



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Hay River North)

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(Great Slave)

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(Tu Nedhe)

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(Frame Lake)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 9, 2009****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Before we begin, colleagues, I would like to inform you that we have two interpreters today. Channel two is the Gwich'in and channel three is Tlicho. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 11-16(3):
MOVING FORWARD IN THE
16TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Members and my Cabinet colleagues for their honesty and frankness in our debate last Friday.

I know the issue of notification of changes to my personal life is a concern for some Members. I want to apologize for the effect this has had on the work of this Assembly.

Members have been clear that they expect better communications from government, and I acknowledge there are steps we can take to make things better.

My Cabinet colleagues and I have discussed ways to improve our information sharing with Members and the public. As a start, we are prepared to discuss our communications protocols with Members and come up with a renewed protocol that meets the needs of Members.

I restate our invitation for Members to appoint representatives to sit on our Strategic Initiative Committees. As these committees start to do more policy work, Members will have an opportunity for input as this work proceeds.

I think there is general agreement among all Members that we need to move forward and do the

best work we can for the people of our Territory. As I stated on Friday, I hope all Members can recommit to the spirit of collaboration expressed when we first came together as the 16th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 12-16(3):
APPRENTICESHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATION AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the week of February 1st to 7th was Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Week in the NWT. I am pleased to be able to share that we had much to celebrate. One hundred and fifty-three Northerners are in the process of occupational certification in the NWT, which is the highest number ever. The number of apprentices registered in the NWT has increased substantially for the first time in several years. As of January 2009, there were 427 apprentices, just over half of whom are in their first year. This is an increase of more than 25 percent from the previous year.

The reasons for this increase are numerous, but they are all rooted in the commitment of northern employers to the apprenticeship system.

This year, there has been increased involvement in all areas of apprenticeship, from employers and apprentices to Aurora College and Education, Culture and Employment.

Employers have been very supportive of the program, not only in taking on new apprentices but also giving their time to the trade advisory committees.

This week we celebrate our many new award winners and graduates from the program. There are recipients from every region of the Territory this year, another great reason to celebrate!

Following the apprenticeship and occupational certification review, there have been many changes made at ECE. The registration process for apprentices has been updated and the act and regulations are being reviewed. Staff have

undergone professional development updates, and we are working closer than ever with our partners.

Aurora College has also updated their trades programs, with a renovation of the trades facility at Thebacha Campus, and the addition of the new mobile trades training facility in Inuvik.

It is an exciting time to be involved in apprenticeship and occupational certification in the NWT, and I hope you will join me in celebrating this year's successes. Mahsi.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 13-16(3):
COOK PROGRAM GRADUATION –
NORTH SLAVE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE**

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, today it is my privilege to announce the first graduation of the North Slave Correctional Centre's cooking program.

This was a partnership between NSCC and Aurora College. Five young men received their camp cook certificates last Thursday. Everyone who attended the graduation saw their pride at finishing the program: they now have skills they never had before. This opens a world of new opportunities; all they have to do is choose to take them.

Aurora College has been an active partner in the delivery of cooking programs throughout the NWT, and we certainly saw that with this program. The effective partnership between Aurora College staff and NSCC food service staff is proof that when we work together, great things can happen.

Our correctional facilities are not warehouses for offenders who are just waiting out their sentences. Our treatment and support programs are focused on rehabilitating offenders and dealing with the root causes of their criminal behaviour. Our goal is to give them the skills they need to reintegrate into their communities. Specialty training programs like this aren't right for everyone. But for certain offenders, they can be the key to getting employment, taking responsibility for their behaviour, and staying on the straight and narrow.

This was an opportunity for these five young men; a chance to start again. They'll go back to their communities with new skills. They prepared a delicious meal for their guests, and I know they'll be excellent cooks. I'll be watching their careers with interest.

Our Territory has a growing need for qualified cooks, and there are employment opportunities in the food service industry. Graduates of the cooking program have both the ability and the opportunity to further explore and pursue this as a lifetime career choice.

The vast majority of offenders eventually leave custody and go back to their communities. We are always glad when people deal with the issues that were leading them to offend, and take the steps they need to become productive members of society. Our goal is to have safe, secure communities. Developing offenders' employment skills is one key to helping them reintegrate into their communities and stay out of trouble in the future. Mahsi cho.

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

Members' Statements

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NEED FOR A DRAINAGE STUDY IN LUTSELK'E**

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to talk about the need to have a proper drainage study done for Lutselk'e in order to properly apply any sort of debt reduction that will be effective. This study and follow-up work is imperative.

Like many small communities here in the North, when the summer rolls around there is a long list of projects that are crammed into a short construction season. Every year new plots of land are surveyed, new housing units are built, new roads are cleared, and existing roads are maintained. All of these activities cannot properly be done without taking into account the drainage characteristics of a particular area. This is a major problem for residents of Lutselk'e. The community cannot effectively do some of these projects until the community has proper drainage.

In Lutselk'e much of the community is situated on sloping terrain and drainage has an everyday impact. Spring rain runoff makes a very wet and muddy mess for residents and unwelcome sights for visitors to this small, isolated community.

There is no question that proper drainage for this community will greatly improve all future municipal works projects. Yards can be developed without coming back year after year to repair. New housing units can be built on long-lasting, solid foundations. And roads can be properly drained, paving the way for future dust control applications.

As well, residents and visitors will finally be able to enjoy this picturesque community without having a cloud of dust hanging over them for many of the dry days. Community residents can go outside without having to use rubber boots all the time.

I look forward to working with the Minister and the community in getting the ball rolling for this important community project. We may someday see a time when mud and dust is not an everyday issue for smaller communities like Lutselk'e.

Later today I will have follow-up questions from my statement for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONFIDENCE MOTION DEBATE

MS. BISARO: It's obvious that more people than I were thinking over the weekend about the events that occurred last Friday. I'd like to thank the Premier for his statement.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all Members of this House for their openness and their honesty in their remarks that were made during the confidence motion debate on Friday. It was gratifying for me, at least, to hear the frustrations of the Members on the other side of the floor as well as the Members on this side of the floor. I found it a somewhat cathartic experience to be able to express my own concerns and reservations publicly and to all of Cabinet in one fell swoop. Everyone heard it at the same time. For me it cleared the air, I got a load off my chest, and let everyone know where I stand and how I feel.

So now what? As a friend of mine says. Did we really hear each other? Will we really make an effort to solve this impasse or will each side retreat into their corners to sulk and plot anew on how to get the other side?

It will take an effort on our part, all of us; an honest effort from every one of us. We all have to be the grown-ups that we can be and play nice in the sandbox, as has been said before.

Can we overcome our distrust? See the others' point of view? Leave aside our instinctive vindictiveness? Ignore the personality conflicts and work together for the better of our Territory and our residents? I hope so.

I believe all of us in this beautiful room in this wonderful building love the NWT, and deep down we're all here to make improvements for our people. We've reached an impasse, but it's not insurmountable. The outcome all depends on how we look at the problem and how we tackle it. I will do my part to reach out and find solutions, offer to compromise and work things out. I only hope I get a positive reception and the same willingness to fix the problem from those I offer my hand to.

The two sides of this House have different expectations regarding how things should work between the two bodies that we've established. But I believe we all want the same result. Can we actually talk this out? Find common ground? Can each side compromise and change a bit, develop new processes and protocols to suit both sides? I say yes and expect no less from the rest of my colleagues.

What is needed for us to go forward is a large dose of humility and another of common sense. Talk is cheap; it's actions that count.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Talk is cheap; it's actions that count. Let our future actions show that we really mean what was said on Friday.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. ABERNETHY: On Friday this Legislature passed a motion requesting that Cabinet stop the implementation of the proposed Supplementary Health Benefits Program. All 11 Members on this side of the House, the majority of this Legislature, the majority of this Assembly supported that motion. The seven Members of Cabinet abstained.

During the debate on the motion the Minister of Health and Social Services said, according to the unedited Hansard of Friday, February 6, 2009, "I believe the intent of the policy is reasonable..." She further stated that, "Those who can afford to should contribute to the cost of benefits that supplement their health care." I believe that these comments go to the heart of the problems that we're experiencing with the proposed Supplementary Health Benefits Program.

The Minister has committed to means testing for supplemental health benefits regardless of any sound evidence that suggests it's the right thing to do. There's a remote chance that it may be right; however, without a financial analysis or research to demonstrate or back up that it is the right way to go, it is premature to commit so rigidly to that model of delivery. It is short sighted and does not allow for the development of a reasonable policy or program.

The Minister and Cabinet need to listen to what the majority of Members and the public have said. They need to immediately cease the implementation of this policy and rethink their devotion to means testing. They need to do the research and financial analysis with an open mind and no preconceived attitudes that their way is the best and only way to do things. There are other options. I strongly believe that a full cost analysis will demonstrate that means testing of supplementary health benefits will do more harm than good and will ultimately cost us all far more than it saves.

The motion on Friday is clear. The majority has spoken. Go back to the drawing board on the changes to supplementary health benefits with no preconceived notions. Allow common sense to prevail. Develop a program that is in the best interest of all Northerners. Do the right thing.

At the appropriate time I will have questions related to this Member's statement for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WATER TREATMENT PLANT
IN SACHS HARBOUR

MR. JACOBSON: The water treatment plant in Sachs Harbour has experienced many freeze-ups since the official opening in July 2005. There are serious design flaws that need to be corrected in order to ensure safety for drinking water for my constituents.

Also, because of the problems with the chlorination system, the water treatment plant in the community has been under a boil water advisory since July 2008, seven and a half months. Needless to say, my constituents of Sachs Harbour are very frustrated with the way the state of the water treatment in the community, and how it has been handled.

To my knowledge of this situation, there is more than enough blame to go around. Everyone involved in the design, construction, and ongoing operation has attempted to fix this, have tried over and over the last four years. I'm not going to sit here and assign blame or demand heads must roll. All I want to see is a clear way forward and reassurance for my residents of Sachs Harbour that the government is taking this problem very seriously, that there is a plan in place to ensure the safety of drinking water in Sachs Harbour and it is safe for my constituents.

I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ARCHAIC BANKRUPTCY LEGISLATION
IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. KRUTKO: [English translation not provided.]

Good afternoon, my friends. Given the difficult economic times we are currently in, more people in the Northwest Territories may find themselves in financial difficulty which could lead to declaring bankruptcy.

In bankruptcy, some essential assets are exempt in order to allow people to rebuild their lives, and those are defined in law. I took a look at the current NWT legislation that sets out what exemptions people can keep if they do file for bankruptcy. I was surprised at how outdated the NWT legislation is, which came into force in 1948. In reference to livestock, bees, ploughs, the items that have no reflection on what the majority of NWT residents own in this century.

I was also shocked at how low the value of exemption property was in the NWT legislation. The equipment necessary to work is capped at the maximum of \$600, including things like a motor vehicle, your principal residence was capped at \$3,000. The maximum of household furniture and appliances was \$200.

If the intention of the legislation is to provide people with some essential assets so they can rebuild their lives after bankruptcy, then it needs to be updated and reflect the reality of life in the Northwest Territories today.

Exemptions vary among provinces and territories. After division, Nunavut implemented and amended the legislation. The exemption items include tools, vehicles, other equipment used by people for hunting, fishing, trapping, and for gathering of food. The legislation also includes exemptions for medical aids and devices necessary for the health and mobility of disabled people. It also makes some important exemptions of money received under the common experience payments cannot be exempted. In Alberta the exemptions of personal property can get as high as \$40,000.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

In Alberta, the exemptions for personal property can be as high as \$40,000 and the maximum exemption of equipment for work is \$10,000. These

are exemptions for other jurisdictions. How inadequate our current legislation is facing the reality of what's happening today. It also shows how vulnerable NWT residents are under this legislation.

The government needs to ensure the residents of the Northwest Territories have updated legislation that reflects the reality and views on exemptions of assets. I urge the Minister and Cabinet to make every effort to implement this legislation and make the amendments necessary so people who do declare bankruptcy can at least rebuild their lives.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEED FOR AIRPORT RUNWAY LIGHTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Today I want to go back to something I raised last June in this House: the need for runway lights in Jean Marie River and Nahanni Butte. Both these communities have a very good airport runway, but they have raised the concern that the lack of runway lights can seriously compromise the safety of residents.

Most community airports across the NWT are equipped with basic infrastructure such as adequate runways, navigational aids, and runway lighting. This ensures that communities can safely be accessed by air 24 hours a day, particularly in the winter months.

The lack of runway lights makes it very difficult for essential services such as medevacs to travel to Jean Marie River and Nahanni Butte at night or during inclement weather. This is a serious disadvantage and can compromise the health and public safety of the residents in these communities. The ability to react quickly to medical emergency and/or policing situations is the biggest concern. The Minister of Transportation has stated that public safety is the number one priority of his department. I urge the Minister to extend his commitment to public safety to the residents of Jean Marie River and Nahanni Butte and make sure that these airports have the necessary infrastructure to operate at night.

I also ask the Minister to make a commitment to include airport runway lights for Jean Marie and Nahanni Butte in the 2010-2011 capital plan of his department. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR PROGRAMS

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to this Assembly a group of adult students and their instructors from the Goyatiko Language Centre in Dettah. These women are currently taking interpreter/translator training at Goyatiko.

The Goyatiko Language Society is a non-profit society established by a number of Yellowknives Dene who are working very hard to save their traditional languages, the Weledeh dialect of the Tlicho language and the Dene Suline or Chipewyan language. The students with us today are taking interpreter/translator training so that they will be able to assist in delivering services for their own First Nations and for institutions such as this Assembly, the hospitals, court and various boards and agencies. These students are also taking courses for Aurora College's Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program at Goyatiko.

Mr. Speaker, ALCIP, as it's known, training will give these students an Aurora College certificate or diploma. However, the Aurora College has cut the Interpreter/Translator Diploma Program, so these students are taking this particular training even though they will not receive a college diploma for it.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has made a real commitment to aboriginal language education in our schools through effective programs such as Language Nests. As languages are recovered, we will increasingly need certified, well-trained interpreters. Thus we need to re-establish the Interpreter/Translator Diploma Program at Aurora College at appropriate locations for good enrolment. The commitment of the students with us today to take the program, despite not receiving a diploma, highlights the need to re-establish this program as soon as possible. In light of our current review of the Official Languages Act, I suggest that Members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations might want to talk to these students to see how important this training is to the preservation, development and enhancement of our endangered aboriginal languages here in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, please join me in welcoming this dedicated group of people to our Assembly today. We have Mary Rose Sundberg and Betty Harnum, and students Jeannie Martin, Stella Martin, Margaret Martin-Baillargeon, Nora Crookedhand, Irene Soldat, and Alice Wilflad.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION OF
ABANDONED GAS STATIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about an issue of safety that affects all our northern communities. It is an environmental concern, a liability of abandoned gas stations here in the North. Abandoned gas stations are a problem because long after the doors close and the profits are taken and gone, those underground fuel tanks are still there and sometimes even the spills are there until they are forced to clean these up. These sites usually require substantial environmental cleanup and remediation, but it will sit there until they're forced to.

In Yellowknife there are at least two gas stations that are sitting empty in prime commercial space; one sitting downtown in my riding and the other sitting between Tim Horton's and Wal-Mart. Mr. Speaker, this has an effect on the community. Mr. Speaker, they're fenced in but they look more like eyesores than anything.

Mr. Speaker, the community-at-large is not expecting these to be cleaned up because they know deep down inside there is no one forcing them to clean these properties up. Where is the public interest in this issue? Mr. Speaker, I don't think there is any interest at all. It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that there are no municipal bylaws that can force these property owners to clean up and remove those tanks and those properties as long as they are paying their property tax. The eyesore and potential environmental liability sits there and waits.

I think the territorial government should step up to the plate and should create a property law in the Northwest Territories that forces these people, when they walk away from these sites for more than a year and they certainly have no intent to reopen these facilities, that they should be acting in the interest of the public. The public stewardship should be taken as first priority and that should be that they clean these sites up. I'd hate to think that many owners have walked away from these sites and they're going to ignore their liability for as long as they can, but some do. Sometimes that falls on the public purse to take responsibility of what should be done up front.

Mr. Speaker, I have problems with this, but I'd say that there are solutions. The Alberta government has a solution for assessing part of the cost and the remediation of those sites up front. Mr. Speaker, I think there are plenty of examples of where we can find solutions to this problem. What about performance bonds up front? We could start considering those actions to make sure the public interest is always foremost on our minds.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the potential health and environmental risks are underpinned by a process that is inadvertently protecting by them paying their taxes and then not being forced to clean up. Mr. Speaker, I stand with the community in making sure that our environment is clean and we are responsible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PROPOSED MINI-HYDRO PROJECT IN DELINE

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, there are eight communities in the Northwest Territories that have hydro development power. Mr. Speaker, these hydro development powers were the gift of the federal government when they had NCPG. Mostly these hydro stations were there because of the mining companies south of the lake of the Great Slave Lake and that area here. These hydro power initiatives that were a gift by the federal government then became the gift of the Northwest Territories and those communities that do enjoy the low cost of hydro power. These eight communities are all on all-weather road highway systems in terms of their connection with this power here, compared to 23 diesel communities that are not on hydro power plus the two communities that are served by natural gas. The 23 communities, Mr. Speaker, five of these 23 diesel communities are on the highway system, 18 of them are fly-in communities where the high cost of living is double, sometimes, compared to Yellowknife rates or even triple in terms of Edmonton's rates in terms of the inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this government's initiative in terms of the NWT Hydro Strategy and also the document that came out in terms of review of regulations and review of the Power Subsidy Program and electrical rates in the Northwest Territories.

My issue, Mr. Speaker, is with the community of Deline. I have been pursuing this initiative on the hydro project to the Bear River hydro that didn't come through, so now they're looking to mini-hydro. I would ask this government here to consider the Deline mini-hydro as a project that is high on its priorities in terms of its Hydro Strategy, in terms of the cost of living, in terms of how can they proceed with the community and this government through the lead Minister of the Energy Coordinating Committee in terms of putting some serious dollars, sitting down with the community, iron out their differences in terms of what is the best for this community in terms of bringing the costs of living down and having the community be an owner in terms of having mini-hydro in the community.

My issue will be with the lead Minister on the Energy Coordinating committee in terms of the Deline mini-hydro project. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONFIDENCE MOTION DEBATE

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak today about Friday and the motion that was narrowly defeated. I'd like to thank all of my constituents who gave me their thoughts and feelings on this motion. I appreciate and respect the views that I got from all of my constituents. I just wanted to take a moment today to summarize why I supported the motion and where do we go from here.

For me, the motion on Friday would have addressed a number of concerns, the biggest one being the proposed changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Plan. It would have been an opportune time to ask a potential new Premier and Cabinet what their positions on the changes were and whether or not they supported it.

The same can be same for board reform, Mr. Speaker. Do you support the initiative, yes or no? It would have made it easier to hold the Premier and Cabinet accountable for these items had they confirmed it through the Territorial Leadership Committee.

Also, the issue of the Opportunities Fund and the future use of these dollars could have been on the table. An interesting note to this, Mr. Speaker, is that on Friday afternoon, while the motion to remove the Cabinet was being defeated, the deal closed on the \$34 million loan, which was quite a coincidence.

As it pertains to the economy, it would have been a great time to ask a new Premier and Cabinet some very important questions on how they would stimulate the NWT economy.

Mr. Speaker, these opportunities passed us by on Friday and now it's time for us to move on. I certainly hope that the Premier and Cabinet were not high-fiving each other this morning during Cabinet, but rather trying to understand and appreciate all of the issues that brought us to presenting this motion on Friday. I'd hope that they'd come up with a plan to address these real concerns. Mr. Speaker, we want good government - honest, open and transparent communications -- not backroom deals, half-hearted delays, poor policy and bad communications. These are the reasons people in the Northwest Territories were upset while Members were upset. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, the questions and the scrutiny

will be getting much more severe. Mr. Speaker, there will be a tremendous amount of pressure put on Members to work together, as the Premier said, to find a way. Mr. Speaker, I do hope to be a part of the solution as we go forward from here and I look forward to discussions that are going to take place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to recognize some very special visitors in the gallery today. We have 10 young women and men who are visiting us for a few days from the Ontario Legislature Internship Program. They are here to observe consensus government in action, and I'm sure, being familiar with the Ontario Legislature, that they will find that we are very well-behaved in here. I want to recognize Emma Stanley-Cochrane, Chelsea Peet, Meghan Buckham, Angela Hersey, Kim Hohan, Tejas Aivalli, Igor Delov, Waqas Iqbal and David Donavon. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly and welcome to Yellowknife.

---Applause

The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize my wife in the House and welcome her to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Just to repeat, I'd like to welcome the members of the Goyatiko program on languages and interpreters translation. Welcome to the instructors Mary Rose Sundberg and Betty Harnum. Also the students, again: Jeannie Martin, Stella Martin, Margaret Martin-Baillargeon, Nora Crookedhand, Irene Soldat and Alice Wilflad. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'd like to recognize a friend and classmate in Fort Smith way back when and a fellow golfer, Alex Wilflad.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I too, would like to recognize Mary Rose Sundberg and

also Betty Harnum and the students for keeping up the good work continuing with our traditions. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 74-16(3): WATER TREATMENT PLANT IN SACHS HARBOUR

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I spoke of the problems that are occurring in the ongoing successful operation of the water treatment plant in Sachs Harbour; problems with freeze-ups and chlorination that are impacting my constituents' access to safe drinking water on a consistent basis. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, the Honourable Robert C. McLeod. Can the Minister tell me in this Assembly: what is this government doing to address the issues that affect the operation of the Sachs Harbour water treatment plant?

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to assure the Member and the residents of Sachs Harbour that the government takes the issue of safe drinking water very seriously and we're committed to finding resolution for the issues that have been plaguing this plant in Sachs Harbour as soon as we can. Right now we're working with our partners at Public Works and Services at identifying the solution for the intake pipe to the water treatment plant. We're at the design approval stage right now and hopefully I'll be able to provide the Member with more information when that becomes available.

MR. JACOBSON: Thanks to the Minister for that information. I'm pleased to hear that DPW and MACA are working closely together on providing a solution to this issue.

On the issue of the boil water advisory, can the Minister tell me when we expect to lift the ban on the drinking water?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we're waiting right now for the hamlet to complete some remedial work at the plant and in the water delivery truck itself. When we get two clean water samples

in a row, the environmental health officer will more than likely remove the boil water advisory.

MR. JACOBSON: The Minister answers and speaks to the issue I raised in my Member's statement and that's that everyone, including the hamlet staff, have a role to play in the delivery of our safe drinking water and share some of the blame for the current situation. Can the Minister tell this Assembly what the department is doing to support the hamlet in acquiring the necessary training for the hamlet staff in dealing with the operations and maintenance issues?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our partners at Public Works and Services are working to make sure that all the equipment in the water treatment plant is functioning. As far as MACA goes, MACA is always working to ensure that water treatment plant operators are trained in the operation of the plant and ensuring standards can be maintained. MACA is contributing significant resources, as far as this goes, and this is one of the benefits of having bundled water treatment plants, where you have the water treatment plants in each community that are pretty well the same and you train one community plant operator and then they can basically answer questions in the other ones. It's all interchangeable parts and everything. I think that would be a good thing for the future of water treatment plants.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 75-16(3): ARCHAIC BANKRUPTCY LEGISLATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice in regard to my Member's statement in regard to the NWT Exemptions Act. In relation to this legislation, like I said in my statement, was that it was basically enacted in 1948 and it's still pretty well in the books on what was stated, which talks about items that basically, when you talk about livestock, you talk about bees, you talk about fowl, waterfowl I suppose. I don't know what that's all about, but again it's so outdated it doesn't really meet the reality of the Northwest Territories today.

One of the first things that was done in Nunavut, once they became a Nunavut Territory, is they made amendments to that legislation. I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice exactly what the government is doing to speed up or make amendments to the NWT Exemptions Act so that the people that do file for bankruptcy realize they are going to be going

through a tough time, but also ensuring that we have bankruptcy legislation that's similar in other jurisdictions and other territories across Canada so that they can also get a fair break realizing that they are going to be going through some tough times. I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice, where are we in this legislation? How soon are we going to bring it into the House?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, this act that the Member is referring to does go back to 1948. There has been one minor amendment in the 15th Assembly. The Member is quite correct about meeting the standards of today's modern legislation act. One of the exemptions announced that it refers to is that it does not reflect our cost of living here in the North and also does not include categories that are standard in other jurisdictions. The Member has also alluded to other jurisdictions, as well, with their acts. So, certainly, my department is doing their research. We're in the process of amending the act as we speak. I'm glad Mr. Krutko brought this to our attention a couple of weeks back and we are in the planning process of making some amendments.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my opening comments, there are certain maximums on the exemptions such as \$600 in regard to different types of equipment; \$3,000 in regard to loss of your residence; and also household items, furniture, appliances, \$200. I'd like to ask the Minister, in regard to the amounts that are present in the legislation, probably the closest legislation to reflect us is Nunavut, and I know they did increase those fees up to, I think, \$35,000. In Alberta it's \$40,000. I'd like to ask the Minister, are you also looking at those fee structures that presently are in place and comparable to other jurisdictions? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly we need to compile what the other jurisdictions have in place. With respect to Nunavut, the current legislation that they have, the changes that have been initiated, certainly we'll take those into consideration; Alberta, as the Member indicated, and other jurisdictions as well. We realize that the act is outdated and we need to make some amendments. Based on the outcome, we will certainly make some changes to that act.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister how soon can he bring this legislation back to this House so that we can deal with it. Supposedly we can have it ready for the May session or even looking at the fall session. I hope we can get it in sooner than later, because we realize the urgency of this legislation in regard to the difficulties that we're seeing in the Northwest Territories with people losing their jobs, losing their

livelihood. I'd like to ask the Minister how soon...If we put a rush on this, can we get it back into the House?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly we need to work with other jurisdictions compiling that information, but the ideal plan is to deliver this legislation by this summer in this House.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I only noted two jurisdictions and I think I posed the jurisdiction that really reflects the Northwest Territories is Alberta, which is basically our neighbour to the south. I'd like to ask the Minister if he'd seriously consider implementing the Alberta legislation in regard to property real estate and also looking at similar economies that we have here in the Northwest Territories and Alberta. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly Alberta experience and also the legislation will be part of our ongoing discussion and amendment to our current act that we have in place, along with other jurisdictional documentation and their acts which will also come into play throughout our discussion with our department. We will certainly bring it forward to the standing committee on a moving-forward basis. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 76-16(3):

NEED FOR A DRAINAGE STUDY IN LUTSELK'É

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of MACA on the need for drainage in Lutselk'é. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of MACA tell me when the last drainage study had been completed in Lutselk'é? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information right now, but I will be sure to gather the information and relay it on to the Member. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, can I get the Minister to commit to either completing the study or updating the study this spring? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, once we see the study, I can commit to the Member that we will work with the community to upgrade the study

once we find out where the study is at. We will commit to working with the community on the upgrade because, at the end of the day, it would be a community responsibility to do some planning with the drainage, but MACA will assist the community any way we can. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for me to think of a more important issue to all of the community of Lutselk'e than theft. That was a major issue during the time I was campaigning in Lutselk'e and also in my follow-up visit. I would like this study or any plans falling out from the study not to be a prolonged process. I am not sure if the Minister will be able to do this, but just for the record, I would like to know if the Minister can tell me if a technical plan can be completed to allow materials to do the actual work, to enable us to allow the materials to be shipped into Lutselk'e this fall. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have to find the plan and then we'd have to work out the details as to the financing and who is going to be responsible for financing the work that is supposed to be done. Again, we go back to the fact that the communities now are more in charge of their own infrastructure and they decide how the money is going to be used. MACA's role is to assist them technically any way that they can. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I already know that the community doesn't have enough money in the new plan to do this work. The communities with the new plan do have difficulty expanding beyond what seems to be a fairly standard infrastructure or mobile equipment type of expenditures. I am going to ask the Minister again...For more expediency, I think some of our issues here in the government have been that the community waits for a long time before projects get on the books and even longer for the projects to actually start. Can the Minister tell me that he is prepared to meet with the local government to actually start plans towards trying to put some money together so that work can be done in Lutselk'e on that issue as soon as possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we talk about dust, and I have lived in a small community for a number of years. I am well aware of the spring runoff and things like that. I will make a commitment to the Member that we will try to put something together as soon as we can, to sit down with the community at the end of the day. MACA will meet with the community at their request. Being a band community, we usually have to work with the band quite closely with anything that goes into their

community. We will make an attempt to engage with the band and be able to find us some time to sit down and see if we can put something together as far as the study goes and the issues facing the community. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 77-16(3):
NEED FOR AIRPORT RUNWAY LIGHTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my Member's statement to the Minister of Transportation. Any time I do my tours for my communities, for Jean Marie River and Nahanni Butte, they often raise the question about the runway lights because they are there every day. They see the need for it. In fact, a few opportunities were missed that they could have benefited from using these runway lights. I would like to ask the Minister, how much work has been done to date in identifying communities or the funding resources toward establishing runway lights for the smaller communities? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that has been ongoing for some time. We have had a number of discussions with the Member and also the communities involved and concern over the safety of our aircraft landing in our smaller communities where the runway lights are not always operational and where that could leave our aircraft as it comes into the community for a landing. We have had many occasions where these lights were vandalized and other occasions where the operators did damage to them. We can't really depend on them being a safe form of providing lighting, flare pots were considered adequate. We plan to continue to use these as a form of lighting for our runways until we can come up with something better or something that would be more reliable. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, damages can occur for many reasons such as animals as well, but despite that, our communities would like to see these runway lights. I would like to ask the Minister to begin deliberations for the 2010-11 budget to establish runway lights for two of my smaller communities. Can the Minister do that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, to replace these lights, the cost factor is an issue. For the replacement of lights in these small communities for the airports, the price tag on replacement is around \$300,000. In both of the

communities that the Member has raised, we replaced lights on a number of occasions. We have another community in his riding where the lights have been damaged three times over the last year and a half. It has become a very big concern. It is a safety issue. Until we can find a way to work this through or find a system where the lights are not continually damaged through either the maintenance of the runways or vandalism, we will have to continue to depend on flare pots, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, the communities report that the infrastructure is basically there but there is certainly damage. I don't think we are reinstalling new runway lights, but more or less fixing what is there, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I would like to ask the Minister to consider the request of the community and look at putting this in the 2010-11 budget year. Will the Minister commit to that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated before, the lights have already been replaced on a number of occasions. The cost factor is getting to be very huge. We have one community in his riding where they have paid for the repairs of the lights. We would certainly consider that if the Member would be willing to talk to the leaders or we can talk to the leaders to see if they would be interested in doing so. I can certainly provide them with the information on how much it costs and maybe if we shared the responsibility or looked at a way through this, that the community would bear the burden of the cost, we certainly can consider it. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What can this Minister commit to to help our community?

---Laughter

The request is simple there, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister to consider the needs of the smaller communities' infrastructure there. Can he look at re-establishing runway lights in these communities? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I certainly can commit to the communities continuing to use their flare pots...

---Laughter

...and having the people in the communities to put these in place whenever there is a need for the aircraft to land in the time of darkness. Other than that, Mr. Speaker, we are very reluctant to do it on a continual basis where the lights are damaged from improper care or maintenance or vandalism. It

has become very costly and it is not something we can afford to do over and over again. Until we can find a better system, that is the only answer I can give him. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 78-16(3):
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION OF
ABANDONED GAS STATIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I talked about the issue of abandoned gas stations and the environmental liability that that could potentially pose to a community. Mr. Speaker, I can easily ask this question to MACA under Commissioner's land and about how to deal with land. I think it is better suited under ENR, with that Minister, under environmental protection. So I wouldn't want the other Minister to get off easy here today. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of ENR is, would they take a look at the situation by coming up with regulations that if a gas station closes with no plan to reopen, within a year they have to start remediating that site to make sure that there are no contaminants left in the ground and we do this in the interest of the public? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I will commit to work with the department and other related departments that have an interest in this, with MACA and such, to get a common briefing note to find out what the issue is, where the gaps are and what are the potentials to close those gaps. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, that was fine.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

QUESTION 79-16(3):
SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS
PROGRAM

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services as a follow-up to my Member's statement. During the debate on the Supplementary Health Benefits Program, it became clear that, although they were prepared to review the program, which is obviously great, the Minister and Cabinet are still committed to the concept of means testing. In the absence of any research or financial analysis, I am

confused by his position, to be quite honest. I was wondering if I can get the Minister to please help me understand why Cabinet is so committed to the concept of means testing, especially in the absence of any financial analysis, the information needed to make reasonable and sound decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I believe in all of our discussions in the House and listening to the Members and the public, I have stated that we have listened. We understand that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. We are taking it back and putting it under full review. I am not sure if we are just debating on semantics. I want to reconfirm to the Member and this House that I have already directed the department to review the changes proposed. We expect that we have to do a lot of analysis before they get brought back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I am still confused. I still don't quite understand how anybody can make decisions and commit to things like means testing in the absence of financial information such as financial analysis. The Minister has indicated in the debate that they are still committed to affordability, which includes some level of means testing. I was just wondering if she can help me understand that aspect of their argument, why they are still committed to means testing while they go through this review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, we are examining the policy, the changes. I am not going to put anything off or on the table. I think that the message is loud and clear that we need to review the program changes. The government is undertaking to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you for that response from the Minister. I am curious. Does that mean that the government and Cabinet are no longer committed to means testing and that any policy they bring forward will go through a thorough research and analysis which includes the possibility of no means testing on the supplementary health benefits when it does come forward? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: We will look at all aspects of this program. Mr. Speaker, I think there is still a good analysis we need to do to know how to address the situation where, under the existing program, while a family that makes \$50,000 gross are having to pay some of the benefits, but somebody who is making \$150,000 net might not

have to. I just want to let the Member and the public know that the government is taking these program changes back. We are going to review it from top to bottom and we pledge that we have to have very good financial analysis to bring them back. I am committed to working with the stakeholders and the Standing Committee on Social Programs on the process and the substance of this review. There should be no question about our commitment to make sure that we have reviewed this program again to see how we can make it work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, thanks to the Minister for that. It still doesn't sound like there is any commitment that means testing is completely off the table, but I will leave that one alone for now.

In the motion we talked about timing. Is the Minister now ready to commit to pushing off the implementation date of this program to no sooner than April 1, 2010? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: We received the motion on Friday as a recommendation from this House. Cabinet and I, as Minister, are reviewing that recommendation. We will communicate back to the Member as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Before I go on, colleagues, I am concerned. I have noticed one Member using a BlackBerry in the House. Our rules do not allow BlackBerries in the House. I would request the Member to remove any BlackBerries from the House. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 80-16(3):
SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS
PROGRAM

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, my questions are addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. At the risk of being repetitive, I am kind of on the same wavelength as my colleague, Mr. Abernethy. As I heard the Minister answer questions earlier last week, the Minister to me...I heard her state that the intent of the policy as passed by Cabinet in September of 2007 will remain the same. If the policy is not up for review, it is my feeling that we will have some residents in our Territory who are going to be paying more for supplementary health benefit costs than they do at present. When this change takes effect in April 1, 2010, can the Minister promise that an NWT resident will not pay more for supplementary health

benefits than a resident anywhere else in Canada at that time? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that answering that question yes or no could predetermine the review process. Really, I just want to make it clear that we have heard loud and clear that the packages as they are presented were inadequate, and are in need for some real sound financial analysis and justification. We need to go beyond the changes proposed on the implications. There are myriads of issues and concerns that we have been hearing since we launched in December, 2008.

It was suggested this morning that we should cease to implement that. I think putting off the effective date has effectively done that. I am committed to...First of all, we have to set out a process on how we are going to review these, and I expect I will be coming back to the Standing Committee on Social Programs on that and I am open to making sure that the review is full and comprehensive. I don't want to put anything on the table or off the table. As it is now, until that policy has changed, the policy intent is there but it's just not effective until it becomes effective and the date right now is September 1st. I just want to reiterate that I am open to full review and we will make whatever changes are necessary upon that review, but I don't want to predetermine the outcome of that review. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess, perhaps, we talk an awful lot about the intent of the policy. Maybe I need to ask the Minister, and I will ask the Minister, what exactly is meant by the intent of the policy? Does that mean that we are trying to cover the lower income end of our workforce or does that mean, as well, that we are going to use a means test in order to try to pay for the extra cost that's being incurred? So what is the meaning of the intent of the policy? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: The intent was not to make some part of our population pay for those who we are hoping to include that are currently excluded. The intent of the policy, as it was approved in September of 2007, is that we need to add an affordability or an ability to pay or inability to pay as one of the factors in determining eligibility. Now, I have committed that we will review this scenario because we have heard loud and clear about concerns who we are including, who we are excluding, who we are expanding it to, what are the cost implications, near and far on a number of issues. So I am committing to the Member, and again to this House, that I am going into this

process open minded and I would ask Members to do the same and I haven't got a predetermined position on that. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I guess, if I hear the Minister properly, then the intent is not to have -- to go back to my first question -- some residents in our Territory paying more than residents in other parts of this great land and other parts of Canada. To the Minister, we have talked a lot about the policy and the intended policy changes to cover people at the lower end of the workforce. I would like to ask the Minister what is the estimated additional cost to provide this coverage to the lower income end of our workforce? I would like to get a number, please. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: That's the kind of number that we need to update and verify because remember this policy was approved back in 2007 and we need to work out numbers and obtaining and confirming and getting better and more blue chip information, as they say, to learn more about this policy, and changes will be the important part of this exercise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for the answer. It's about what I expected. I would have thought that that information would have been available to us now if we are going to be putting a policy in place and we expect that there was going to be an additional cost. I would have thought that cost would have been known upfront. That said, when will the Minister be able to provide that number to Members of this House? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I need to correct that also. The Member said in her last question that from what I am saying, no one in the Territories will pay more than what they are paying in the southern jurisdictions. I have no idea to determine that right now, because the packages that we offer under the Supplementary Health Program are very different than a package of programs they offer down south. For example, homecare is included as supp health in Yellowknife or in the Territories, which is not the case down south.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why we don't have an exact number as to exactly who is going to benefit with these changes and how much that is going to cost is because of the fact that we're dealing with a population that comes and goes. Health programs are demand driven. Once you set a policy on who is eligible, whoever is eligible under that criteria will come in and benefit. Right now, under these program changes, we are trying to include those who were not included before. But until they come

and benefit from it, we aren't going to know exactly how much that is. We will provide the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, as we move forward on this review process, some of the numbers in income levels, age breakdown, what we are offering under supplementary health right now, who we expect will get into the new program. We will come with all this information so that the Standing Committee on Social Programs can give us feedback on how we move forward from here as we start the review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 81-16(3):
RELIEF FROM HIGH ELECTRICAL
POWER COSTS

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I could have included in my list of reasons why the motion came forward on Friday was power rates. I have been hearing from a number of constituents, people who live in apartments, Mr. Speaker, are paying over \$300 a month for power rates. When the latest increase to power rates came up and the GRA was approved, it was because oil was \$140 a barrel. People could buy that. The interesting thing is, though, people were told because consumption was down. Now, consumption is down for a reason; it's because people are putting in energy efficient appliances, they are changing their light bulbs, they are conserving energy, but I think the government, the Power Corporation and NUL should have been upfront with residents of the Northwest Territories that if you conserve power, you are going to pay more and that's exactly what's happened. It's had a perverse effect, Mr. Speaker. The first question I have for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation is when are residents going to get some relief from the high rates they are paying and now that oil is hovering around \$40 a barrel? When are these rates going to be rolled back to give our residents some relief?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Power Corporation rate, general rate application that went in, was to pay for fuel that was purchased not this season but the season prior to that to make up the loss there. So we would see, as we go through refueling, the cost would be looked at again and most general rate applications come on a three-year cycle. So we would have to look at those costs, but again the general rate application that went forward to the PUB that was approved was based on previous year's costing off fuel supplies, and most of our communities that are

run on diesel are refueled once a year and that affects those communities. So it would affect on how we would move forward with any numbers.

Meanwhile, we are doing work on the discussion paper that was launched around our rates and generation distribution. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I don't believe we can wait three years for another GRA. I believe people are having a heck of a time paying their power bill and if someone in a one bedroom apartment in my riding is paying over \$300 a month for power, I can't imagine what people in the smaller communities have to pay for power. Even my own power bill at my house has gone up 30 percent, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, I want to ask the Premier, the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, can he instruct the Power Corporation to give some relief next year? People cannot afford to wait three years, Mr. Speaker. Can it happen next year? It should happen next year. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Members are aware that the general rate application or any rate changes in rate structure are very complicated. It's not a matter of a Minister standing up and saying this shall be done. We have to work through the legislation through the Public Utilities Board and establish the cost if there are cost savings, we could look at doing something, making a change. Some of the rate riders that have been put in place that also affect the cost of that power as they've reached their target goal of the revenue that was being sought, would drop off as well. I can get back to the Member if there are any of those in place and when those might be able to drop off. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Like I said, if we wait three years, my fear is we are going to lose residents. I already know many people, given the current state of affairs here and the cost of living, are packing their bags and heading south. If we don't take this concern seriously, more people are going to leave. Paying a power bill of \$300 for living in an apartment is very expensive and people can't continue to pay these high rates of power.

I'd like to ask the Premier, who gave permission...and the one thing people have trouble with is we're still paying these bonuses to the staff at the Power Corporation in excess of \$600,000. When people see those bonuses being paid and then they're paying this \$300 a month for an apartment dweller, I mean, hey, come on, now. They should be ashamed of themselves and we should get some relief for the residents. When is it going to happen?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The Member had a couple of different items there in that last question, whether it was a bonus issue or the general rate

application and when there'd be some relief. We haven't identified a time of relief. All the rate structures and processes in place would require us to go back to the Public Utilities Board.

As for the bonuses in that area, that falls under the authority of the board itself.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you go by the logic that the Minister uses on power rates and if we wait three years can residents in the Northwest Territories...Let's say oil stays at \$40 a barrel. Will residents three years from now see a 30 percent to 40 percent decrease in their power rates? I don't think so. Like I said, we run the Power Corporation. The people of the Northwest Territories own that power corporation and if we're not going to do anything about it, nobody is.

I'd like to ask the Minister if he will instruct the NWT Power Corporation to cease these bonuses that are paid to their senior staff and roll rates back now that oil's at \$40 a barrel.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The Member continues to use today's price as to why the general rate application was put through. The fact is the purchase of the fuel at the time was much higher than today's environment. We cannot compare those two. That would not be doing justice to the issue that residents face in the Northwest Territories. We do see the power as a very serious one in the Northwest Territories. That is why the discussion paper has gone out about the rate distribution and the subsidy that is in place. Also, through this budget process that will be in front of Members to look at alternative energies and how we get that in place to help the cost of living issues in the Northwest Territories.

There are a number of things that this government and the Assembly itself is looking at to try to stabilize rates or find a way of lowering them and try to come up with some solution. As I have committed, if there are rate riders in place, depending on which communities to see when we might meet that target, I can get back to Members as to when some of those might be able to be dropped off.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 82-16(3):

PROPOSED MINI-HYDRO PROJECT IN DELINE

MR. YAKELEYA: The community of Deline has been asking and been getting some support from the territorial government in terms of pursuing a mini-hydro project in the mouth of Bear River. It's

been a fact that eight communities rely on hydro development along the highway system. There are 23 diesel communities. So far what I've heard from the Minister of Finance when he addresses these two communities that are in his address that list Lutselk'e and Whati as diesel communities that would look at alternative power in that community.

I want to ask the lead Minister in the Energy Coordinating Committee, is Deline getting the same kind of continued support in terms of being one of the diesel communities that are off the highway system to get continued support to look at the possibility of having a mini-hydro plant at Deline?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Energy Initiatives, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Member from Sahtu that we have provided for funding to look at providing mini-hydro in the Sahtu at both Deline and Tulita and it is in the detail of the budget that the Minister of Finance read out.

MR. YAKELEYA: As the Minister has indicated, I would certainly add support to continue with our hydro development on the Bear River. We know right now today as it stands that the Bear River dam is probably not a very good project to put on the table in terms of our people with respect to the pipeline, but the other issue is the Deline mini-hydro project. I know this project has been in the books with Deline and the government 16 years and yet we're not seeing too much of the standing stages in terms of construction of the Deline mini-hydro.

I would ask the Minister if he could sit down again with the Deline people and this government and put some real dollars so that we can see a mini-hydro plant within the life of this government at Deline.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The NWT Energy Corporation, with the support from Department of ITI, has been working with the community of Deline in conducting feasibility studies for a mini-hydro project. Funding was provided this year to the community and the issue seems to be coming up with a viable project proposal. The community of Deline, as the Member knows, has been looking at a hydrokinetic proposal. The issue seems to be whether the scale of the project that's being proposed, whether the technology is proven to allow it to go forward.

MR. YAKELEYA: The Minister is very correct in terms of the viability of this UEK turbine for use on the Bear River. Deline is looking at 200 kilowatts. The UEK turbine tested, I understand, could be a possibility. That's been tested at the University of

Manitoba is my understanding. Deline, as of January 2009, has found two locations, one in Mississippi in the United States and one in B.C., that could look at this technology as being viable for the community of Deline at this location. The numbers seem right by this company in B.C.

Can the Minister commit to have his people go into Deline to sit down and work out their differences, to sit down and say we can have a work plan in terms of having a mini-hydro project in Deline? Can the Minister commit that to me in the House?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We're quite prepared to go and consult with the community. I know the community has proposed two locations where they indicate that there are technologies at work. Also, more recently there's been an announcement that in Ruby, Alaska, they are putting in place a hydrokinetic option. So we're quite prepared to work with the community to look at these different places.

MR. YAKELEYA: Certainly the people in the community of Deline will be very pleased with what the Minister has indicated today in the House in terms of looking at viable options. Can the Minister commit within the life of this session here that he will get his officials in Deline to come together and work out a work plan? I know that's asking maybe too much in terms of what we have of a time frame here, but to commit to the people in Deline that we can look at this viable option and have some dollars committed to in terms of developing and putting a plant on the Bear River for Deline.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We can commit to having our officials get in contact with the Deline Land Corporation people. I should point out that three Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure did travel to Manitoba and were able to view the hydrokinetic site at the University of Manitoba. We'll be prepared to work with the community.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 83-16(3):
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE
INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR PROGRAM

MR. BROMLEY: My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Recognizing the need that our institutions have, such as this Assembly, the courts, the hospital and so on, for certified translators and interpreters I'm wondering why Aurora College has dropped the Interpreter/Translator Diploma Program.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The decision was made back then due to the fact that there was low interest in the program that was delivered through Aurora College. We do continue to deliver those modules through DCI, the Dene Cultural Institute, through the Yamazhaku Society. We have delivered to date four out of six courses, modules, in different communities such as Lutselk'e, Yellowknife, and with the involvement of the Deninu K'ue in Fort Smith, Lutselk'e, and Ndilo and Dettah elders. We continue to deliver that. The remaining five and six courses will also be delivered in the Akaitcho region this year.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for his response there. I detected a conflict, though, between the first and the second part of his response. There was no interest, so we're offering all these amazing courses and we've got enrolments up the gazoo. I'm wondering what we can do to...I guess my first question is, was the lack of enrolment because of the location that the course was offered? Maybe I'll start with that. I've got more questions.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: When the decision was made at that time it was based on a number of factors: enrolment, the program itself, and again I stated lack of interest from the individuals in the communities. At the same time, we wanted to reach out to the communities. Deliver the program into the communities and into the regions. At that time the decision was made to utilize the facility out of Hay River as coordination and on to Yellowknife, Lutselk'e, and different communities. We continue to deliver those modules in that format.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you again to the Minister for those comments. I certainly support his response there and the department offering the program in other communities. I have to wonder if it was just the location of Fort Smith that was the problem, but I'm very glad to see that he's reaching out to communities.

My question then is, and particularly given the commitment of the quality of instructors that we have here in Goyatiko, why do we not certify that program and make a diploma available to the students taking this course work? It's essentially the same, as I understand it. Why don't we offer them the diploma that they need to be certified and offer that service?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly there are different avenues of taking courses and programs in the Northwest Territories, via Aurora College or different institutions in the North. Through Goyatiko,

with the teacher Muriel Sundberg and Betty Harnum, the program has been successful to date and we continue to support them as well. Depending on the criteria of the program that they deliver, whether it be ALCIP program or different teacher instructors programs, we need to sit down and look at the whole program itself; if they are part of the ALCIP program or the TIP program or are they a part of the preparation for a TIP program. Those are the questions we need to address with the group, but at the same time I think we need to really discuss this whole issue about interpretation and translation, the program that's been delivered through the modules. Possibly looking at the outcome of the course delivery as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again to the Minister. Would this Minister commit to assessing whether we can start to offer a diploma once again to these students who are obviously working hard and the instructors and committed members of groups such as the Yellowknives Dene to put this program together? It's obviously meeting a need. Will this Minister commit to reviewing that and establishing whether we can make it into a diploma program and when can we expect to see that report?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Certainly there is a process in place with our department as we speak with respect to renewing the Aboriginal Languages Strategy we have in place. It's time that we look at our language area and this could fall into play as well. We need to look at various aspects of the courses that we deliver and the programs that we offer. This could be part of the discussion on a moving forward basis with our strategy. Certainly I'll be more than willing to share that with the standing committee on information that will be available.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 84-16(3):
GRAVEL SOURCE FOR AKLAVIK
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

MR. KRUTKO: My question is to either, I'm not too sure which Minister wants to take it on, but either the Minister of Transportation or Minister of MACA. It's in regard to the Aklavik flood of 2006 in which there was major damage done to the community infrastructure, the roads in the community. There are still issues with regard to access to people's homes to deliver services in the community.

There were also funds given to this government through the federal Disaster Relief Program to do a

lot of these repairs. The Minister was also talking earlier about drainage studies. That was something that also came up in regard to the emergency that happened in Aklavik and the issues that had to be dealt with.

I'd like to ask the Minister, in light of the situation where we're realizing that the gravel is essential to communities that have been flooded and flooded previously, and that there's a need for gravel resources in those communities to deal with the new water treatment plant, replacement of the housing shop that burned down this winter, there is that gravel need. The community is looking at doing a gravel haul this spring, but they haven't heard anything back from this government with regard to supporting their efforts.

I would like to ask whichever Minister what this government is doing to support the community of Aklavik in light of this emergency measure response and the amount of federal dollars we got to deal with the flood in 2006.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member raises issues on two crosses, both MACA and DOT responsibilities. Regarding the gravel issue and the supply for this coming year, we've been working with the municipality for a number of months now and we're getting to the point where we've identified the timing of the gravel stockpile that needs to be done this year. We've worked with the different departments that need to be participating and we're supporting the community by helping them draft the technical documents that need to be put together so it can go to tender.

MR. KRUTKO: We, at one time, had a grant or revolving fund in place to assist communities with gravel where they didn't have any. I was surprised to hear from the Department of Transportation that they're going to haul crushed gravel from Inuvik again. The last time we did that the cost was over a million dollars. I'd just like to ask the Minister if he would consider looking at the community gravel haul to replenish the crushed gravel for the airport in Aklavik and allow the community to bring in a crusher to crush their own gravel rather than bringing it in from Inuvik.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: This year the community's planning to get gravel from the Willow River pit. We're working with the community. Each department has submitted their needs on the amount of gravel that's needed for this coming season. At this point the revolving fund dollars, as the Member has indicated, does not exist anymore.

It was rolled into funding that was allocated to the communities. That's not an issue we can bring back up and install in the budget. Each department, each participant, each stakeholder is responsible for paying their share and that's how the whole program is designed to work.

MR. KRUTKO: I believe I raised the question in this House, I believe it was last spring, to the Minister of Transportation regarding the possibility of having a marine landing approach in Aklavik for the large vessels to land, such as NTCL, who resupply the community with most of their fuel and a lot of their building materials coming by barge. Yet there's no docking facility in Aklavik for such a large vessel. They do have a little docking facility for boats and whatnot, but nothing for large vessels.

I know you made a commitment in this House to look at that and do something about it, but nothing's been done. I'd like to ask the Minister, with the new federal program that's in place for these types of facilities is that something that your department is looking at and can Aklavik be part of that process?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Interesting new line of questioning. Right now the information that we received from the federal government on the in-water harbours is still fairly vague. We have not received all the information in terms of detail. We are looking at and pursuing this information. There are a number of communities that certainly can use and benefit from this program, such as Aklavik and Hay River and others. As soon as we have that information and know what the potential use will be on the funding, we'll be glad to share that with the Members of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a final supplementary question. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In final supplementary I would like to ask the Minister to keep myself and the community of Aklavik informed on exactly what commitments he has made here and, more importantly, where we're at with the gravel haul for this winter. The permits have already been issued. We're running out of time here. We have to get going on the haul. I'd like to ask the Minister as soon as possible if he could get me an update on where things are and also inform the mayor of Aklavik on that. I also look forward to the commitments the Minister made and implement those commitments at this time.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We'd certainly be pleased to involve the MLA. The community has been very responsive in terms of allowing us to provide assistance and offer advice. We'd like to make sure the gravel haul goes off without a hitch

and we're able to supply the community for this coming year. Any information we have around this project we'll provide to the Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 3-16(3): GNWT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE BONUSES

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for Premier of the Northwest Territories.

1. How much was paid out in bonuses to each of the following GNWT employee categories for the 2007-2008 fiscal year:
 - deputy ministers
 - senior managers
 - excluded employees
2. What percentage of the employees in each category who were eligible for bonuses actually received bonuses for that fiscal year?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to the budget address, day three of seven. Item 12, petitions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Petitions

PETITION 5-16(3): NWT ELECTRICAL POWER RATES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of NWT electrical power rates. The petition contains 173 signatures of Nahendeh residents and the petitioners request that the Premier take action to implement a single-rate zone for electrical power rates for the entire Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy; Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the

Committee; Tabled Document 11-16(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2009-2010; Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act; Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act; Bill 4, Public Library Act; Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act; and Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 7-16(3), Committee Report 2-16(3), Tabled Document 11-16(3), Bills 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee moves to proceed with NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Committee, break?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we'll take a short break and get back to Tabled Document 11-16(3).

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We are on Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010. General comments. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have some general comments with regard to the budget. I've got a number of them. I will start with the process which for me, second time around, was an awful lot better than the first time around. I don't know whether that's because it's the second time I have gone through this process or it seemed to work better or whether it's just because we used a different process. Certainly the first budget I experienced was a little unusual because it was immediately following the election. This one was different in that we went through business plans with standing committees and then went forward from there.

In general, I am pleased with the budget. I am particularly pleased that the Premier and Finance Minister made accommodations, some accommodations, not all but some accommodations after the department-by-department review of the business plans by standing committees. For me, personally, I can't speak for anybody else but I certainly appreciated

the willingness on the part of Cabinet and the Premier to make accommodations to the recommendations that came from the various standing committees.

I am also appreciative of the flexibility that's been shown by the Finance Minister, and I think it came from his budget address, to a flexibility to adjust the budget relative to our changing economic times and it's changing downwards instead of upwards, unfortunately. But I mentioned in my Member's statement the other day that to me, it's extremely important that we remain flexible and adapt the budget as required for the economy as we move forward. The budget, to me, seems to recognize the recent downturn in our economy and I particularly am happy to see the emphasis on infrastructure that is in our budget.

The other thing I would like to say is there is a small deficit projected and I'm okay with that. I would not be okay with that as a matter of course, but I think in this particular budget year it's something which I can live with. I would certainly caution the government not to try to project a deficit every year and I don't think that's what I heard the Finance Minister say the other day.

The other thing I would like to say is what I am appreciative of is the work on behalf of the government to minimize job cuts. There is a small number of people who have to look forward to losing their job in this budget year and for me that's a very good thing.

The last thing, I guess, that's positive is the statement by the Finance Minister relative to a heritage fund. I strongly support that move. I'm sorry that it's not in the 2009-10 budget and if I understood the Minister correctly, the government is working towards that and I think if we don't get it established in 2010-11, it's probably not going to happen, but it's something which I think all Members would be happy to see be established within the life of this government.

So now that I have given the Finance Minister my comments and my praise, I am going to extinguish his smile with a few criticisms.

I heard the other day...Sorry. Members heard the other day when I made my statement and also when I asked a few questions of the Finance Minister -- he wasn't here but the Premier did answer -- I am dissatisfied that the recommendations from the Social Programs committee and the Priorities and Planning committee to establish a milk subsidy in this year's budget was not accepted. You know, it's well known the value of milk as a healthful food or as a valuable food, particularly for young children. The other thing I am particularly dismayed with is

although there may be something in the budget to adjust or address the cost of living in communities, I don't think what is being proposed is going to be put into effect as fast as a milk subsidy could. It's my belief that particularly in our small communities we need to reduce the cost of living and we need to reduce it now, not yesterday...Sorry, not today but yesterday. I don't see that the proposed actions are going to be in place in the near future and I think a milk subsidy could have been put into place for the 1st of April.

I am particularly disappointed with Education, Culture and Employment's proposal to withdraw the grant to Skills Canada. It's a paltry amount of money in the grand scheme of things and if we are intent on providing an emphasis on trades and other programs particularly to young people and to women, this is one avenue that would allow us to do that. Skills Canada as an entity is expanding across the NWT. They are into more and more high schools all the time. The removal of this funding will simply remove one of their staff persons and will probably halt the expansion into our high schools. The fact that Skills go into our schools gives kids an opportunity to experience trades at a young age, other vocations as well, and it exposes them to many things that they probably wouldn't get an opportunity to see or experience if Skills wasn't there to help them out. So I would encourage ECE to find the money that's necessary to put that grant back within their department.

I do have a problem with the amount of money we are spending to have a presence at the 2010 Olympics. I feel we should be there. The NWT should be there, but I think the funds which we're expending are beyond what we should, particularly where we've got expenditures in an economy where there's a downturn. These funds are coming from a community development trust fund and I feel that the fund would be far better used to assist our communities and development within communities than it would be to fund activities at the Olympics, which are a one-time affair. Once the Olympics are done there's not much that's going to carry through after those funds are expended.

I'm concerned about a reduction in funding for non-government organizations, to which it's not a large amount of money but any reduction in funding to NGOs, in my estimation, is not a good thing. We should be increasing funding to NGOs and the other thing that we need to do is to set in place multi-year funding agreements for our NGOs. I think I hear that's coming, but I haven't seen evidence of it yet.

I think it's vitally important that somehow this budget be amended or we go into a deficit to fund supplementary health benefits for the lower income end of our workforce. We have to provide the

benefits to those people who don't have coverage right now. If it costs us a certain amount of money and if we have to go into a bit more of a deficit situation to do it, then so be it. That's what we should do. That's my belief.

I mentioned the other day, and I want to mention it again, that I think it's important that we ensure that any infrastructure projects that we put in place early on in 2009 benefits the small communities in particular. I think they're the ones that need the economic stimulus the most and I would encourage the government to make sure that it's small communities that get the jobs and the projects early on.

The last area of concern for me is assistance for communities, particularly in relation to human resource community capacity. With the New Deal and different ways of doing things for communities I think that they are experiencing a lack of skilled people in their communities who can take on the jobs and the projects that the New Deal requires of communities. They're given lump sums of money and are required to do project planning, monitoring of infrastructure projects, all sorts of things which previously were done for them by MACA. I think there's a lack of manpower in MACA to assist them with the holes that they have in their human resource areas. I know MACA says that they help out, but I think unfortunately they're not providing as much assistance as they should and I think they need to provide more hands-on assistance than they currently are. That's all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. General comments. Next on the list I have Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to take this opportunity to comment on the budget as a whole. I, too, am a strong believer in alternate energy and alternate forms of supply and energy to our homes and to our communities, and I'm pleased to see that our budget does dedicate funds and resources to this effort. We've got community initiatives, especially in my riding, that want to do something along these lines. We've got geothermal interest in Fort Simpson, biomass support from Jean Marie River, and a few other communities that want to explore and they are currently discussing these needs. Just outside of Fort Liard there is proven heat beneath the ground at about 120 Centigrade, but that's something that has yet to be explored, as well as the specific mention of testing a run-of-the-river system in Fort Simpson. People are curious and they want to see that. We've been talking about it so long and at my public meetings people are saying stop talking and start doing something about it. Many of these initiatives and green projects are

capital intensive and very long term. Like that petition I put forward in the House here today, it was about government doing something today to effect change and to change the high cost of living. That specific project in Fort Simpson is showing people that the government is indeed interested in some action, and wanting and willing to look at different ways of doing business. People are happy to see that.

The ATCO proposal, I don't know where it's at. But initiatives like that at least government is trying to do something and move forward to help the people.

The budget doesn't really talk about this, but the initiative of government going throughout the North and talking about NWT power rates and the NWT Power Corporation, that's a good initiative and I support that. They continue to do that and get that off the ground as soon as they can.

I'm pleased to see the investment in Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 7. To me it's the Dehcho Connection that travels from the Fort Providence junction towards the Checkpoint junction and down towards Fort Liard. That's what that does there, is it creates a loop from Alberta up through Fort Simpson and exiting in B.C. It's a very scenic route with lots to do and lots to see. The NWT Tourism and several community residents who travel to international trade shows talk about this and support the tourism aspect of our Northwest Territories, which is the Dehcho Connection. It was seriously impeded last year when the highway collapsed, and we don't want to see that again. We want to see continued improvement. We take this very seriously because we use this highway every day for our transportation needs getting to and from work. Then the additional income that comes from the tourism market during the summer months is very much needed. I've raised it in the House, too, about getting it towards a state where we're actually looking at chipsealing of Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 7. I really would like to see that in a capital plan. It's not there. I've got no expectations that we'll get it done this year or next year, but the key thing is to identify it as a priority and get it on the capital plan. Our capital plan runs around five, 10, 15 years. I'll be happy to get it on the far end there. The main thing is that it should be a goal of our government to run towards chipsealing of that highway. I know we're going to do some other chipsealing projects. The big thing, too, is that the constituents are saying yes, we've got a chipsealing project, but it's continuing to Yellowknife and around Yellowknife. That might be important, but I think the priority should be other highway access communities as well. That's why I support Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 7 being chipsealed. It's not for the benefit of Fort Simpson, it's for the benefit of the North and all Northerners to continue our...ITI

called it the spectacular vision of the North and that's certainly part of it. I certainly support advances towards that.

I'm concerned that people are not qualifying for the homes that we're rebuilding. We've got to adjust that and take a good, hard look at that. This year's housing budget, at least for my riding, wasn't that good. At the same time I do realize that we are behind in providing infrastructure needs. The homes from Nahendeh that are being built this year are quite a bit, only because we couldn't get them done before. I don't know if it's a blessing in disguise kind of thing, but this gives us a real opportunity to catch up and not always be behind in home delivery. So there's some good projects happening in our region and I support them wholeheartedly. The thing is one of my other larger communities of Fort Liard the real need is not so much homeownership, it's that we have to start moving towards public housing in a place like Fort Liard so people can get into those homes and not have an affordability issue.

I've always said that our range, our threshold income guideline is very low. There's only a certain amount of people who can qualify for these homes. I would say that the people that can't afford them are the ones we should be lending the money to. These are the people who are hard working. They do want to invest in homes and they do want to make continuous payments. If we're not going to help these people there must be a way of getting around this rule of this income threshold guideline to allow people who can afford it, the double income earners, to access our programs and get these homes built to their specification and to their need. Blocking out the people that are willing and ready and able in the smaller communities just doesn't fit the situation there. The larger communities, people can argue about market disruption and they may have a legitimate case, but in our small communities there's really no market. There are people there willing, ready and able to be building their homes and I believe we should support them 100 percent.

There's the bundling of the water treatment plant. I think that's a good initiative. If it shows that it can save our government money then we must seriously take a look at that way of doing business. The only concern there is how do we involve local businesses and local residents to benefit from bundling of the water plant or bundling of infrastructure projects. Bundling means a larger company will get it and they're willing and they want to build these projects. But it also means how do we build a local component into that, too, so that the community and band councils and businesses benefit as well from infrastructure development.

Some of the projects that happen in different ridings, particularly the Nahendeh riding, is that I'm for the infrastructure expenses, the infrastructure budget that we passed earlier this year. To us, that's our stimulus package. The little projects are happening. The little \$60,000 parks that for a small community is a huge project and a big investment into their communities and into their local job economy. I would urge government to see that none of these projects are deferred, that we try to get as much of our, I think, as the Finance Minister mentioned, about \$200 million in infrastructure projects done for this coming fiscal year. I urge all the horsepower of our government and the brains we have to see that all these projects or as many of them get done. That \$200 million shot in the arm is what our people and communities need. I wholeheartedly support that. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on the list is Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: I'm not going to go into a ton of detail department by department or anything like that because we're going to do that as we go through the line by line in each department.

On page 2 in the statements the Minister of Finance said a serious economic downturn is not time for governments to reduce overall spending. I'd just like to put on the record that I agree with that. I think that's an important statement to be made in this day and age, especially with the financial world as it is.

Having said that, I do have some concerns with some particular areas. I think there's a lot of good stuff in what the Minister said during his budget address, but this document doesn't obviously highlight some of the areas that had to be reduced in order to get to some of those good initiatives.

The Department of Health, obviously I'm passionate about the provision of health and social services in the Northwest Territories and to me a 1.2 percent increase in health is actually a 2.3 percent reduction. Because forced growth is usually about 3 percent to 3.5 percent. I know we needed to find some reductions out there; we needed to make sure we had some efficiencies. But given the cost of providing health care throughout Canada, we already pay the lowest amount of our total budget on health care compared to any other jurisdiction. Although a 1.2 percent does appear to be an increase, it is technically a decrease.

I guess what I want to say about that is we spend a lot of time looking at our department as individuals and little entities, little silos. I don't believe that's the best way for us to be doing business. I think we need to be able to stand up and look at the entire

government as a whole and as we're targeting these individual groups, these individual departments to become efficient and find some efficiencies and hopefully find some money which allows us to do those valuable reinvestments that the Cabinet and the Legislature have been putting forward, I think we need to be cautious that we're not taking from some departments that fit less with our vision than others at the expense of the others. Health care is important; education is important; justice is important. I'd say those are the three most important departments and the provision of services. Not infrastructure, because infrastructure is a bit of a different thing.

I'd like for all of us to find a way to stand up and look at the big picture and see where we're flowing the money and some of the reinvestments. They make good sense. Like, obviously my colleague Mr. Menicoche is right; the park projects in the small communities are incredibly valuable to those small communities by way of job creation and whatnot, but I'm worried there are those things that make the most sense for the budget as a whole and providing services. We're here to provide services to our people. I'm not criticizing any individual project, but I think it's time for us to stand up and look at the big picture.

Moving through, I really like what we did in October with respect to the infrastructure stuff. I like that we got into that a little early. It gave you guys a lot of time to get out there and do the planning. Now we hear from the feds that they're going to be expediting that process from four to two years, which on the face of it sounds absolutely fantastic. Last year we had to defer \$50 million-- and correct me if the number's wrong; if I remember correctly it was around \$50 million -- because we weren't going to get the stuff built. I know the world has changed. I was watching the news last night and Alberta was talking about the number of tradespeople and whatnot, construction people that are finding less work to do. They're doing a lot of cutbacks. Hopefully that means we'll be able to find some people to actually build the stuff we want to build. We've got a lot of money here to build a lot of stuff and it will be fantastic for this Territory to move forward and renovate the schools and build the roads and do all that. I think as a Legislature we've done a pretty good job of getting those identified, and thanks to Cabinet for taking those forward to the feds to fight for those. But I'm just worried that we're not going to be able to build that stuff in the time that we have. I don't know what Cabinet is doing to ensure that we actually get out there and build that infrastructure. That's what we need to do to spark this economy. We need to actually build this stuff. We need to stop talking about building this stuff and we need to actually see the things being done. We need to see the roads being fixed

and we need to see the schools opening their doors to allow the children to come in and learn. I'd like to hear from the Minister of Finance at some point on what we are doing. Can we guarantee that we're going to actually build these things that we talked about building?

On page 5 the Minister indicated that we need to promote the NWT as a great place to live. We need to make investments to reduce the cost of living. I hate to sound like a broken record, but I'm not convinced that the changes proposed for supplemental health that came forward in December are actually going to help reduce the cost of living. I think it's actually going to increase the cost of living for many Northerners and have negative ramifications if the model goes through. Now, to the department's credit we've heard the Minister say that we are going to go back and look at this and make sure that it fits and works. But until we see that we have to be a little bit cautious on that. Make sure that we don't increase the cost of living to any of our residents.

I had comments...Just bear with me; I'm not going to use my whole 10 minutes.

I have to say that we went through a bit of a scare last session when we started talking about revenue options. There was a lot of panic in the community. I think the Cabinet's come forward with a decent proposal on how to increase some of our tax revenues. I think if we're going to tax things, things like cigarettes and liquor seem like a reasonable place to start. Increasing taxes in that area I think is a good start. I think it will help us raise some money, but it will also maybe force some people to smoke less and drink less, which can only be good for us in the long run as far as the health of our residents of the Northwest Territories. That's coming from a guy who used to enjoy three-quarters of a pack of cigarettes a day and who doesn't smoke anymore, I must say for the record.

---Applause

I know smoking three-quarters of a pack a day basically was \$300 a month for me, which is now my car payment. So I think increasing taxes affect and scare a few more people off of smoking. I think it is a good thing and is going in the right direction. Those people who want to smoke will be able to smoke, but they will be contributing a little bit more to our economy and our tax base and are helping us fund the programs that are valuable and important to the people of the Northwest Territories.

When we get into line by line, I do have some questions. I will ask you some specific questions on some of the cuts that you propose and some of the reinvestments that you suggested. Overall, I think that there is some stuff in here that Cabinet and

Regular Members should be proud of. I think it is in the right direction. There are some areas that I think we do need to debate further, but overall I am happy with it.

There is another question for the Minister responsible for lands. When we get there, he can answer it. I am just a little confused. On page 12, the Minister of Finance said the GNWT has made a proposal to Canada that provides for the transfer for legislative authority over land and resources to the GNWT. It would also establish an ongoing partnership with Canada on strategic infrastructure and major development of the NWT. I am curious. We had a discussion with you and we talked with the Premier about a proposal that was made I think it was like a major infrastructure, but I didn't think that was a legislative authority change. I am not sure what this one is. I am a little confused by this one. It might be the one you already told us about, but I would like a little bit more detail on that one, if someone gets a chance to give us a bit of a response.

Overall, not bad. There will be debate. There will be discussion. There's some room to talk about a few of these things but overall I think it is a good budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: I would like to start by saying that I felt the introduction, the context provided here was excellent. I think the quality of life in our communities is what we should be aiming for. Basically, that comes down to the happiness of our children, our families and our communities and recognizing their concerns and showing them that we are actually dealing with it. Several times throughout the document, I noticed the Minister referred to our economy or our environment and our people and various orders. To me, that is totally appropriate and finally I think we are getting some full perspectives out there. This sort of holistic approach, full cost economy approach should get us some real gains that deal with what we profess to talk about, prevention and giving the basic issues long-term solutions.

I am not a big fan of deficits. To me I still see lots of opportunities for being more efficient. Under the fiscal strategy, we protest a lot. We put our calculations through the utmost of agony that we could over redemptions and so on, and obviously we cheated very little. I am hoping at least the program review office will eventually come out with something meaningful and make that agony worthwhile. The short-term economic stimulus master refers to...I think needs to have multiple objectives, not just hiring people and flowing money. It needs to ensure that we gain other

benefits as well, which is still development, greenhouse gas reductions, replacing our old system with new ways of doing things. That should be a filter that all of those projects have to jump through.

The infrastructure is not really part of this but is referred to in our budget. Obviously we have a record of increasing amounts of carry-over when we unsuccessfully take on projects. We now have an amazing \$246 million infrastructure capital budget with a strong record of not being able to achieve anywhere near that. So our challenge is very clear. This aggressive response is not necessarily a negative, but with it needs to go some performance, so I think that must be highlighted by now. I know we have had a sub-committee looking at this. They seem to have come forward with a good plan. I am looking for evidence that is actually working.

I am not sure in terms of structure and cost of operations of power corporations. We are now looking at another proposal. I am not sure that selling off our assets and our Power Corporation to a very large multi-billion-dollar development company is necessarily the way to go. It seems like a bit of overkill to me. We have a company here that we own. We should be able to get them dealing with reality and with some innovative responses. So I think that is more what the final response we are looking for is here: Providing NWT communities and residents with the tools they need on energy issues and so on, replacing diesel with other forms of energy. These are things that a number of us have been calling for and are very happy to see it in the budget there. These perspectives, developing alternative energy, there are many opportunities right now that are relatively easy to achieve and the government has moved on some of these in terms of replacing fossil fuel, heating of appliances with wood pellet boilers and so on. I think that is the way to go in the short term while we wrestle with the more problematic things that we have on the list.

I am hoping to see this year some substantive move towards dealing with a systemic approach, especially for our smaller communities. We talked about commercial subsidies and whatnot, and maybe I will deal with that in a bit here, but we have a real opportunity to do things in a much better way and achieve multiple objectives at the same time.

On revenue, again, we are very lucky in the North. We have this 70 percent base and so we are somewhat protected in a recession but we also have to recognize, obviously, that some of our companies are slowing down in their operations, so we are losing tax revenue and so on. I was hoping to see much more of a progressive approach in the revenue generation side. Obviously, we have been very modest; \$7.5 million planned this year and

some questions about the future. In terms of income, I think it is well established throughout the world, in fact, but certainly in North America, Canada and likely here in terms of income. Ninety percent of gains have been achieved by about 1 percent or the top tenth of 1 percent of people, and that is a fairly obscene accumulation of wealth in a smaller and smaller number of people. To me I see opportunities for developing some new tax brackets and a response there. There are other things that obviously we can be thinking of there. I think we will have more discussions on that this year.

Investments in our economy, there are some good things there. Again, if we can make good use of the capital, I see with housing infrastructure, acceleration of Building Canada Fund, again get those multiple objectives working there, we should really make some gains to the extent that we can actually get some projects accomplished.

The Arctic Energy Alliance I think is a good focus for million dollars there. I am concerned about the Territorial Power Subsidy Program, \$3 million up on the commercial power costs. Business as usual is out the window. We cannot keep doing the same old thing and perhaps there is some innovation here that I am not aware of. I would like to assume that \$3 million will be put towards supporting commercial enterprises generating their own power with green energy, this sort of thing, rather than just business as usual throwing dollars at a sinkhole. I will be looking for new details on that.

The increase in funding to the arts, again, I think that is well established. I think even the Government of Canada said for every dollar they invest, they get \$1.85 or something of economic activity, so that is a good investment. I think that is well developed. This Assembly has a good record now of bumping up support in that direction. Again, a substantial increase to the SEED program, the Support to Entrepreneurs and Economic Development. I would like to hear a little bit more about programs that are applicable under that program.

Investments in our environment, I think I won't say too much about that except that it is very good to see this happening. It is a substantial effort. It will all be in the details and we will all be helping focus things to make sure that we get the most out of it.

Investments in people, again something you have heard me speak on before. Early childhood education, something that I see has a little bit more support here which is a good recognition of need. Some of the health programs, care for seniors, especially in small communities that have been established and so on.

Finally, I guess, the support for volunteer non-government organizations, I think we seem to be waiting on this magic meeting that is going to happen. We have a two-year record of that. I see a little bump up this year. We have not been indexing our support to our non-government organizations according to cost as we do ourselves. This has left a deficit that needs to be recognized and responded to. I am hoping that we are going to be doing more on that. All in all, Mr. Chair, I do support this project and I am looking forward to contributing to tune-ups where they are needed.

Obviously, the milk subsidy really needs to be addressed. Skills Canada responded well to what we wanted. Now we need to respond to them. Family violence is a good program worth our support. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next on the list, I have Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Yakeleya and Mr. Jacobson.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was pleased with the budget, especially in the area of infrastructure spending. We have in and around the small communities that is a key area for government spending. In my communities -- there are five -- from the operation of some of the infrastructure there is not a lot of O and M spending by the GNWT. The \$246 million infrastructure, \$50 million in housing targeted some of it, targeted it towards repairs and so on. I see it is very positive. I think government has to develop a good plan for how to spend that money. I know that when I had an opportunity to question the Minister responsible for the majority of the infrastructure or the three major infrastructure departments of Public Works, DOT and Housing, that there are some changes being introduced in the way they plan the infrastructure, project management planning. I see that as a positive thing. I am looking forward to the Housing Corporation developing some sort of strategy for the disposition of their public housing units. My thought is that using this money to fix up the public housing units and then able to pass on the public housing to the clients that have lived in these housing units for a long time in fairly decent shape that very reasonable price that would allow a lot of people to come off of the social housing system and become homeowners.

I like the idea of mentioning small business in the budget. I think that that is very important in the area where I think that small communities will benefit from development of some small businesses in the smaller communities. I think that government has some work to do in facilitating that. However, I think that it is the right idea to place some emphasis on small business development.

In the area of the environmental stewardship, I thought that this is something to put some attention to the Wildlife Act and the Species at Risk Act. I think those are important acts so that we can begin to manage our wildlife with our own home-grown acts and rules that will allow us to make the best decisions for the wildlife; caribou and bison being a couple of areas that we'd benefit from having our own act and our own Species at Risk Act and so on.

The money that was announced by the federal government on Mackenzie Gas Project in the area of regulatory process, streamlining regulatory process, I am assuming that the ultimate objective in doing environmental assessments and so on, I think that is an area I would like to see our environment department get more heavily involved. All of that money is going to be spent directly by the federal government or not. I think there are always opportunities for the GNWT and the federal government to work together. I found that being with the Department of Environment, I found many opportunities where the GNWT and the federal government are working together on all of the environmental agreements and so on at the diamond mines. I am hoping that something like this will evolve from here where there is an opportunity for people in small communities to be involved in the environmental stewardship. I know that is a big issue for a small community. I am looking forward to something evolving from that budget, although it is the federal government's budget, like I indicated.

I like the hydro development. Of course, he mentioned specifically of mini-hydro in Lutselk'e and the opportunities where that could be afforded to the community of Lutselk'e as a result of hydro development is something that I am looking forward to. I think that the communities did some work and looked at the various ways that hydro development close to a community could benefit the community, and work in the area of lowering the cost of power to the community and ultimately lowering their cost of living for that community.

I am looking forward to having some of the youth spending out there in the communities and so on. I think that there has been more done in the area of youth spending in this budget than has been than in the past. Being this is looked at as the first year where we are trying to put some new money to help the youth and so on. I look forward to future years and also the fact that we will eventually, I am hoping, put this youth plan, youth strategies and so on in place.

Just a brief mention of devolution on the federal government to manage our own lands, water and resources. I think that is a positive move. I think it is a very good move for the economy of the Northwest

Territories. If this government can negotiate the transfer of positions from the other managing our land, our water and resources, Ottawa's positions were to be held in Yellowknife, I think that it is a good opportunity for displacement positions from Yellowknife to the regional centres and also from the regional centres on to the communities. Managing lands, water and resources is probably no better way to do it than to be near the lands, water and resources that you are trying to manage. I am looking forward to something coming out of the talks, at any future talks or talks that have already occurred between our leaders and also people in Ottawa for this initiative.

I have some general concerns. I'd like to see more focus on small communities. I still have the idea that we can centralize some of the positions out of the GNWT and delegate some of the authority to the community governments and manage some of our programs in that way. Again, the centralization, a very few of the small communities could have such a major impact. We still, I don't think, have resolved the issue of the public housing income support issue and so on. I think that more emphasis on the cost of living, reduction of the cost of living in small communities and programs that could be put in place to reduce the cost of power. We often hear about the cost of power, cost of food. There are positive things with some of the cost of fuel and gasoline recently. It's still high, but I'm expecting that to come down over the next couple of years also.

I think that housing for staff is key in order for us to carry a lot of these initiatives out. I notice there is some money there, but again facilitation of how housing for staff can be put on the ground in small communities is probably going to be a challenge.

It was good to see some of the energy programs that the government chose to keep supporting in the area of addictions and health counsellors and so on. I'm out of time.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next on the list I have Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: The budget, as I've been reading it and picking up, doing some selective listening in terms of what I want to hear and how I see this affecting the North. The communities that I represent would have to wait to give an overall report. I'd have to wait to see where, in general, when it talks about specific expenditures in the Northwest Territories, there are some general statements made in the budget which I think the Minister has been listening to us. It's very good. It's a good, well-thought-out budget in terms of, as he noted, that there's global economic turmoil happening across this great land here and that we

are somewhat reactive to. But I see ourselves, as the Legislature as a whole, we are taking not so much a reactive position, we're more positive in dealing with the issue at hand.

Mr. Chairman, the issue I do have, and some comments I heard, is that some of the issues we deal with in our region, being isolated, in terms of programs, our services that make sense or could make sense and then not knowing what the impact would be, because most of what I'm hearing, some of the expenditures that are going to be in areas that make sense to the government in terms of the boiler system in some of the large centres. They're going to experience that and have that. If there are areas where there's a high cost of living and we acknowledge it and we want to do something about it, I believe the government and the Minister is looking at the area in terms of how do we reduce the cost of living in some of our more isolated communities. We're not served on a highway system. All our products, all our supplies, materials, all have to be flown in. In my region we rely on a diesel energy source of power. Those are very expensive.

I guess, Mr. Chairman, when you look at the whole, overall, in terms of some regions have hydro, some have got some projects going on there, some have biomass initiatives going on there. They have all these things that pile up. For whatever reason, how they come to that conclusion needs to be discussed in here and see if we can have that in our region also. Hydro is very cheap in the southern communities of the Northwest Territories; very cheap. So why not, with some of the communities that we're paying high costs of energy, have some of those programs, some of those initiatives refocused in our communities.

That's what they mean by the "devil's in the details," on infrastructure spending, on spending in the communities, treatment plants, a lot of treatment plants, hydro initiatives, transportation infrastructure needs.

Mr. Chairman, if you were to take \$50, spend it here in Yellowknife or some other community, down in Smith or Hay River, if you take \$50 and spend it in Colville Lake or Good Hope or Deline, you would get two different types of returns. We are expected in the Sahtu to live within those means. When we come here people really appreciate the stores here because of the low cost and how they can get the extra supplies they need in their communities. When you come to those communities that have to fly in their groceries, sometimes once a week if the weather is cooperating, if not then you have to wait until next week. When you have to pay \$21 for 10 pounds of potatoes in my community and look at what you have to pay here, this is where we have to really look at. Some communities in the North, for

whatever reason, are not receiving much attention. I'm certain, and I'll probably get a reply from the government in terms of what they're doing in some of our communities, but I think just from hearing and reading what's before me in the budget address, I think some of these things need to be discussed further.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister has certainly prepared his notes and, like any other Finance Minister in Canada, is uncertain as to how the economic turmoil, the economic crisis is going to be dealt with in North America. For me, I feel very confident with his vision, the way they're going with it. I'm not agreeing with some of the things to where you're putting some of the projects, but I think you're doing a pretty good job. He's telling people in the Northwest Territories this is what we have and this is what we have to deal with.

This budget is a relationship with the federal government in terms of the type of dollars they give to the Northwest Territories. They tell us here's \$1.3 billion, go govern yourselves, go spend it where you think it's most needed. I think a lot has to do with our relationship with the federal government in terms of how do we get them to look at this government as a partner in Confederation. But that's at another table. I think the reality is that we have...I think the Ministers have certainly taken some of our views to heart and they've certainly had some good discussions as to how do we live through this economic crisis in the next couple of years to see how much we can benefit our communities. Again, it's a difference of opinions as to where the funding should be spent and who needs it more, community A or community B. We put them in a difficult position, but we're also here to see if we can better our communities.

There are other points I want to make but I think that when I look at this, the overall picture, I'm going to be asking throughout the budget on how it's going to impact the communities that I represent, how it's going to impact the quality of life that I represent, and if it's going to make a difference in my riding in terms of having this budget being passed. I look forward to a healthy, passionate discussion. I'm going to look at the geographical expenditures on some of the programs.

Some of the things I like in the budget. I like what the Minister has put together with his other Ministers. I certainly know he's listening because now he's looking at the plastic bags. That means a lot to the people in our region in terms of dealing with the plastic bags. It's a small one but it's a big thing when you look at the environment. I know the Minister is going to continue to take notes as we have some discussions, and certainly I wanted to thank the Minister for his hard work in this budget

here. I know he put down some decisions that I may not agree with, but that's up for discussion and I look forward to a healthy debate on the main estimates as we go through this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next on my list is Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Sitting here today in regard to the budget, I am in support of the budget. I have a lot of comments to make and I'll start with the federal government on the Building Canada Plan. Being four years earlier, I just want to thank the Conservative government for that in regard to my access road, for getting the extra money that I needed.

The gas and heating fuel in our communities was a good thing in regard to being dropped 16 cents per litre for assistance for people who live on, for hunting and for caribou and stuff like that. So that's a real good initiative.

Near and dear to my heart is my polar bear issue. I'm working with the Minister of ITI on product diversification and the marketing. Diversification in regard to tourism and stuff is a good thing, but I do still support the polar bear hunt. It's a \$1.7 million hit to my economy in my riding of Nunakput and 85 people affected directly. So many helpers, the airlines, everybody is going to be hit with not having the monies coming in until April. Maybe a guide would take out three or four hunters a year and that's a big hit to their economy and where they get their money from. I still would like to see our government try to get the United States to take a good look at taking that off the list and talking to Fish and Game on that polar bear issue. It has to be dealt with. It's affecting too many people in my riding.

Another good initiative is the residual heat project in Ulukhaktok. That would be really good to get that project off the ground and running in regard to the school system and that, the hamlet, the local community government, to try to cut down the cost on the high price of fuel. There are many other people who could use that, like the arena if possible. I think that's a really good initiative.

Wind turbines in Tuk, that's going to be really good due to the high cost of power in the community. We are a diesel community and just paying for your power bill every month, it's gotten higher. You think it's high up in Yellowknife when you're 30 percent extra. You're not paying \$800 or \$900 a month now in the small communities. It's a really good thing that we should really support and get that off the ground.

Going through continued support, the extra monies put forward for the pipeline to make sure we stay on

top of it, on the project to make sure it happens. I worry about businesses up and down the valley, especially in the Beaufort-Delta, having no work this winter and half of the community...People are really struggling. We have to stay on top of that.

The overall cost of living is so high in my communities that I represent it's ridiculous. From travel to power to food, you can't live. Quality of life is not the same as it should be. People are worrying for little things and not able to go and purchase a new snowmobile every year due to the high costs of living. You make do with what you've got or just hope on family and friends to help you.

On projects, the extra funding that's needed on that initiative right across with the housing, ECE, will make a difference. A couple more things in regard to the job cuts in the budget for my riding, I'll make sure that I do it justice and I will fight to make sure that gets resolved, because some people say retirement. You could retire on a retirement package down south maybe, but you can't retire in my riding because you'd go broke in two years with regard to the high cost of living. That's not an option for me. I'm going to go tooth and nail in regard to the job cuts, if any, in my riding.

Again, the quality of life is not the same, so I'll really let the government know that we have to do something about this. If it's not us, we could assist the local community government, the airlines and stuff to see what we can do to help them, the small businesses and the airlines. We've been giving out quite a bit of money lately to some airlines. We have a couple of airlines in the Beaufort-Delta that need some money, too, so it would be good to assist.

The extra money that we did get for the housing, the extra \$50 million, I think that's a really good thing. We really do need housing; we're short in the communities. On just retrofits alone, we could spend that money probably, with the Minister, in a couple of days. I wouldn't be surprised.

Early Childhood Initiative; I would say that the youth are our future in the Northwest Territories and any support that we can give to the youth and to the families on a go forward basis is always a good thing.

Our elders repair on their Homeownership Program, that's the extra monies we did get in there that Mr. Beaulieu brought up is another really good initiative we do have coming. Overall, it is a really good budget. I am really happy just seeing a couple of my communities that I represent on one page, so it is pretty good to see.

In the budget it includes over \$61 million for NWT community governments increased by 9 percent in

2008-09. I am really happy to see with the increases with the local community governments that they are struggling already. That should be really taken into consideration on the high cost of living, not only for the power and the fuel, but it eats up so much of the budget. Some communities can't get the arenas opened just due to the high cost of power. It really should be looked at. Any kind of help that we could give our local community governments is always a good thing. I really do stress that it is time to work together to make this budget go through and making sure that everything gets passed along to the communities, and not only the communities but to Yellowknife, Hay River and everybody.

I have one more thing. I have 57 seconds left. I am going to make sure this time that housing gets put back to Housing. We have so many problems with ECE and housing in regards to the small communities. If they are corporations, they should be treated as stand alone. It is the same with the Power Corporation. Right now you have constituents being evicted just because of not showing up on time at the end of the month. A lot of things could be said, but I look forward to working with everybody here to make sure this goes through. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Next on the list is Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: I know Members have covered off a lot of what I wanted to talk about but I just wanted to get a few comments on the record, if I could, and the issue that we had last week with the motion, it was nothing to do with the budget.

I think the budget itself is a good document. It addresses many of the concerns that Members have had over the past 16 months. I think it is something that we should work towards passing. We will. I mean there are a number of questions that will come up during the debate on the budget itself. Those will be addressed as we go through it. For me it has never been an issue with the budget. I mentioned it before. It is bad communication and poor policy, but those are some things that really need to be addressed. The budget itself is okay.

Having said that, there are a few things I just wanted to mention. The government, I think, has done a good job in some areas. The program review office, though, we have yet to see any tangible evidence that the work has been done and we can actually make some decisions. I know there is work happening there. That work needs to continue. I am a big supporter of that office. I am looking forward to, at some point in time, having some information to base decisions on to move the government forward from the work that that office is conducting. In today's day and age with the

economy the way it is when we are looking at revenue options, I don't believe we should leave any stone unturned.

A lot of people do not want to talk about gaming in the Northwest Territories as one area of potential revenue, but I think it's time we took a look at that as a government and at least investigate it now. Not all of us are going to be supportive of gaming and the possibility of casinos in the Northwest Territories, but every jurisdiction in this country, with the exception of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, have gaming legislation. They are deriving revenue off of those operations. I believe we should at least examine how much money leaves the Northwest Territories for points south in the area of gaming. You try to keep some of that here in the Northwest Territories and put that money to good use for residents here in the Northwest Territories. Again, I think that is something you will hear me talking a little bit more about as session goes on. Like I said, it also has the possibility of 300-plus jobs in a community like Yellowknife. In bad economic times, I think we better be looking at everything. We better put everything on the table.

The other thing I wanted to mention, in the area of health and social services, I know the Minister said last week that they do have people looking into the renegade health care card issue. That is a big issue for me. That is over 3,000 cards and we don't know who they belong to. We don't know where they live. That is something. Even if we had a team of two or three people that every day found two or three cards that were being used fraudulently, that is a big step. I believe the department and the government need to be paying more attention to that. I have talked at length about the deficit at Stanton and the Beau-Del. We have a new CEO at Stanton. Hopefully things will progress there.

I am happy to see the increase to spending on infrastructure. There has been a lot of good work. I think the Minister of Public Works and Services and the government deserves some credit on the capital infrastructure planning process and how it is that the government is now planning infrastructure and carrying out that work. I think there has been some good work done by the Department of Public Works on that.

The other thing I wanted to mention as well is when I am talking about infrastructure. Some Members have alluded to this and there have been motions passed in this House about putting social housing back with the Housing Corporation. I can't state enough how much support that I would have for an initiative like that. We could look at the elimination of 14 positions. We could look at saving the government \$1.5 million just for starters. That is something that I believe has some merit. The

government should be looking at that because it makes sense. Why are we paying another \$1.5 million to administer a program that was already being administered? It always troubles me why we did that in the first place. Like I said, there have been times when Members in this House instructed the government to revisit that decision, but yet I know the Minister promised us a review. That was back in last February. We still haven't seen that review. I would suggest that is because there is nothing good to say about ECE administering the program. We need to re-examine that.

Also, when we are looking at the Housing Corporation itself, I think we have a lot of money that is going to be flown into the Housing Corporation. To me, I think it is too close to government, oftentimes influenced by political decisions and political meddling. I think it is time we take a look at the Housing Corporation and try to put it more arm's length away from government so that there isn't that political interference. Its job is to provide housing for our residents. It takes the MLAs phoning and getting involved. It just gets messy that way. I think maybe that is a way we could look at that. I think it has some merit too.

I mentioned it in my Member's statement earlier today about the cost of living. That is probably the single biggest issue that is out there for residents here in the Northwest Territories. If you look back in the past year, what are we doing about that? We are going out prematurely and announcing revenue options that scare the life out of people who have the proposed changes; the self-help benefits that scare the heck out of people; board reform is scaring people. You add to that the increased cost of power and the fact that residents' power rates have gone up 30 percent. People are packing their bags and leaving. If you don't think that is happening, you are fooling yourselves. Just wait for the next census to be done and we'll see just how many people have left the Northwest Territories. It is going to be a staggering amount of people. What I want the government to understand and appreciate is we cannot allow these people to be leaving. Every time we go out there with an announcement, we cannot scare people. The government has a penchant for scaring people. In these tough times we have to try to keep people here at home in the Northwest Territories. We can't be rushing them out the door. To me, that is the communication. It has to change. We have to sing a different tune. We have to get more people interested in staying here, not leaving. Like I said, every time you turn around the government's trying to make up an excuse for people to pack their bags and I don't want to subscribe to that whatsoever.

The youth spending, I think that's another area the government needs to be commended on. I think it's

the first year since I've been here that it's gone up this substantially and I'd like to thank the government for finally realizing that an investment in the youth is an investment in the future.

I'm not convinced on the Olympics. I'm not convinced that spending \$3 million there is the best use of our money. I think supporting the arts and the cultural component of our involvement there at the Vancouver 2010 Games is something we should do, but I don't understand why it costs \$3 million to achieve that.

I'm also interested as we go forward here with the examination of our relationship with the NWT Power Corporation and ATCO and how that's all going to play out. There certainly is probably a better way to do that. The working group that we have proposed doesn't have anybody that's got a background in power generation or the PUB or anything for that matter. It's a group of senior bureaucrats. From where I sit, ATCO is going to come forward with people who are experts in the field and we're going to be swimming in that tank. We had better know what we're talking about and we had better have some people at the table that are going to protect the interests of the residents here in the Northwest Territories and the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Power Corporation as it exists. To be honest with you today, I just don't think that's the case. I think we need to identify a couple of individuals out there and plug them into this process so our interests are protected.

Again, I've got a few seconds left here. This is something I say every year to the government, but we have to get away from our reliance on consultants and I haven't quite seen that yet. We've got to get staff doing what they've been assigned to do and they can't be contract administrators. They've got to do the work that's before them and not rely on consultants to do the work.

Of course, the Taltson Hydro Project, that's another area where we've spent a tremendous amount of money. Here we are five years later, we don't have a power purchase agreement. Folks, we need to get on with that. We either need to get a power purchase agreement or find something else to do with that power, whether it's to sell it south, run the line around the other side of the lake and service some communities, but we have to have those type of discussions because right now it's not...Like I said, it's been five years.

I know my time is out, but I'll have lots more to say as we go through the budget itself. But I do support the budget and I think it's a good piece of work and I'd like to thank the Finance Minister for presenting us with a workable budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Mr. Krutko is next.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have issues, especially from small communities. I know a lot of my colleagues in small communities raised the issue on capacity challenges we have. We have issues such as dust control, dealing with programs and services, where in our case we don't have any. I think it's important to see...You know, \$1.4 million, almost \$1.5 million is going to be spent annually on the Dementia Centre in Yellowknife, going forward. The same thing in regard to \$540,000 to operate the Territorial Supported Living Campus in Hay River. Yet, in our communities we're struggling just to maintain nurse...(inaudible)...Minister of Justice is trying to address the issue with policing in Tsiigehtchic. Yet in the area of health we're still having a lot of problems, especially in the Beaufort-Delta communities.

I think it's important that as government we have to find systems that are not unique to all, but are basically there to solve the capacity challenges we have in small communities. I think you can throw all the money at the health boards, you can throw all the money at the education boards, but at the end of the day if you don't have people on the ground delivering programs and services because of challenges such as housing, high cost of living, insecurity in our communities because we don't have policing. Those issues are bread and butter issues for a large majority of our communities in the Northwest Territories. Almost 18 communities have these challenges, by way of rural and remote communities. I think as government you have to deliver programs and services which are universal to non-urban centres by way of rural communities.

I thank you for the budget, but I think at the end of the day the communities are going to be left on the back burner, trying to find the people to deliver energy plans or programs they're going to need to identify those capital issues that they want to implement over two years. I think the time frame of two years is unrealistic in a lot of our communities. We have logistical challenges. We have challenges of just getting...I know the Premier mentioned I'm getting a water treatment plant in Aklavik. Well, we've been waiting four years for the water treatment plant and it's still not there. They're not even working on the site that it's supposed to go on in the next couple years. Little things, like just trying to find gravel to develop the site is an issue for communities, but the government doesn't seem to think it's an issue. I think this government has to find a way to deal with those challenges that we face in small communities. If that means having a separate division that deals with municipal and community affairs for small communities, so be it. I

think we have to think outside of the box when we talk about capital infrastructure.

With regard to the budget that's in front of us, we do also have to deal with the issue of the commitments or obligations that we have under the federal gas tax, that all communities have to have plans in place in order to access this money after three years. In the last report we saw before committee only three communities concluded their plans in regard to that commitment by way of community energy plans. But for communities the highest cost in O and M for municipalities, regardless of whether it's hamlets, charter communities or small communities, is the O and M costs in regard to the fundamental cost of operating and maintaining infrastructure in our small communities. Just water deliver costs alone...If we can find a way to reduce the cost in those communities, that's half their budget. If we can look at ways of finding ways of reducing the cost of treating water, reducing the cost of heating, reducing the cost of distribution such as utilidor systems or whatever water delivery systems you have now, those are areas that communities can save money in.

The communities in my riding are already running deficits. Yet it's only two years in regard to the agreement that was signed to give them that authority. I think it's important that we as government have to not wash our hands of them and walk away. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has an obligation to ensure the legislation that we passed in this House will really give the communities the tools and have the ability to operate, maintain and run those programs and services after we give them, and look at a 10-year implementation plan so that when they have problems, we will go in there with the staff that we still retain through our government departments to assist them to implement those programs and services.

Again, I think with the ministerial committees that are in place, without being at the table, I think we as communities have lost an opportunity to really say what we'd like to see in regard to capital plans or programs that went to Ottawa in regard to infrastructure or programs. Yet, that's neither here nor there and I think that's something that you have to either make a decision on; either take part or sit on the sidelines and wish that we were sitting at the table.

I think, as I stated, the biggest challenge we're going to face as communities in the next years -- and we're already seeing it -- is climate change. The amount of flooding that we've seen in our communities in the Northwest Territories in the last 10 years has increased in every community. We've seen an increase in regard to forest fires. We've seen an increase in regard to permafrost. We've

seen an increase in effects to infrastructure in all communities.

I think if government does not take hold of this problem and really put money into ensuring the infrastructure that communities have the capacity to deal with things such as floods, build up the communities so that you do have berms around the communities to protect them from floods, drainage systems that have to be there so that when it does flood, you're able to drain.

But, more importantly, what you see in the United States or what you hear on television happening in Australia will happen here. The temperature is rising and we are going to possibly at some point be in a drought. I think that we can't kid ourselves that the biggest expenditure to this government is fighting forest fires, fire retention every year. We have to put money into that budget every year since that issue became pretty clear. I think as government, and as communities, and as a Territory we really have to take this issue seriously.

Again, I'm glad that they are looking at these small communities committees going forward, and I think the committees have to start meeting more often. I think we had one little get together and that's it. I think that if we're serious about this, this committee should be meeting weekly or even on the weekends. Because this budget that's in front of us, the challenges we're facing with issues that were raised by in the 14th Assembly in regards to the special committee's report the issues haven't changed. The issues are still capacity issues that we're dealing with in regard to finding SAOs, financial officers, planners, land developers. You name it, those issues are still there and I think we do have to seriously look at those issues.

Again, I think it's important that we as government look at the energy side of things. I'd like to thank the Minister in regard to looking at the energy side of where we're going with regard to green energy. I think the programs we have to deliver have to be universal. We can't just cherry pick communities and say, well, you're going to get it because you're a nice guy, but I'm a nice guy too. I think it's important that we find a system that's universal for all communities on the river system. There's no reason that we can't have a plan in place to implement some sort of a system in all communities that are adjacent to a river. Find a way that we can use that water that flows past our communities from April right until October, and get off diesel fuel during those times of the year from solar power. It's doable. We can save a lot of fossil fuels being used during those times of the year where we don't really have to use it. I think there's ways that we can deal with this for those communities that are already on the river systems.

I know the Minister of ITI mentioned earlier about different initiatives that are out there. I think from our trip to Manitoba and seeing exactly what's being done there, there's no reason that we can't do the same thing here. It doesn't have to be large-scale hydro projects which are going to cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. I think this is something that we really seriously have to look at. I think in regard to reducing costs of living in communities, that's one area that we can seriously make a difference for our communities.

The other area in regard to reducing the cost of living is improving infrastructure. I know the airports are one thing that we can look at so we can get bigger aircraft into our communities. Again, we do have to be able to allow communities access year-round.

I know I've raised the issue about the Peel River Bridge and I think realistically there's no reason that that bridge should have been built when they built the highway. The Department of Public Works, the federal department had a plan in place to put a bridge in place in 1967. Yet it hasn't been done for \$6 million. Yet, we're talking today of \$70 million. So again that issue I will be discussing more about again. Those are some of the issues I have and I think that we have to work together and move forward. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Are there any further general comments? Seeing no more general comments, is committee agreed that we've concluded general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Agreed. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Committee moves to report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please. Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010, and would like to report progress. Mr. Spoo...Speaker...

---Laughter

I will get it right sooner or later; I promise.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, item 24, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 10, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 4 of 7)
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills

20. Second Reading of Bills

21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy
- Tabled Document 11-16(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2009-2010
- Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee
- Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act
- Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act
- Bill 4, Public Library Act
- Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act
- Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 10, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

