you that would be the right time to build a road at the same time. I don't think the federal government will come and tell us, okay, we want the pipeline, so we will build your road. You have to ask and fight for every one of those, so maybe there is some inkling of hope in the agreement. I do not know, but I think it is one thing we have to work on and I am in full support of. In saying that, I want to say that it may be hard to believe.

I don't think I have been here that long. This is my seventh year. I was constantly asking questions about Highway No. 3 when I first got elected. In fact, my first newsletter was like a newspaper size and it had a double side of the whole issue on Highway No. 3. The title was something like, Winding, Crooked Road or something and it had a picture of Highway No. 3. I just want to say that I remember, and I am old enough to remember. I have been here long enough to remember what that Highway No. 3 was like between Behchoko and Yellowknife.

I really want to commend the department for the work that has been done to finish that. It really is a beautiful road. I guess the better part of Highway No. 3 is between Providence and Behchoko. I think because of the topography or the ease of the weight, the land is set up, it is just a smoother road. It is a wider road. It is a beautiful

road, but from Behchoko to Yellowknife, I know my friends in Behchoko may not agree with this, but I think there's been so much more improvement there than we have ever had. I drove there most recently in December. I did see some rough parts. There were some soft areas, but you have to slow down. Honestly, I drove through Ontario one time and if you combine all the roads under construction, it would combine to at least 1,000 kilometres, because there was so much construction in every place. Once you build a road, there are some parts always under construction. I know that I do my share of pounding the table here asking for things, but I do want to take a moment to really appreciate the work the government has done on Highway No. 3.

For years, that highway took a huge chunk of highway budget. My argument was always once we finish this, we should have more money to build other roads. So I would like to think that having completed that has provided room for other areas of roads. I think that everybody should just slow down and protect that road that we spent I think 25 years and at least \$100 million to build.

The second thing is the Kam Lake access road. It is something that we really need to work on. I do understand that it is within municipal boundaries for the most part and it will probably have to cross claimed area or designated area. I just don't think it is fair for the truck drivers or for the residents in the current space that it is now. I forget about the truck traffic until the winter roads start up and when you are trying to rush to work, you are surrounded by the trucks. I don't mind that because every time I see the trucks, I see money. It is our diamond industry. They could have thousands of trucks here if they want. I just need to slow down. I think there is a tolerance level and safety issues if these trucks keep going through town. Pretty soon that Old Airport Road will not be able to handle that. So I would really urge the Minister and the government to work with all of the other partners or aboriginal governments and the City of Yellowknife to see if we could work on an arrangement on that. I would love to see a truck stop where all of these trucks could come and fuel and rest before they go on the ice road. That is an important part.

With respect to the road to resources, the Minister made a statement earlier today that there will be a study done to see the feasibility of having roads built in Tlicho. I am waiting to see what will come out of that. I don't know what the details of that are. Any study or something like that would have to, and I would want to ask the Minister to make sure that there is a cost-benefit analysis to where the best road to resources should be at and the fact that there are existing road systems. I think industries have a lot of say in that because they are already spending a lot of money to transport the fuel and other supplies that they need. I think they are thinking about doing an all-weather road in some of the soft areas so that you could extend the ice road. I guess the earth part warms up faster than the lake and so if you could have an all-weather system into some of the more vulnerable spots, you could extend the road. I think the way they figured it out so cleverly, as the private market always does when they are under pressure, they have built the secondary road to withstand the demands of supplies more. I think the department will do well to work closely with the industry and our friends and partners in the Tlicho area to see a real cost-benefit analysis. Maybe there could be a loop, but the bottom line is we only have limited resources for roads. I know there

are a lot of needs all over the North. We need to make all of the communities accessible. I would like the study to keep in mind where the money can be best spent. Also, we need to support the industry as well, because they are here creating a lot of benefits for us. I would like to leave it at that. I will be watching closely at that study to see the extent that a cost-benefit analysis is being done, not just in this area but how to best spend the government money.

The last thing I want to mention is the airport. I am not familiar enough on where the department is at in terms of just listening to the Minister's opening statement, but there has been an ongoing issue about extending a runway in Yellowknife to allow some of the bigger aircrafts to come in. I don't think that is a Yellowknife issue. I don't think that should be looked at as a Yellowknife issue. The fact is, Yellowknife Airport is the biggest airport in the Territories. It has the most traffic. When we were in communities like Wekweeti or other communities surrounding this area, there are a lot of tourism possibilities for these communities if they could be given a little bit of help. Because we are located geographically more conveniently than even northern parts of the States, to be the gateway from Asia and the other side of the world, they could land in Yellowknife and go to the rest of North America. If that is the case and we get more people coming through this way, they will spend less time. The visitors from Japan, if they have in their limited time, or Germany...from Europe and Asia, they could all come here as a one-stop to Yellowknife, there is a much more of a chance that they would be able to go to other communities here, but if it takes them two days to get to Yellowknife, you know they are going to spend two days in Yellowknife and go back. But if they could get here in 8, 10 or 12 hours, I see such potential for our surrounding communities in Yellowknife to be at the centre of that eco-tourism. There is so much for us to offer. I would also like the government to look at extension of the Yellowknife Airport runway as something that would be beneficial to all of the North, the tourism industry, oil and gas, pipeline, when they are coming. Why can we not be the real gateway and take that title away from Edmonton or even from Chicago? We could do that. I don't think it is going to cost a whole lot of money either. I welcome the Minister to make any replies to that. Those are my opening comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Next on the list for general comments, I have Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have brief comments in regards to this particular budget. I would like to, as well, go on record indicating that I fully support the extension of the Mackenzie Valley highway up to Inuvik and on to Tuk, preferably as part of the pipeline project that hopefully the Conservative federal government will kick into as a way to have a legacy project that will open up the North.

I also would like to go on record, once again, to restate my interest and support for the idea of a road through the Tlicho that will connect all of the communities as well as forge on ahead up to the mines as a long-range, good way to open up this part of the country and to take an enormous amount of traffic out of through Yellowknife and up through the current route. Of course, I, like the government, wait eagerly for the potential new funding or possible new funding extensions for further infrastructure development and, of course, I have particularly in mind the building to, once and for all, finally finish the

chipsealing of Highway No. 5 and 6, 5 being in the Fort Smith, 6 being in the Fort Resolution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. MILTENBERGER: Finally, Mr. Chair, I, as well, would like to commend Transportation for investing in apprentices. They are in desperately short supply. I think their projection was over a million apprentices short over the next 10 years across all different trades. The government used to be a major supplier of apprentices and they got out of that, and where it makes good sense I think we should be getting back into that. So this is a good idea, in my opinion. Those are my comments, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We've got Mr. Pokiak next for general comments.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few quick comments with regard to Transportation. I think it's very well known that since 1978 we've been talking about the Tuk-Inuvik highway. We're now in 2007 and we're still talking about it. You know, there's been a lot of money spent on the Ingraham Trail, or since I've been here for the last three years anyway. It seems like all of that money is being spent in the southern part of the territory. It always seems like the northern part is being left out in a lot of the project that can happen. Unfortunately, I understand the reason why and the people back home understand the reason why, because mainly we're looking at federal funding for new highways. Again, like I said, I've been here three years already. We've always been told first there was Corridors for Canada I, then they were talking Corridors for Canada II, now we're talking about Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast. To me, Mr. Chairman, I think it's mostly just talk. There's no action coming from the federal government. I respect the Minister presently, right now, and the previous Minister in Transportation, to really try to get funding for the Tuk-Inuvik highway, and we're only talking 80 kilometres basically. I think maybe \$70 million, but again, that would be good money invested because you will make economic benefits to the people back home, you will employ people, people will pay taxes. So eventually the road will be built.

Also, Mr. Chairman, gravel source 177 is only 22 kilometres from the community of Tuktoyaktuk, and I'll bring it up again. That's gravel that the community really needs in order so that we expand infrastructure in the community. I don't know how much more the Minister can do, or the department, in trying to address this problem with the federal government. I think what we need to do now is just make sure that hopefully the Conservatives can put that in their upcoming budget that's supposed to come out on March 19th I think. I hope that they can do something with the resources and the infrastructure that we have up here, because I think it's important.

Mr. Chairman, it's also good to see that the Minister has identified seven apprentices in his department. I think they've done that in the past, years ago with the government. They always seem to have apprentices in their department and I think it's one step that we can get people online here for the potential Mackenzie gas pipeline.

Another area, Mr. Chairman, is I'd like to speak a little more in regard to the marine services. Tuk is well known, like Hay River is well known, for the NTCL terminal

buildings. The federal government is talking right now about Canadian sovereignty and I think we should really press the federal government for infrastructure, and again, I'll bring it up, I think Tuk has good infrastructure for that. It's right in the Beaufort Sea. I guess the Canadian Army can utilize one of the camps and I always talk about the camps in Tuk, utilize that as a base. The infrastructure is there. That port is deep enough for their vessels to come in there and I think that it would be a good investment. It will not only help the residents in the Beaufort Sea, but you'd have access right from the west coast all the way down to the east coast. So I think that's a good investment that should be considered.

Another area of importance that the people in Tuk are talking about is in regard to the airport itself. It's a 5,000-foot airport. Right now they're maintaining it and they'd like to keep it maintained to the present level because I guarantee you if that pipeline goes through, industry will utilize Tuk and Inuvik as a base for operations for their personnel. I've seen it happening in the '70s; I've seen it happen when Dome Petroleum was operating, when Gulf...(inaudible)...was operating. They basically bypassed maybe even Inuvik at that time because they could land 737s. So that's another area of interest I'd like to make sure the government continue to pursue.

I just have a quick comment, Mr. Chairman, or a few more here. It's good to see that the department, I was looking at and like the chair earlier indicated that 23 new positions, but again there's a reason behind that because we know that. I think the question I have is the Minister indicated about four highway equipment operators, mainly because of the level of activity for the winter road, but again, do they still require those people after the winter road shuts down and where do those people go? That's another area for consideration.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to say once again that again they've invested another \$2 million for the Mackenzie Highway and Ingraham Trail. Again, it's disappointing for me and my constituents that you see all this money being spent in the southern part of the territory and nothing really for the northern part, and \$13 million for the...(inaudible)...program on the Mackenzie Valley, which I understand the reason why it's being done again.

Just in regard to the bridge repairs, Mr. Chairman, I'd like the Minister to consider, I understand the hamlet of Ulukhaktok are looking at replacing the present bridge from the airport to the community. I think they should consider that, because I became aware of that just recently. I think that's just the general comments I have for now, Mr. Chairman. I will have questions once we get into the details. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Next on the list I've got Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just in terms of general comments on Transportation, I can only think of one particularly pressing issue as it relates to the community of Hay River. Hay River is a lovely little town on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. A river runs through it; a rail line runs through it; and a road runs through it, which would be particularly of interest to Mr. Menicoche because that is his road. The Mackenzie Highway runs right through Hay River and right to the West Channel.

With the activity, the shipping, the transporting of goods to the mines, that road is very well utilized at this time of year. I guess somewhat similarly to Yellowknife, it seems the trucks have to come right into Yellowknife as well on Old Airport Road, about one a minute it seems. I was going to the airport last Friday and I was just trying to turn there to go to the airport and they were just one truck right after another after another. Well, Hay River is where the fuel is getting loaded into those trucks. So those same trucks that are pulling into Yellowknife are starting off a lot of them in Hay River and so we have those big trucks rolling down the Mackenzie Highway right through town to the Old Town where they load up with the fuel to come to Yellowknife for the mines. So the highway, as the Minister probably well knows, is not very wide, doesn't have turning lanes on it, it probably doesn't have exactly the right kind of slope for some of the curves that are on it and there are some important turnoffs on that highway, notably the airport for one thing that has a lot of traffic coming and going from it as well. So in the socio-economic agreement on the pipeline, the agreement talks about industry dealing with municipalities directly in terms of the use of infrastructure or water and sewer services et cetera, but I somehow am not thinking that the Mackenzie gas project proponents are going to want to build or widen the highway through Hay River in order to get to the barge facilities, the shipyards, potentially the fuel tank farms, all those sorts of things.

So I don't know what it would take to get the capital identified for enhancements to that Mackenzie Highway that runs through Hay River; but might I suggest that if the pipeline does go, that is going to be a very immediate and serious problem that will be staring somebody in the face. Like I said, I kind of doubt if industry is going to want to pick up the full price of it, and I certainly know the taxpayers of Hay River are not going to want to pick up the price tag for it and it is a GNWT road. So later on when we get into the detail, or right now, for that matter, if the Minister wants to respond, I'd like to ask the Minister if there's anything in the works that could address the highway in Hay River?

A lot of the other areas to do with transportation infrastructure have been already covered by MLAs representing different regions of the Northwest Territories here. I guess we're not all just confined to only drive on the roads that are in our own constituencies, so we get to observe some of the issues. Lately I haven't been driving on Highway No. 3 because I'm afraid of the buffalo and now I'm afraid of the transport trucks, but I am going to drive home tomorrow night and I'll give the Minister a full report when I get back on how the road is looking in terms of maintenance and shifting and heaving and all that sort of thing. But I'm mostly interested in that road that runs through Hay River and what the Department of Transportation could potentially bring to the table to help us address that problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Just to be fair to other committee members, I'm going to go to Mr. Braden for general comments and then we can get to the questions throughout the detail. Thank you, committee. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. A couple of points. In sort of the vision stuff, the legacy stuff that we talk about and I think we need to keep reminding ourselves about, Mr. Chairman, we have the ongoing legacy of the diamond mines in the south and the south

eastern portion of the territory, Mr. Chairman. Then, of course, there's the pipeline, which will extend from north to south along the valley and in the west. We've already talked about the potential of completion of the Mackenzie Valley highway as a legacy of the Mackenzie pipeline. Certainly, some of the legacy expectations of the diamond mines we have sort of yet to see fulfilled, Mr. Chairman. One of those being the long sought after Deh Cho Bridge, which if it's going to be constructed and paid for, Mr. Chairman, at least in part by toll fees, then with every day and every week and every month that we don't have the Deh Cho Bridge built, we're also losing the revenue from the trucks that go back and forth to supply the diamond mines. So there's a legacy project there, and there's also been discussion of other transportation legacies potentially to the Tlicho communities. The Minister just spoke to us earlier today about studies that are underway to see how Tlicho communities could potentially be linked by road, and it is very much spurred by the economic activity that the diamond mines are providing.

More immediate and more direct, Mr. Chairman, is the need for more certainty for the direct supply route to the diamond mines. We suffered a nearly disastrous season last year. Some people would call it a disastrous season last year, Mr. Chairman, because I think there was perhaps two-thirds of the projected loads that made it to site. It caused an enormous consequence on the air side where suppliers and transporters brought in heavy lift aircraft; another, I'm told, \$100 million was expended to continue the operation of the diamond mines because of the shortcomings of the winter ice road. Mr. Chairman, if there should be a priority, I believe, for highway or road infrastructure that truly has a return to our economy, and, indeed, I think we'd have very willing partners to come in to help shoulder the cost, it is to find a way to have more certainty and an extended season of supply into the diamond mines. I'm not talking about a full year or full-season road all the way up to the mines. My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that if we essentially look at getting improved conditions up to Gordon Lake or up to basically where the treeline stops and the Barren Lands take over, that we will be avoiding the critical and weakest areas of that winter supply line and even here, Mr. Chairman, as we've done already in the Mackenzie Valley, it may be as straightforward as installing some better portages, some bridges over some of the stream crossings, or finding our way around some of the troublesome lakes. This, I would suggest, is the place we should be looking at soonest because it has the most immediate impact on our economy and the certainty to those areas.

I think, though, linked to that, Mr. Chairman, is also a notion that the department has a responsibility to help provide transportation; secure, reliable, safe transportation, but that need not only be in the shape of airports and roads. Mr. Chairman, and I'm going to go back to the diamond mines, there's a couple of very innovative alternatives out there to flying bulk materials to the diamond mines or, for that matter, to any remote location. One of them is a proposal by a company that says that small diameter pipelines constructed across the tundra, laid underneath lakes, is technology that has been proven around the world for decades now and could indeed be a very viable way for us to supply fuels, both liquid and gas, to northern communities and the diamond mines. Think, Mr. Chairman, of the reduction that this would bring about in environmental costs, the cost of

burning...Ten thousand truckloads are projected to go up to the mines this winter, and I think it's about 2,500 of them could potentially be shaved off if fuels could be piped to the site rather than trucked. That's a lot of diesel fuel; it's a lot of environmental exposure to potential breakthroughs, if a truck were to break through the ice.

Another potential alternate is air ships. I believe there is some kind of a test project somewhere in the NWT, was it last summer? I'm not getting any nods here, so maybe I was reading the wrong comic book, but these have got enormous potential. We don't need airstrips, we don't need runways, but we do need, perhaps, a sense of risk taking, if you will, and an ability and a willingness to experiment and try new things. This is all, Mr. Chairman, in the sense of creating more secure supply at less cost to the environment and potentially even reduce the cost of the product actually delivered to site. I would encourage the Department of Transportation, Mr. Chairman -- I think this is my message -- let's not just think about roads and airstrips and ferries, let's think about assisting in transporting goods by whatever means and join in that in the spirit of thinking outside the box sometimes.

Mr. Chairman, there's one other item and it's closer to my constituency here in Yellowknife, and those are reports that were carried in the media early this year about the approval of a major infrastructure project to the Yellowknife Airport. It's something that's long been discussed, bringing water and sewer services to the last few hundred metres of Old Airport Road and into all the buildings in the airport precinct itself. A very desirable project that would do this city and the airport a lot of good; however, Mr. Chairman, this is a very expensive project, I understand in the neighbourhood of potentially \$20 million. It was not one that I, as a Yellowknife MLA, had seen approval for before it was discussed in the media. I know that it had been long and loudly discussed in business plans and in ideas and infrastructure projects that could be undertaken. I recognize and acknowledge that, but there comes a time when if there is actually going to be commitment and approval of taxpayers' money, especially of that magnitude, then it is one of the expectations of our consensus system that MLAs and, I think, other officials would be involved in that decision. We weren't, and I would be looking at the appropriate time for perhaps a bit of an explanation of how that decision came about and where we're going with it. Again, I don't want to dismiss the project outright because it does have tremendous value, but given tight fiscal times and competition for other infrastructure projects, we skipped a beat in the approvals and it's something that I would just like to bring back to the attention of the department and the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Mr. Braden. There's nobody else on the list for general comments. I'll draw committee's attention to page 9-7, it's the department summary, which we'll defer until we're completed. We'll start the detail on 9-10, that's the revenue summary. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I agreed to do detail on 9-10 and I have some questions here. With respect to the airport landing and other fees and airport lease and rental of revenues under revenue summary, just let me deal with

airport landing first. We see that in 2005-06, the actual revenue was \$1.754 million. Last year the revenue was \$2.4 million. We are expecting to see \$2.5 million next year. On the lease and rental revenue from the airport we have seen not as big as that landing fee, but still we're projecting some increases there. I'd like to ask the Minister what the reason is for that. I know that it's a big issue for local airline companies, the cost of doing business, and part of that is the landing fee. I guess my question would be what is the reason for the increase? Is it volume, or are we continuing to increase the fees? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The landing and other fees that were increased over the past, well, actually, couple of years, was due to the fact that we had to increase the fees to recover our costs for expansion of the Yellowknife Airport. We received an extra \$600,000 in revenues using that scheme of recovery for the funds expended. As well, for this year's main estimates, because there is more activity at the airport, we expect the same scale of revenue using our existing fees.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I see that last year we saw about \$690,000, yes, about a \$700,000 increase. No, I can't do math fast. Yes, about \$750,000. But next year we're projecting about a \$150,000 increase. I'm happy to see that the increase has tapered off a bit. I do understand that we need to recover some of the costs, but we do need to balance that with airlines' ability and capacity to stay competitive and to control their costs of doing business. They are under a lot of other pressures, especially for our two northern carriers because of the big brother, the third airline that decided to come to Yellowknife. Mr. Chairman, could I ask whether we could take the somewhat smaller increase to be the one that would be the trend for awhile, or would it change continuously and what is the amortization period, if there is any, to recover the cost? Is it over a period of 5 or 10 years to recover, or is it going to be on a year-by-year basis cost-recovery kind of system? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We had indicated that cost recoveries would happen over 10 years. As well as the small increase the Member is talking about, the 2007-08 mains over the revised estimates of roughly \$200,000, we're expecting it due to increased traffic volumes that we're seeing at the Yellowknife Airport. That's where the extra revenue...Our fees, even though we did jump them up to recover costs of the expansion, it's still comparable to other jurisdictions across Canada. In fact, it is below average. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I didn't catch that 10-year part the first time around. I'd like to ask some questions on the road licensing and safety programs. Under there, we're

seeing a projected decrease next year. That's a different trend from the airports and I'm just wondering why we're projecting that the fees will decrease. Maybe because we're going on a longer licensing period or something? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The numbers that we're using, yes, we adjust them as the actuals come in for the end of the year. So these are estimates for 2007-08.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate that a main estimate is an estimate and a revenue estimate is a forecast so you can't be quite on the nose with these numbers, but I would think these revenues mean something in the bigger revenue picture for the government. One way to look at future forecast is to look at the immediate past. I'm looking at, for example, road licensing and safety, registrations, last year's actual was \$158,000. This past year's actual is \$218,000, but next year we are forecasting to go down a lot further. When there was an increase for the last two years, we're projecting to go down next year. Same thing for the licensing and safety - licences. On all the permits and licences we are forecasting a decrease and the fees we're only forecasting a very little increase. On the registration, we saw a decrease in the last two years and yet we're forecasting an increase. Do you know what I mean? I'm trying to explain my question as much as possible with the information in front of me. I'd like to see what the justification and rationale might be that we may not be aware of as we sit here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We'll just take a closer look at the numbers that we're proposing here. The 2007-08 Main Estimates, we're actually basing these on the average and actually the actuals of 2005-06 actuals. So if you look at those two numbers, they're actually closer together. The 2006-07 mains and 2006-07 revised estimates, that's exactly what they are, they're still estimates and the numbers are still coming in for those. This year's main estimates, some of the considerations, particularly with the Member's questions on licences, is that based over last year we're actually, because of the uptake on the new licensing system, we're actually looking at a decrease only because of some of the lengths of the licences that were offered. As well, it will be the same for the permits. In terms of the registrations, the amount of traffic and large trucks that continue to use our systems and continue to do business in the North are up and that's why we continue to estimate around \$3 million for revenues for those registrations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We're on page 9-10, revenue summary. Any further questions? None.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Page 9-13, activity summary, corporate services, operations expenditures summary, \$8.076 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 9-17, activity summary, airports, operations expenditures summary, \$26.843 million. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. On the airports issue and the extension of the airstrip in Yellowknife, which I believe the department and the city have been in discussions with, it's my understanding that there was some kind of agreement or understanding about the project. Could I just ask the Minister, what do we know about how much it would cost to extend that airport to make it suitable for international landings?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In 2004, the study that was conducted at that time, I think it was a 3,000-foot extension, was estimated at \$12 million at that time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are there any discussions going on with the City of Yellowknife about that at the moment?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoché.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With regard to the extension of the runway at the Yellowknife Airport, we are in discussions with the Department of ITI in terms of the tourism market that's out there and how much of an impact it's going to have on our North. Once again I'll state that a runway extension has to have merit as a business plan. For expending \$12 million, they have to make sure that there's benefit for our North and for everybody that's involved. If the numbers are so low and the volume is just not there, then it's very, very difficult to proceed with a project of this nature. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are valid questions that one should ask about any project and I think that's why the Minister today stated in the House that he's funded some money to do the highway system in the Tlicho area. I would expect that any project like this would have those questions posed and answered. I'd like to know if the study in 2004 that the Minister mentioned had any information in that regard, other than the fact that the cost at that time was \$12 million. Before the Minister just dismisses the idea, I would think that he might want to ask those questions, because I wouldn't imagine that, even if he's talking to ITI about it, ITI is not going to be able to cough up \$12 million from ITI. So my questions are, would the Minister be interested in undertaking something to see what the feasibility of that is before he draws to conclusions? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. No, I didn't want to convey that a project of extending the Yellowknife airstrip is not being looked at at all. In fact, extending the runway is one potential method of improving access for our tourism market. We have begun internal discussions with ITI to look at the case; and 2004, you could say that's an old study, I guess. We do have to revisit the numbers and look at the demand that's out there and to revisit that business case. That's what ongoing discussions are happening with ITI to develop this comprehensive business case, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I know that the Department of Transportation has produced a number of good studies about, you know, the Corridors for Canada and a lot of those reports on the road system and the need for them had been prepared and there have been documents that would go with the Ministers and Premier to Ottawa to make our case for various funding. So I know that the department is experienced in doing those studies. I have one question about whether or not there is any mention in the socio-economic agreement on the Mackenzie gas pipeline about any road infrastructure.

The second thing is...I'm switching the topic here. Let me just stick to the old topic. The airport extension; has there been any discussion with the federal government about the possibility of their involvement, because any potential project like that would have to involve the federal government if we were to ever be a gateway not only to the North, but a gateway from Europe and Asia to North America. So that would definitely require federal participation there.

My second question is just a transportation project in general whether there are any provisions under the socio-economic agreement on the pipeline about any investments on roads related to the resource development project. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Our airport, and once again we'll have to sit down and work with ITI and develop this business case and then at that point we can determine whether we're going to need federal involvement. The existing development of the airport itself has always been a fully GNWT initiative, but something significant like this, certainly we could begin discussions with the feds, although we have not yet at this point, saying we can't handle a project of this nature. Once again, we need the business case and we are going to continue to work towards getting that done. Once again, it's to our North's benefit to have such a significant airport if the business case is there.

The Member talked briefly about the SEA and impact on the highway. Certainly the SEA mentioned it quite frequently. We have got in there early enough to say you will be impacting our highways and our transportation infrastructure and the community infrastructure. So the Mackenzie gas project has always had a good ear for us

as to how they will accommodate and assist us with the impacts of their development of the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I just get the Minister to be more specific about exactly what the agreement speaks to about the transportation issues?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Member will permit, I can read the document in front of me because it's a rather detailed document, the SEA, but I do have a briefing note. I will try to be as quick as possible.

I think the main thing that we must remember with the SEA is that the Mackenzie gas project is willing to contribute to upgrades or infrastructure and really look at negotiating additional O and M costs to maintain our highways and infrastructure, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the idea of reading the document for something that's fairly lengthy like that, if the Member doesn't already have a copy, I am sure the Minister would be happy to provide it. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have a copy, so I didn't mean for the Minister to answer that. I wanted to have a conversation about what's in it. Maybe I could just ask a question then. I don't see any intent, cooperation or understanding between the proponent and the government. Are there any specific dollars? Is there going to be a built-in process where the government and the industry would work together to see what sort of stress there will be or additional use or need for expansion or enhancement in order to supply this massive project? How specific is that? If the specifics are not there, what is the process for us to get there? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Obviously we can't really get into specifics because there has nothing been nothing finalized with their logistics plan that they have been filing. But the level of detail that I can share is that the Transportation logistics plan, the operators have agreed to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement with us for capital upgrades, O and M, maintain highways, airports, anything they are impacting. They recognize that safety and movement of our travelling public is important. They agree to continue to consult with us to develop measures to address public safety and maintain our infrastructure that they will be deteriorating and will help us upkeep it and negotiate it financially as well, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on the list I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to delve into a little bit more detail into airport security. A few days ago, the Minister answered a couple of questions relating to security screening that passengers have to go

through. It's in this area of not only a necessary inconvenience that all the passengers around the world are going through. I am not at all challenging the need for doing this in this terrorism-prone world we have, but in delivering the service and making sure it is effective and efficient, are we actually keeping an eye on this? What tests or criteria are we applying to the screening service that we undertake here on behalf of the CATSA organization? Considering the costs of operating this are borne by the taxpayer in part through fees and things at the airports, our Department of Transportation is making sure that it's up and running, are we looking at it through the efficiency, the economy lens, Madam Chair? Is the department satisfied that we are indeed spending the dollars required and no more to provide passenger screening, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Canadian Air Transport Security Agency, more commonly referred to as CATSA, is a federal government arm that is responsible for screening of air passengers and baggage. Once again, it all stems out of our post-911 world and we have a duty to provide for the travelling public's safety. So the federal government did provide funding for us to increase the security services at the airport through our baggage handling, explosive detectors, et cetera. It's important to note that the staff out there are federal staff and not ours. Their security system is run by the federal government and all their tests and screening are all conducted on the federal level and they are all trained at a standard to provide our services.

Once again, I think that the Member had brought it up in the House as well in reference to a newspaper article in one of our northern papers. We did check out the lag or delays that are happening. Even though they seem like delays, all the flights are leaving on time and it is comparable to other jurisdictions across Canada, the line-ups that are happening, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the correction. I had assumed the staff were there under our watch and not the federal government's. So the money we vote here is not voting for the staff or the operation of those machines and everything else out there. I know CATSA did give us some of the money that was required to install the machines. Are they actually paying for the operation of them as well, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, CATSA is paying for their portion through us and that's why it's showing up on our books. We classify them as vote 4 and 5. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRADEN: Is the federal government picking up 100 percent of the costs of operating these screening systems and the staffing required, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Yes, the staff is 100 percent CATSA and federal responsibility.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to the O and M, it is a negotiated responsibility with CATSA.

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

MR. BRADEN: How much of the costs are borne by the Government of the NWT, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's to operate the O and M for the baggage system that's there. We do get \$125,000 a year from the federal government for ongoing O and M.

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

MR. BRADEN: How much does the Government of the Northwest Territories pay? What is the balance? What are we on the hook for, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's important to note here that it's a dual-purpose system. CATSA has installed the system and it's used for screening, but it's also used for baggage handling and to make a distinction to split it, how much O and M is dedicated to baggage handling from our portion. I don't believe we can get to that level of detail without further research, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps this is something that I could take up with the GED committee to see if it wants to explore that level of detail. It's important to know that CATSA is contributing \$125,000, but it tells me nothing about what the taxpayer in the NWT is on the hook for. It is part of the cost for providing air services that I think government should have some kind of handle on, but, as I say, I would give over to the GED committee to see if it wants to pursue that level of detail.

I guess if I had one other question, Madam Chair, technology and security systems are always changing and we are always hearing about new gadgets and new approaches to providing this. There is retina scans, fingerprints, voice prints, who knows. Is there anything on the horizon, Madam Chair, that we might get some advanced notice of, or some indication of that in two, three or five years that we are going to be looking at yet another change in technology, Madam Chair? Are other airports in the NWT going to become required to comply with any of this, Madam Chair? I would just like to get a bit of a snapshot on the whole passenger security regime and

whether and how it is going to be required to expand here in the NWT, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can say we don't have the answer to what CATSA or even our homeland security might require for further passenger travel at this point. There has been no indication anywhere to say that there would be a different level of identification, retina scans, I guess, other than what we have going on which is our drivers' licensing. That's one of the most noted improved identification forms that we are using at our airports and across Canada, as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Anything further? Activity summary, airports, operations expenditure summary, \$26.843 million. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have one quick question for the Minister. As I indicated in my general comments earlier, I think down the road Tuk and Inuvik are going to be really busy with the airports if the Mackenzie gas project goes ahead. I would just like to ask the Minister if he can indicate to me whether they will continue to keep that runway in Tuk to the 5,000 foot level...(inaudible)...

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, there are no plans to change the Tuk Airport. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Activity summary, airports, operations expenditure summary, \$26.843 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Page 9-19, activity summary, airports, grants and contributions, total grants and contributions, \$25,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): That's such a small number, I couldn't read it. Page 9-23, activity summary, highways, operations expenditure summary, \$42.786 million. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again I would like to just bring up my concern regarding access to source 177 which is in line with the highway to Tuk and Inuvik. What kind of details can the Minister provide if there are any new discussions with the federal Minister of Transportation with regard to the Tuk-Inuvik highway?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak, for keeping that in our consciousness. Mr. Miltenberger. I mean Menicoche, I'm sorry.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Further to the discussions with the Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik tech road committee, we did have discussions in December with regard to permitting and getting access to

source 177 and discussions are ongoing. The details of the permitting process are being worked out. Thank you.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was at that meeting when we had that meeting in Inuvik, Madam Chair. I am just wondering, we could talk about it in December, we are now into February and we are probably into a new year coming up now and I pretty well know the process of how to get the permits that are required for an access road. I would like to ask the Minister, Madam Chair, with regard to the 80-kilometre highway between Tuk and Inuvik, as I said earlier in my opening comments, I think Corridors for Canada II, Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast is one thing. I would like to ask the Minister has there been any headway to identify funding in their upcoming budget in March that the feds are going to come out with that they will actually put money into this Tuk-Inuvik highway? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. Our Mackenzie Valley road includes the Tuk to Inuvik segment and it remains a priority of our government in all our strategy documents; Corridors for Canada I, Corridors for Canada II, as well as Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast. I, myself, as a new Minister, did make my trip to Ottawa. I did pound on doors and met with the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Mr. Cannon over there and indicated our government's desire to continue with this project. In fact, they do indicate, too, that it is hinged on development of a Mackenzie gas project, as well. They just don't see how they can do it if there is no...For them it is a road to resources issue as well as many of our roads are in the Slave Geological Province as well. It is how they consider it. So if the resources are there, then it is time to build roads to get at it. We continue to press the matter with the federal government. There are just no indications of any type of special announcement for the Mackenzie Valley highway other than...We are in the dark, along with all the rest of Canada, awaiting the March 19th budget speech from the federal government.

In terms of the Tuk to Inuvik highway, I must be missing 20 kilometres because our research is saying it is 140 kilometres for the Member there. In 1999 dollars, Madam Chair, it was pegged at \$100 million from Tuk to Inuvik. We haven't been using that figure for a while. We have been using it in Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast where there was \$700 million for the whole segment, to complete the whole road. That is the number we are using these days, Madam Chair. Mahsi.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think we should rely on the road to resources. I think, as a government, we should take that stand and actually connect the three oceans together, Pacific, Atlantic and the Arctic Ocean. Once you do that, you are opening up a whole new highway that is going to go from coast to coast to coast. If you do that, you are opening up...People will have jobs. The economy will be really hustling and bustling up there. I think we can't just rely on what the

federal government is saying. I think we should just get the feds to commit to the long-term dream of what goes back to what Diefenbaker dreamed when he actually went up to Inuvik to finish the Dempster Highway. I think we should continue that dream and continue to complete that road to Tuktoyaktuk from Inuvik and it will bring a lot of benefits back to the Beaufort-Delta, not only for Beaufort-Delta but people along the valley will utilize that some day. The tourists will always go up to Inuvik and they fly down to Tuk. If they build that road, they can drive all the way up. They can dip their toes in the Arctic like they want to do. In reality, I think we should try and get something done with that.

The discussion about the documents that we are talking about, it is a dream, but I think we should pursue that, put our foot down and pursue it. Let's get something done to complete the highway. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, I don't disagree with the Member and his desire to complete the road to the Arctic Ocean. We continue to press the matter with the federal government. We continue to maintain that any new roads are a federal government responsibility. Even in 1999 dollars, it is still \$100 million question as well. Once again, the federal government is linking systems infrastructure development to resources, Madam Chair. Mahsi.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to go on to another one. In my general comments, I talked about the hamlet of Ulukhaktok talking about building a new bridge to connect there. The bridge that they have presently in Ulukhaktok from the airport to the community is fairly old now. So they are talking about trying to get a new bridge built in that location. I am just wondering if the Minister will consider sitting down with myself and the hamlet to look at the engineering that might be required. Thank you for that. Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I will be willing to sit down with the Member to discuss the bridge at Ulukhaktok and we did, in the past, work with MACA to do repairs to that bridge. I would be pleased to help initiate discussions on how to replace or repair Ulukhaktok's bridge. Mahsi.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will sit down with the Minister and we will take a look at the bridge that is connecting the airport to the hamlet of Ulukhaktok. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Activity summary, highways, operations expenditure summary. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask the Minister in terms of the highways into our

region. I understand there were some discussions earlier today in terms of the highways up to the Tlicho area in terms of realigning the new corridors up in that area. There was also some discussion on the Beaufort-Delta. I want to ask the Minister in terms of the support into our region. I know it has been a long time in waiting. I think Cece McCauley has been one of the strongest advocate persons for our region anyhow. However, it takes a lot of work. It requires a lot of planning and dollars in terms of upgrading our road system in our region, the winter road system. When can we see some significant improvements? We are seeing some improvements, but not, according to my region, significant enough. There are still some pretty big hills and some forms that need to really cut down and safety issues. I want to ask the Minister in terms of the winter roads in our region. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member mentioned the Tlicho road realignment studies. That is a real good news story. I am glad that you see it that way, as well as that we are finally looking at some new roads, but the studies are looking at realignment, some geotechnical work. There is going through the Canadian Shield so the chances are there will be some blasting studies that have to be done in that area.

But in terms of the Mackenzie Valley highway, a bulk of that type of work was done in the '70s in terms of where the highway alignment...I am not too sure, but I think some of the geotechnical was done, what is under our roads that are there right now. The bridges that are installed and are there right now, that is part of our overall strategy. The Member is absolutely right; he has the bridges, now where are his roads? We continue to strive and work towards that, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. The Minister is right on the button on this one here, Madam Chair. We are starting to get our bridges and we want to look at where our roads are. Certainly, I agree with some of the comments by some of the Members in terms of the road between here and Yellowknife. That is a fairly good road compared to our roads in the Sahtu. That is a smooth road. I think some of the Members need to drive on our winter roads up in the Sahtu; then they can talk about roads. Then, Madam Chair, they could really see the type of roads that our people in the Sahtu region have to drive on. Winter roads, there are roads in other ridings that certainly require some improvement, but gee whiz, our roads are forgotten. They are just like orphaned roads. Last year, I called it the goat road.

---Laughter

It is a crying shame that all this activity going into our region, to improve our roads up there and have some proper planning in our region. I think somewhere within the department's planning, that we are certainly not getting the attention that we would like to see, the same type of attention that has gone into the Ingraham Trail. Two million dollars into that road. It is nothing there except people living on the road there. There are no oil,

gas and minerals. It is coming into our region. I am sorry to say, Madam Chair. That is the truth here. I can understand there is an oil plan to our gas plant or some mineral activity, but there are cabins out there. People are living out there, and they are paving that road for how many miles? You forget about our road that we have our whole region that has mineral development and mining activities. Madam Chair, I get really passionate. I get really angry inside in terms of seeing that this is still happening in this day and age and that our people have to be so happy that we have roads that go to each other's communities. We shouldn't be driving on roads at 30 kilometres an hour because it is not really a highway. It is a winter road, and you should be happy because you have it open. Yet you pave the road right out here. I call it the best bush road in the Northwest Territories on the Ingraham Trail. I am really happy that the Minister saw some light in support of the bypass in our community, by not having the road go through our community, big trucks. That is a safety concern such as Yellowknife here. They talk about it on TV about big trucks going through their communities. I support that section of Yellowknife where they don't have to have big trucks going through the school ground. That is a safety. Kids' lives are worth it. So things like that, I really think about.

I am really happy that the Minister made a bypass in Tulita and Norman Wells. I am glad. You guys are doing some work. I certainly see that we certainly could use some more improvements. I know you guys are working hard, but come down to or bring your planning people into our communities, sit with our people there, look at some of the roads that could be improved. We could certainly save this department a lot of money. I think we need to show some presence. I hope they establish a regional office in the Sahtu and show some presence that we could have them. I am very surprised they don't have a regional office on the Ingraham Trail to look at that road there. Two million dollars into that road. It is just mind boggling, Madam Chair, to my people in the region.

Madam Chair, I guess I want to ask the Minister in terms of...I will ask him again in terms of our road. Are there some real concrete plans in terms of how we improve our roads for safety? I know there is money being put in there when we have oil development activities into the region in terms of paving our road with water. I think, last year, we surely appreciated it. We felt it this year because there was not so much oil activity, dollars going into our winter roads. Madam Chair, we want to see the benefits of a winter road. I am not too sure about the other regions, but we certainly want to see the benefits of our winter roads. We certainly want to see those bridges go up. I know there were some bridges that were a challenge to put in. I think they are going to look at it again this year. We are about 20 years behind Yellowknife, or 10 years. I hope the Minister can at least give some good news to the people in our region. I am just going to tone it down a little bit now. I drove those winter roads and I know what people are going through. I see the amount of work that is going in there. I hear about the amount of work that is going into other regions. The road from here to Behchoko is good and smooth. I don't know why some of them are complaining about it. Come on our roads and drive it. Then we talk. I have said enough, Madam Chair. I want to give some time to the Minister to respond to some of my comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member raises many questions that are very important to him and his riding and for our department. Absolutely, safety and transportation of the public is the number one priority on all our roads. The Member speaks about how much effort we are putting on Highway No. 3, but the reality of it, Madam Chair, is that there are 10,000 trucks that go up there every year and all in bulk and during the winter months. We do have to pay attention for our travelling public that is up there as well. In fact, we did receive extra funding from the federal government because it is one of the roads that are impacted by pressures of resource development. So we are spending attention on there and the Slave Geological Province. We have to admit and say, yes, that is driving our northern economy right now. We do have to provide resources to maintain that infrastructure that is going up there as well.

In terms of capital money being spent on the Mackenzie Valley winter road, we did receive \$41 million over six years from Corridors for Canada I specifically identified for the Mackenzie Valley Road. We have been spending those monies. That is part of our big bridge program that is happening up there. That is where we are spending all of our money on the bridges. We are allocating \$1 million a year to make improvements on the Mackenzie Valley winter road. Not to mention, the last couple of years, we have been receiving support from the industry. The last fiscal year, we received \$500,000 to make ice roads, actually. That is why the roads were smoother. This year, because there was less development, industry is contributing just that much less. We are not able to do all of the roads, but we are able to make a bit of an impact and water what roads we could. We are not building ice roads. We are watering the roads and so we are accommodating the best we can. In fact, our highway maintenance contracts up there for winter roads, we have allocated extra money and negotiated an increase for better services on our winter roads up there, Madam Chair. So we are expending monies on the Mackenzie Valley winter road and the system and striving towards our long-term goal of eventually having an all weather road system up that way, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Activity summary, highways, operations expenditure summary, \$42.786. I have Mr. Ramsay and Mr. McLeod and Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a question in regard to the Deh Cho Bridge and the disposition of that project, the loan guarantee has been extended a number of times, Madam Chair, over the time I have been here. It has been three and a half years since I have walked through the front doors here. Are we any closer today in shoring up federal dollars to make this project a reality? When are we going to say enough is enough and not keep extending the loan guarantee? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, we have set a target date of March 31st, 2007, of this year to determine exactly what we are going to do with our Deh Cho Bridge proposal. Being consistent, we

are waiting for the federal government budget rollout on March 19th. There are lots of indications, although none confirmed. We keep getting it time and time again, Madam Chair, that there will be money for P3s of which the Deh Cho Bridge will qualify for as well as any special infrastructure allotments that may happen with the budget. That has happened because we still have our P3s and Canadian strategic infrastructure funding proposal before the federal government as well as our requests for their highways and borders infrastructure fund and the bridge certainly qualifies for that. So a lot hinges around the budget time and so we look forward to the federal government's budget, but up until that time the strategy that we're taking on the Deh Cho Bridge is we will continue to have a firm deadline of March 31st of what we want to do and, in fact, what this Legislature wants to do as well, Madam Chair.

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

MR. RAMSAY: That's good. Thank you for the update.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Next I have Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple questions on this page and on some of the Minister's opening remarks. One of the things I brought up is the \$47 million and it said the level of funding went up due to ongoing federal infrastructure initiatives. I'd like to know what that means. Are they matching the money? Are they giving us the \$47 million? My reading on this is they came up with the initiative, so who's financing the initiative that they came up with?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The \$47 million that I reference in the opening remarks is capital disbursements by the department of which \$24 million is federal funding for this year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that response. Another interesting paragraph here was the roads that were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s are nearing the end of their lifecycle. Can the Minister explain how a road or a highway nears the end of its lifecycle? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Sorry, just some clarification on the CSIF funding, it is 50/50 cost sharing from the federal government. In terms of road lifecycle, we're talking about the structures that build up our road, they deteriorate over time. Culverts built in the 1950s and 1960s are in those roads and they have to be replaced. We're talking about the grade of the road, as well. All those just deteriorate over time and so, often, we're finding throughout our North we're often rebasing all our roads, digging them up and making them stronger and firmer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another one of the concerns that I have is Highway No. 8 and I notice there's some money going into it again this year which I think is much needed. I would like to know how that money is disbursed. Does the regional office decide how the money is going to be spent, what repairs are going to be made? I'm thinking more in particular of dust control, and as the Member from Mackenzie Delta will verify, the dust control is much needed on the Dempster Highway. The Inuvik to Fort McPherson route of it is dangerous driving, it's like driving on marbles. It's dusty and it's very dangerous. We've been fortunate that we haven't had as many accidents as we could have had on that road. I can think of a few offhand where people have lost their lives, but how many more lives do we need to lose before we realize that the dust control is a big issue on that highway? We've got, I think, 259 kilometres, I believe, from Inuvik to the NWT/Yukon border and there's little stretches of it that have dust control. I'd like to know whose responsibility it is to ensure that the money goes to something that's much needed like dust control. I think that all the people of Beaufort-Delta or Mackenzie Delta will agree with me on this one, that they do need to do something about the dust on this road. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The \$5 million that was referenced is capital money. It's the actual reconstruction from the Yukon border inwards towards Inuvik, and that's where we're starting. That's what we're talking about, that we have to redo those roads. The Member talks about dust control and applications and that's something that's handled in our O and M allocations for the Dempster Highway. The department is responsible for dust control on our highways, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Minister Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, and I appreciate the answer from the Minister. I'd like to know, is it stipulated that so much of the road has to be dust controlled? It is, like I said, a dangerous road and you're putting \$5 million into the reconstruction of the road. I look in here and I hear talk about chipsealing this road and chipsealing that road, main street chipsealing, and all we're asking for is some highway dust control so we can enjoy the level of comfort, while we're driving, that they enjoy down here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Dust control on the Dempster Highway is part of our O and M program and we do use, I believe, calcium chloride and it is an expensive venture up that far; we're looking at \$5,000 a kilometre and up to 2,000 tons...Sorry, I'm just looking at some figures here. There were 2,000 tons applied on the Dempster Highway in the last year, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've driven that highway in the last few years and I'm not sure where that 2,000 tons went. I'm sure it flew off the highway with the rest of the dust, because it's just not working. It's not working. I'll leave it at that on that particular subject. I will, and that's another issue that I should pursue with Transportation before this session is over, because it's something that's very important to the people up there.

The other question that I have is on the Mackenzie Valley highway again and I can't put it any better than my colleague from the Sahtu when he said, gee whiz.

---Laughter

I can't put it any better than that. I'd like to ask the Minister, we hear what Ottawa says all the time and they say we're going to connect Canada coast to coast to coast and Arctic sovereignty and all they seem to be doing is talking, talking, talking. I'd like to ask the Minister, what is Ottawa's real position on the construction of the Mackenzie Valley highway? They have the means and the ability to do it and I'm starting to realize that maybe they just don't want to do it, because it stopped construction in 1977 because development slowed down. However, development since then has doubled, maybe tripled, and will continue to go up. I'd hate to think that they stopped it because of development and forgot about the people, because there are people living along the route to the highway. So my question to the Minister would be, and I just said it already, is what is Ottawa's real position on our Mackenzie Valley highway? We hear what they say, and they say a lot, but we haven't seen them do anything yet. So I'd like to ask the Minister that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Myself, as the Minister, and all Members of our government have been consistent in the fact when we're approaching the government and saying, look, you know, the resources are up there and you guys want to access them and the one way to do it is to build the Mackenzie Valley highway. We threw lots of different scenarios at them, of course, like telling them that you can help the Mackenzie Valley gas project indirectly by building a road. For a while they did listen to that, but the basic thing that we get is that the need is still not perceived to be there for them to invest in the North. We continue to do that in all our submissions that we provide to the federal government, is that we provide a business case that there is a need -- CFC I, CFC II, Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast -- and we tried to make the case that the need is here and it's today and it's real. But the federal government continues to see that it's still an option for them, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My ranting and raving about the Ingraham Trail and the amount of money that's going into that highway is, as I referred to, the best bush road in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Chairman, some real good people live on the Ingraham Trail and kudos to them for having a real nice highway. Mr. Minister has indicated to me, Mr. Chairman, that there are tens of thousands of people that pass through there.

It's a safety problem, you know, and if that was happening to my region I would certainly stand up and pay attention because that is a lot of vehicles and those people have to live through it a certain amount of time throughout the year. I guess that's the reasoning. Anyway, I have from my region similar cases that we want in our region and asking that consideration and effort and plans be given to our region that has potential for huge economic oil and gas activity. Once you complete the Bear River Bridge, that would be a signal that development can happen in larger volumes, at least, because of the completion of these bridges. Right now that's stopping a lot of the government from staying an extra month or so longer in our region. They indicated to us, so I want to say that in terms of our bridges, in terms of how soon when we can see the completion of the Blackwater Bridge, the Bear River Bridge. I know you're doing some work on Big Smith and looking at Little Smith also, and there are other bridges that need to be completed. It's just mind boggling that the federal government just doesn't see the need for continuing on with the Mackenzie Valley road in terms of a priority and an option. Maybe the pipeline should be an option for them, too, in terms of some type of leverage, but that's a whole other discussion.

Right now we're talking about highways and bridges and I would like to definitely see our bridges completed to show that we can make a huge contribution to the North and our region can contribute, too, like any other region, if we had the infrastructure there to do so. Mr. Chair, I'd like to take a few minutes to listen to what the Minister has to say, then I'll have two more questions and I'll be done. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Our government continues to spend money on the Mackenzie Valley road and, as I indicated earlier, we've got \$41 million worth of investments over six years, of which there's two left. I know the Member remains frustrated over our level of investment in Highway No. 4, the Ingraham Trail, and in six years we invested, or do plan to invest a total of \$12 million for that road. Once again, it's a safety consideration and maintenance of our infrastructure. The more trucks that are on the highway, there's more deterioration that happens and that's why the level of investment into the Ingraham Trail, to basically keep it up, the upkeep on it. Once again, the government recognizes the value of the resources that are being developed in the Slave Geological Province and we have to assist in that.

As well, we also recognize the amount of resources that the Member's own riding has there, Mr. Chair, in the Sahtu, and our need to go further and get the resources from our High Arctic and around Tuktoyaktuk, as well. To that end, the federal government has agreed with that business case, and the long-term strategy is to help us develop the bridges on the Mackenzie Valley winter road. That's why we're building bridges; it is part of our long-term strategy to eventually have an all-season or an all-weather road north, Mr. Chair. No, they're not being forgotten. We continue to strive towards that strategy. Well, this year, in particular, it is a huge blow to our government to look at the reality of not building a Bear River Bridge. We had the money at that time but, unfortunately, it was only good for 2004 dollars, so we had to reallocate the money that we had slated for the Bear

River Bridge and, in fact, we managed to get five more bridges in. I believe it was, and the deputy minister can correct me, I think it's a total of 34 out of 37 bridges will be completed for that section all the way up to Good Hope. We continue to strive and work towards our own goals of utilizing what resources we have for one of our priorities and that's the Mackenzie Valley highway. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I certainly would stand right next to the Minister with a pick and shovel if he wants to go to Ottawa to argue for our roads up the Mackenzie Valley and the need for bridges up there. We can certainly have a good business case for all the northern roads in the Northwest Territories. I'm letting my views known to him in terms of our roads.

One of the things that many of my constituents are asking is there's a real need to do some training and working and we haven't seen anything from this department in terms of advocating for a training program within the region from our communities. They talked about from all the communities in terms of getting a jumpstart on a Mackenzie Valley road where communities can do one kilometre to one and a half kilometres to two kilometres of road to start laying down the Mackenzie Valley road. There's no plans from this department in terms of how we can do that, even working on the road during some quiet time. There is money there, I know that. I'm not too sure if the money is all being spent in the region or where it's going. That's what the people are saying, let's get on this road and let's do some training programs and let's see some creative initiatives being developed by the department in Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, Tulita, and even in Deline. I know Deline is off the corridor. Let's see some training programs where they can start laying down some work in the communities to initiate or get a head start on these roads that we're speaking of, the Mackenzie Valley road.

I want to ask the Minister if his department is doing some work in that area to present back to my leadership in the Sahtu region in terms of looking at the bridges, advance some work done to enhance or speed up the project on the Mackenzie Valley road in our region. Some realignment...Look at the Bear River road from Tulita to Deline, it goes very close to the Bear River waters and zigzags in the last portion of the road to the Bear Lake there and it's pretty dangerous and there's hardly any work being done there to realign that work there. It's safety issues that we're looking at. The Minister has indicated that \$41 million has gone into the Sahtu region, I don't know if it's strictly the Sahtu region, or if he's talking about the whole winter road project in the Northwest Territories, because there are other regions that do have winter roads so...I'm just speaking on behalf of my region in terms of the type of work that needs to get in there. I guess we want to see the involvement where we have our people developing some of this work here, and that's why I keep advocating for even if you have a temporary office in our region on highways. He makes a good point and I do take his point well, but it doesn't seem logical that you have a regional office out of Fort Simpson coming up and telling people up in the Sahtu about roadwork and that. Then they go back to Fort Simpson after, back to the regional office. It's mind boggling. The Minister is right; he is hearing my frustrations about our roads and how it's been done in our region. I think the department needs to

step up to the plate and show some leadership in terms of building roads in our region. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely. Our government can, and will, accommodate any training where and when we can, especially up in the Sahtu. If the projects are significant enough, like the Bear River project was, and the Blackwater, you could make a case that it is significant enough to look at some type of training that could be accommodated with it. If the money is there, we would love to accommodate that and include that as part of the package because it's capacity building, and developing our youth and our skills in the communities and regions is a priority and is always a good thing, Mr. Chairman.

But some of the smaller ones, like you are talking about great improvements and that kind of stuff, we don't foresee how it would work to ask a small contractor to take on a huge training component. It's just not doable. Perhaps it's something that the Member and the companies are going to joint venture in the Member's riding can look at and accommodate through their own negotiations. For our department, if it's significant enough, we would certainly work with anybody we can to include training as part of the package.

The Member brings up about his need to have a regional office for the Department of Transportation there. I have to applaud the Member for being consistent on that matter. When you look at the business case for our department, it just doesn't fit in our plan currently, but we continue to monitor and as the roads develop and as the workload increases in his riding, then we will certainly consider staffing it with a full-time position there. Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have Mr. Pokiak next.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a quick question for the Minister again. It has to do with the \$2 million identified for the Ingraham Trail again. The Minister said earlier that one of the reasons why they do that is wear and tear on the road. With the Ingraham Trail, does the Minister put any money into maintaining that section of the trail? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No. Seventy kilometres of Highway No. 4 is maintained strictly by ourselves, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the level of activity the diamond mines use for that trail, has the department ever considered trying to sit down with the diamond mines to get money to maintain that road? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, Highway No. 4 is a Department of Transportation

responsibility and we continue to maintain it and keep that road up to safe driving conditions, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With that section of the road, would the Minister consider down the road to talk with the diamond mines so they can help maintain that road, rather than getting government to do it all the time? I think if they continue to use that road and we continue to put money into the Ingraham Trail, for us that money could probably be put to use for the Tuk-Inuvik highway and source 177. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Ingraham Trail, Highway No. 4, is a public highway and we are responsible for public highways, so we continue to maintain that road and keep it in safe driving condition, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Pokiak?

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think we are getting anywhere with this one, but I will continue to pursue this issue with them anyway. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Thank you, committee. We are on page 9-23, activity summary, highways, operations expenditure summary, \$42.786 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 9-29, activity summary, ferries, operations expenditure summary, \$6.429 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I am going to allow Mr. Pokiak to take the chair. I just had some questions on this page.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Page 9-29, activity summary, ferries, operations expenditure summary, \$6.429 million. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just wondering if the Minister could explain -- and I know we have repatriated some positions -- but when I do the math here it doesn't quite add up to what would amount to be what the contact would be and then what we are paying. If you look at compensation and benefits, we are at \$1.9 million. The '05-06 actuals were \$776,000. That's an increase of about \$1.1 million. Then our contract services, the actuals in '05-06 were \$3.18 million. They've come down in the '07-08 mains as \$2.5 million. So that's about \$600,000. So there is a discrepancy there and I just wanted to get the Minister to explain to me that discrepancy. Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to what looks to a significant increase to the Member, absolutely, there were many, many changes that

occurred as a result of repatriation. Some of it was for forced growth. I will try to detail as much as I can. For compensation and benefits, from the '06-07 mains of \$658,000, the increase covers five main areas; the Collective Agreement for the Members that are there, there's a increase of \$16,000; northern allowance funding adjustments of \$6,000; marine service reorganization of \$535,000; from contract services is \$855,000; and, we've also deducted \$195,000 for marine service reorganization to highways. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What was the cost of the contract that we had prior to the repatriation of the services? I am just trying to do the math and see what that was in relation to the additional cost the government is now incurring. Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What we had done is we had reduced our contract services by \$855,000 and that was reallocated into compensation and benefits. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then in your mains at \$2.5 million, why is it not \$858,000 less in the mains on contract services? If you go off the actuals from '06, it's about \$600,000. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The contract services did go up in other areas as well. There was the fuel increase allocation of \$143,000, as well as marine service reorganization of \$306,000.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another question in this area. I am just wondering what it cost the Government of the Northwest Territories to get out of the existing contract we had with the service provider when we repatriated the positions. Where would I find how much that cost and where we account for it? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For that level of detail, I will turn it over to deputy minister Russell Neudorf.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were quite a number of adjustments that we made in our ferry budget and I will try to walk through those quickly if I can. Overall, from '06-07 mains to '07-08 mains, we increased by about \$800,000. There were a number of different initiatives that were part of that. Those had come forward as part of a supplemental funding request. We took the

opportunity, due to the number of changes in the marine program, to take a look at how we were structured there and we made some changes to our organization. There were some additional dollars that resulted from that, about \$240,000.

At the same time, with repatriation of the two ferries, we needed some additional dollars related to converting from a contract to own forces. The total amount there was \$240,000.

There were also impacts on our other ferries of the actions that we took in Fort Simpson and Fort Providence. We did want to keep those other ferries under contract, but recognized we had to revisit some of the rates we had negotiated with those contractors, specifically the Arctic Red River ferry, the Louis Cardinal Ferry, where we renegotiated the contract there. That cost about \$200,000.

At the same time, there were a couple of marine incidents that had happened elsewhere in Canada. It caused Transport Canada to take a look at what's happening on the regulatory side. These ferries are all governed by Transport Canada and their regulations. Part of that is for the next sailing season, they will be asking us to put first mates on three of our vessels. That will cost about \$500,000 at the end of the day. So if you add those things up, it should come out close to the increment there.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the deputy minister for that level of detail. A specific question though: What did it cost the Government of the Northwest Territories to get out of the contract they were in with the previous service provider at Fort Simpson? Thank you.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will turn that over to Mr. Neudorf as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This was an action we took last fiscal year. There was a total, one-time cost of about \$100,000 that we had to pay to get out of the two contracts.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the deputy for that detail. Where did that come out of, that \$100,000? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That came out of our O and M dollar that we had allocated in the ferry program.

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

MR. RAMSAY: That's good, Mr. Chairman. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, the first mates, are these specific operations in the North, or is it for up in Inuvik and McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, around the Liard and then the Fort Providence area? Are these first mates advertised in the Northwest Territories? Do northern people have an opportunity to fly and get the training? This really adds an increase to our operations in the North. I don't know who we are serving in terms of the operation. I am going to ask the Minister that question. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The requirement for mates is a technical one. I have got here a 200 gross registered ton, so there are three ferries that qualify for that. That's the Merv Hardie, Providence, the Lafferty at Simpson and the Louis Cardinal. We are in the process of beginning to issue those job advertisements and we'll progress with the hiring of those mates. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I guess we are going to have a hiring policy. There are 23 new positions we are looking at. Whose rule is it that we have to have these mates or these requirements? Again, you are going to have different levels of ferries in the Northwest Territories. So the Minister of Transportation, I want to ask him that question. There are different classes again of people, so you are going to hire 23 new positions and we keep saying we have no money, we have no money, but somehow you find money. You have regulations, so you can find money. I am going to let my frustrations out again because our winter road seems to be falling off the scale here in terms of any type of regulations that require...You are spending millions on the Ingraham Trail. I am going to ask again on the different levels and ferries. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Of the three sailing ships, out of a total of 23, there are six mates required by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Once again, it's based on the size of the ship and because we repatriated the ferry services, it's a Transport Canada requirement that we have this minimum level and skill level of mates and engineers on all our ships. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the Minister how many types of ferries are there in the Northwest Territories? We are running a budget here. I want to ask the Minister that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In our ferry system in the Northwest Territories, we have many different sizes of ships. The Transport Canada requirement is based on tonnage. So out of all the ferries in our system, two of our systems do not have the requirement for mates. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, we are creating 23 positions again. It's going to add to our budget in terms of different regulations that we followed. The dollars keep going up and we keep saying to our people we have no money, we have no money to fix things. I don't know. That's enough of my frustrations. The Minister knows and the department knows. Has there ever been a discussion on a ferry service from Wrigley to the Sahtu and using that road back and forth once a week? Has anyone thought about that in the department about having a service like that in our region? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoché.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I will just clarify the 23 positions that were stated in my opening remarks. Not all 23 positions are for our ferry services. Out of the 23, 10 positions were associated with the repatriation of the Fort Simpson and Fort Providence ferries, as well as seven positions new this year are apprentices. Four positions are heavy equipment operators for the expansion of our winter services, one position was added to the Yellowknife Airport due to the increased size of the passenger terminal building and one position has been added to the Fort Simpson Airport. I hope that clarification is good enough for the Member, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Just for clarification, my understanding is that there are six first mates and four ferry workers out of Fort Simpson out of 23, so that's 10 workers. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My last question is to the Minister in terms of the question I asked him. Has the department considered, in terms of future operations as a cost analysis or looking at an option of having ferry service from Wrigley to one of the Sahtu communities to bring vehicles? There are over 60 vehicles in Tulita right now. A lot of people would like to go down south and go out on holidays. It cuts down the cost on airfare for huge families. In the Sahtu, we have huge families there so it costs lots of money. They have a lot of vehicles. So has the department given that type of consideration in terms of what it would cost, or what they can do to provide that type of service to our region? Certainly they could have some kind of discussion. That's what I want to ask for the people there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoché.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member brings up a good question that probably many of his constituents have been asking, is how do we continue our journey when there is no road. The department has taken a look at such an issue, but the Department of Transportation is not in the passenger business. In fact, we looked at a hovercraft idea and it's

just not a cost-effective way of doing business in that passenger service, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, I beg to differ on that issue here. The Sahtu does need a ferry, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman...(inaudible)...during the summer because of the way things are set up. I think the department needs to re-examine the need to have a ferry service in our region that can provide other benefits, cheaper groceries. Everything is being flown in. It's an isolated community. Nobody travels by road. We have to put our trucks on NTCL barges on their schedule, or Cooper Barging. That should be something that should be looked at. I would ask the Minister if he would give it some consideration and he may come back with the same answer next year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoché.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Once again, the department has looked at it and it wasn't a cost-effective way of providing passenger services. But there are other options out there. I encourage the Member to look at them. There is barging, river taxis and air that equally accommodate transporting of freight up to his region. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. I shall stand and report progress. No, all those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. I will rise and report progress. I would like to thank the Minister and the witnesses for coming down today. We shall continue tomorrow. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses out, please. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Pokiak.

ITEM 17: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 21, Appropriation Act 2007-2008, and Committee Report 8-15(5) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 19: ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Governance and Economic Development committee at 7:30 tomorrow morning.

Orders of the day for Thursday, February 22, 2007, at 11:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Petitions
10. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
11. Tabling of documents
12. Notices of Motion
13. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
14. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, Write-off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
 - Bill 22, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2006-2007
15. Second Reading of Bills
16. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act
 - Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008
 - Committee Report 7-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 8-15(5), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 9-15(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 10-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
17. Report of Committee of the Whole

18. Third Reading of Bills

19. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 22, 2007, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 18:01.

