



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

3rd Session

Day 18

16th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Pages 2559 - 2614

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 25, 2009****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, 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 1:35 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 38-16(3):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY**

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the construction of an all-weather road through the Mackenzie Valley to the Arctic Coast has been a priority since the 1950s. The vision was born out of the federal recognition that northern transportation infrastructure was required to build the nation's economy and support Canada's sovereignty.

In 1972, Canada began constructing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Extensive construction, survey, environmental and design work was carried out until 1976. One of the department's current employees, Mr. Joe Cooke from Inuvik, was on the field crew working north surveying the alignment. He actually drove the final survey stake into the ground when they reached the connection with the Dempster Highway.

Mr. Speaker, this was a time of great hope and potential for the North and the nation. Unfortunately, it was overshadowed by increasing uncertainty regarding oil and gas development potential and escalating political and legal issues at the time. In 1977, following the release of the Berger inquiry, a moratorium on the oil and gas development, construction was halted and the federal government abandoned the route just 18 kilometres south of Wrigley.

The federal vision of a highway through the Mackenzie Valley has been carried forward as a Department of Transportation and GNWT priority

since the department's first Transportation Strategy in 1990. The Mackenzie Valley Highway was reaffirmed in subsequent highway strategy documents including the Department of Transportation's 2000 strategy, Investing in Roads for People and the Economy; the National Transportation Strategy, Looking to the Future, developed in 2005; and, the more recent Pan-northern Transportation Strategy released during the 16th Assembly, Northern Connections. It also has been identified as a priority of this government; reinforced by its inclusion within the government's strategic initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, a strategy can only be fully realized if the necessary implementation funding is available. In an effort to secure federal funding, the department developed Corridors for Canada in 2002 and Corridors for Canada II in 2005. These proposals resulted in an investment of more than \$41 million into the Mackenzie Valley winter road bridge and grade improvements. In 2006, the department also developed a stand-alone federal partnership funding proposal for the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway titled Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast. Connecting Canada received positive media coverage and public statements of support from the Chamber of Commerce, the NWT Business Coalition, community leaders and members of the public; however, it has not yet resulted in federal funding or partnership commitments to complete the route.

Mr. Speaker, while new road construction in the Territory remains a federal responsibility, the GNWT has not just been sitting back waiting for the federal government to finish this highway. The department has been making considerable progress. In 1995, the department completed the all-weather road as far as Wrigley and commenced operation of the Ndulee ferry. Beginning in 2001, through a funding partnership with INAC and through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the department has invested in grade improvements and permanent bridge construction on the Mackenzie Valley winter road. These bridges have dramatically extended and stabilized the winter road season and reduced the environmental and safety risks associated with ice crossing construction. These improvements will ultimately

serve the future all-weather highway. A total of 37 bridges will soon be completed. The only outstanding major bridge will be at the Bear River crossing.

The department has also begun the construction of an access road from Tuktoyaktuk to source 177. The Tuktoyaktuk gravel access road marks a major step towards our long-term goal of a Mackenzie Valley Highway. This could become the first 19 kilometres of an all-weather Mackenzie Highway connecting from the Arctic Coast.

Mr. Speaker, this government plans to continue working towards the goal of connecting the Mackenzie Valley up to the Arctic Coast. New investment of \$16 million on the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road is planned through the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative. Additional investment could also flow from the recently announced federal economic stimulus package.

Aside from the major infrastructure improvements, planning and research work for the Mackenzie Valley Highway is also underway. We are currently finalizing an economic analysis which will update and quantify the benefits of constructing the route. Through the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative, investments, substantial environmental baseline and socio-economic work valued at \$2 million is planned between 2010 and 2012.

Mr. Speaker, within the last 10 years, the department has made significant progress towards the long-term goal of a Mackenzie Valley Highway. While the 2006 Connecting Canada proposal and the corresponding \$700 million cost estimate needs some updating, the benefits outlined in the proposal, including reducing the cost of living, facilitating economic and resource development and enhancing Canada's sovereignty still holds true today as they did 50 years ago.

It has been more than 30 years since the federal government abandoned the route. The political difficulties that impeded the completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway over three decades ago have improved. There is a renewed interest in oil and gas exploration and development including aboriginal partnership. The recent downturn in the economy only strengthens the impetus to finish the construction of the Mackenzie Highway. Major investments in Canada's future, investments in both its people and supporting infrastructure will stimulate the economy and position Canada to powerfully emerge from this economic crisis. The benefits of completing the Mackenzie Valley Highway are greater now than ever.

Mr. Speaker, the department will continue to pursue this long-standing priority. We will continue our efforts to partner with the federal government,

aboriginal governments and industry to push this project forward. All Northerners and all Canadians will benefit from a Canada connected from coast to coast to coast. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 39-16(3):
DON'T BE A NUMBER
TV COMMERCIALS LAUNCH

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every year an average of 455 young workers under the age of 25 are injured on the job in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. These injured young workers represent 17 percent of the established Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, WSCC, claims.

At noon on March 13, 2009, the WSCC invites the public to join them at the Yellowknife Capitol Theatre to launch their new "Don't be a Number" TV commercials. The two English commercials feature important stories about two young men who were injured at work when they were only 22 years old. The two Inuktitut commercials feature a young worker from Nunavut who is committed to working safe and "not being a number." These young workers have willingly shared their stories and hope their message will encourage youth to know their rights and work safe.

I invite Members, employers, labour organizations and the public to join the WSCC in their efforts to empower our northern youth with the necessary knowledge and tools to keep them safe on the job and keep them from not being a number. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 40-16(3):
MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL
ON THE ECONOMY

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, our job as government is to stimulate and maintain a healthy economic environment for our Territory.

During this time of slower economic growth, it is incumbent on us to play a role in counting the impacts of this downturn and, in doing so, protect and sustain the economic capacity and potential that exists in our people, our businesses and our communities.

Recent events have shown that the economy of the Northwest Territories is not immune to the impacts of the current global economic slowdown.

Mr. Speaker, our government must create and maximize economic opportunities for NWT residents by providing access to opportunities and markets and access to credit and capital. Addressing these issues has become an urgent matter, not just in terms of growth but also in terms of viability of our businesses. At the same time, we need to be guided by a strong and healthy working relationship with the Northwest Territories business community.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, and working closely with the president of the Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to advise Members of this House of this morning's inaugural meeting of the Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy.

The Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy was established in the fall of 2008 to obtain firsthand advice and guidance from the private sector regarding Northwest Territories economic issues. The Ministers Advisory Panel consists of 11 Northerners representing stakeholders from a broad scope of business interests in the Northwest Territories. These include the Northwest Territories and regional chambers of commerce, the Aboriginal Business Association, the Northwest Territories Tourism, the Northwest Territories Construction Association, the Northern Air Transport Association, the Northwest Territories Chamber of Mines and Alternatives North.

In this current economic climate, the advice and guidance that this group of Northerners can provide is more urgently required than ever. This panel will provide a forum in which government, non-government organizations and the private sector can discuss policies, strategies, initiative and other economic development issues. It will play an advisory role to myself and to our government. They will insist in the development of programs and initiatives that will be relevant to our Territory's business environment and the advancement of economic development in our regions and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the first formal meeting of the Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy was the beginning of a great vehicle for productive dialogue. More than ever before, there is a need for collaborative effort between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the drivers of economy of this Territory. This panel will provide that vehicle.

If the feedback, insight and engagement, evidenced at this morning's meeting, is indicative of future

dialogues, I believe we are on the path to success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, transportation corridors, rail lines, roads, waterways, crisscross the vast reaches of our country. They are our economic lifeblood and connectors of communities. But here in the North, those connectors are woefully inadequate especially for travel from south to north. It's the responsibility of the federal government to fund these new roads in Canada. We've known that for a long time. In fact, way back in 1958 the federal government announced that it would build a Mackenzie Valley Highway north to the coast. The Canadian government actually started construction in 1972 and 210 kilometres were completed, but in 1977 construction stalled and the highway ended 18 kilometres short of Wrigley.

Since then the federal government has been noticeably absent from any responsibility for new NWT highways and that accounts for the lack of a south/north route to connect our communities.

Over the years, the GNWT has had to step into this road construction void. We've completed the missing 18 kilometres of the Fort Simpson to Wrigley section of the highway; we've built bridges, affected alignments which enhanced the Mackenzie Valley Highway Winter Road and at the same time, year after year, NWT governments have continually requested funding for the completion of the highway from the federal government. But to no avail.

We've had the benefit of federal dollars to cost-share some of this work, but it's to the detriment of our own financial resources. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker, the federal infrastructure programs are great and I welcome them, but new roads should not be at the expense of the GNWT.

Where is the Government of Canada in fulfilling their duty in constructing the roads to the North's resources? Nowhere to be seen, I have to say. We need the federal government to stand up and be counted to accept their responsibility to the people of the North and the people of Canada and to provide the dollars necessary to complete the

Mackenzie Valley Highway and connect the North to the southern part of Canada.

Our communities need this highway, Mr. Speaker. Our government needs it, our economy needs it. It's time for the federal government to see the same need. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to take a little bit different tack on the Mackenzie Valley Highway proposal today. CBC Radio has recently been running a series of shows called How They Got Here. I want to tell you how highway infrastructure played a deciding role in my coming to the Northwest Territories.

As a student sitting in a Grade 12 geography class in a small town in south-western Ontario, I looked at an Atlas, I looked at a map of Canada, I thought about leaving home and where I would like to go. In Ontario, where I come from, there is a community about every five kilometres, so the thought of isolation wasn't something that particularly was common to me. But I thought the North would be isolated. When I looked at the map and I saw that rail line and I saw that highway that went straight from Alberta to Hay River, Northwest Territories, I decided that was the place that I wanted to go.

The psychology of isolation is not something that I fully understand, but I do wonder how it impacts people who do live in the North who have very few exit options. The cost of air transport for communities that are cut off from any highway system is very prohibitive to people leaving. In my 35 years in Hay River I can't really say that I have actually flown out of Hay River very many times, but it was somewhat reassuring to me to know that there was that daily jet service if I did want to leave. But I think people in small communities look at that airplane and no road and if it's cost prohibitive I think it does play a part in...I think it can be discouraging to people and make them sometimes feel that if they did want to go someplace, it's kind of hopeless.

In terms of attracting people to come to small, isolated communities -- that is supposing that you want more people like me in the Northwest Territories -- I think it's a very interesting thought indeed as to how a Mackenzie Valley Highway would change people's thoughts about coming into the further reaches of the North.

The benefits of a Mackenzie Valley Highway would be immense. All Members today are going to speak to that. The opportunity at this particular time to consider an undertaking of infrastructure such as this nature could only be a good thing and I will support all endeavours and pursuits of such a highway.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleagues, I, too, will stand up here today to talk about the benefits of constructing a Mackenzie Valley Highway from Wrigley to Tuktoyaktuk. My riding of Tu Nedhe will not have many direct benefits with the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway; however, I have hopes that the construction companies will recognize the rich resources of heavy equipment operators that exist in Fort Resolution. In Fort Resolution we have many very good heavy equipment operators and truck drivers.

Heavy equipment operators and truck drivers would have work on the Mackenzie Valley Highway for several years.

In addition to some employment in my riding, the entire NWT will benefit from the construction of the highway. The Mackenzie Valley Highway will lower the cost of living to those communities along that highway and will have a ripple effect on the rest of the North.

The workers needed to construct the highway will take a lot of families off income support. Again, this will have a positive impact on the rest of the Northwest Territories by relieving some of the social pressures on the GNWT budget.

This highway will have a very positive impact on tourism in the NWT. I feel that thousands of tourists will drive the loop using this highway and the Dempster Highway.

Once a highway is built through communities it opens the doors for many other benefits, such as a housing market and allowing professionals into the communities that would otherwise not live in these communities due to the isolation. Many professionals will not live in these communities because of the isolation and the fact that they cannot invest in a house. With the completion of the highway and the possible emergence of a housing market, professionals can purchase a home, build

equity, and remain in the community for longer periods.

The youth and the students will benefit from teachers remaining in the community for a longer term and we all know the benefits of a healthier youth population. In addition, longer term, stable health professionals will have a major benefit on the health of our people.

I support the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway in hopes of employment for my constituents and the lowering of dependence on the social purse which will benefit the entire NWT, including Tu Nedhe.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today you have and will hear Members of this House speak passionately about the need to move forward with the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The people of the Mackenzie Valley and the NWT have been saying that it must be built for years. Cece McCauley and her Women Warriors have been champions for the cause.

The Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Corporation, or MAC group, has been actively lobbying the federal and territorial governments to proceed with the development of the highway.

Historically, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker saw the advantages to developing the road to resources. Under his direction and leadership, a vast amount of roads and railways were built in order to open up northern regions of Canada to create easier access to resources. Yet his vision has never been fully realized. A Canadian highway system stretching from coast to coast to coast still does not exist.

The 15th and 16th Assemblies have identified the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a priority. The 15th Assembly developed a proposal titled "Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast" to complete the Mackenzie Valley Highway to the Arctic Coast and submitted it to the federal government in November 2005. This proposal outlined how the highway will facilitate resource development that will bring significant benefits to all of Canada, how the highway will ensure Canada's sovereignty in the North, how the highway will improve Canada's northern security and emergency response, how the highway will support the economic and social development of Northerners, and how the highway

will improve the North's capacity to adapt to climate change. The proposal is on-line on the GNWT website and I encourage everyone to give it a read.

In these difficult economic times a national project is required. The GNWT cannot afford to build this national highway and, although important to the residents of the NWT, this must be a federal project. The federal government continues to talk about stimulus projects. The construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway addresses and supports all of these statements. As a government we need to encourage the federal government to complete this national highway project and connect Canada from coast to coast to coast.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COOPERATIVE EFFORTS NEEDED TO CONSTRUCT MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also support the efforts to build the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I have worked closely with the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation, which has put a lot of time and effort into looking at how they can develop this proposal realizing that it is going to be a major capital endeavour. Through partnerships from the Deh Cho to the Sahtu to the Gwich'in settlement area to the Inuvialuit settlement area to construct a highway from Wrigley all the way to Tuktoyaktuk is a dream that people in the valley have had for years.

We all hear what the high cost of living is in our small communities and, more importantly, in our isolated communities and communities that have to be served by winter roads. In order for us to reduce the real cost of living, we have to improve our infrastructure. With the challenges we're facing today with global warming and the shorter seasons that we're seeing with regard to being able to build roads and service our communities it's getting shorter every year.

The Mackenzie Highway has cost this government about a million dollars a year in regard to opening the winter roads and maintaining those roads. Yes, we've invested some \$41 million into bridges and I believe that is a start, but in order for this project to go forward it will take a lot of capital investment from the private sector, the Government of Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. As a government we should push forward a major infrastructure problem in the Northwest Territories where we're looking at somewhere in the range of \$1.8 billion to construct this length of highway.

We do have to think outside the box. The federal government has been taking royalties and revenues from the old Norman Wells field going back some 50 years. Yet those revenues flow directly to the federal coffers. The federal government owns one-third of the Norman Wells field in which the revenues are somewhere in the range of \$200 million a year. Yet I believe that's where the investment should come from. The federal government should reinvest those dollars that they've taken out of the northern economy. Just to drill one well in the Mackenzie Valley costs somewhere around \$30 million. We have to do better.

With that, I will support this endeavour and thank the Members.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would want to add a little story to my Member's statement. Mr. Speaker, some time ago, the elders were telling stories on the Norman Wells oilfield. Some of the elders claim that, when they passed through, they picked up the oil off the ground, put it in a lard pail and brought it to Tulita. When they got to Tulita, it was given to some of the Hudson Bay and the government people that took it down. Later on, some of the people came up from the south to claim the Norman Wells oilfield. That was about 89 or 90 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories has been noted over many studies of the vast amount of resources that are waiting to be capped. It has been said over time that the Northwest Territories could be true partners in Canada, if only we were taken seriously by the federal government.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, the NWT has billions of resources that could be redistributed amongst the people of the Northwest Territories. For example, if the highway was built from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, we could contribute to the national gross domestic product and billions, almost \$58 million alone just in terms of the potential for oil and gas exploration. Just the highway itself on the royalties and the taxes, I understand there could be about \$13.5 billion. If we could build a highway, that will be thousands and thousands of jobs just for the Northwest Territories and also have a little bit of room for people from the south to come up and work on our highway.

Mr. Speaker, this Mackenzie Valley Highway would open many resources in the Sahtu and other

regions in the Northwest Territories. The federal government could either win or lose depending on their next move in terms of supporting the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, Northrock in March 2006 announced the largest oil and gas discovery in the last decade. The well is suspected to produce 100 times the volume of the average well in northern Alberta. That is near Tulita.

Mr. Speaker, the lard pail that I talked about the elders were saying when they shipped the lard pail out, the people have yet to return that lard pail to the people in Tulita. Mr. Speaker, if we build this road, hopefully that lard pail will come back on it.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about the completing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. In 1972, the federal government announced they were going to build a highway from Fort Simpson to the Dempster in four years. I believe that it is time to focus our government's and the federal government's efforts to achieve these goals once again. The Mackenzie Highway was constructed to a few kilometres south of Wrigley. When construction stopped in 1977, only 210 kilometres had been completed. More than 800 kilometres of road remains to be completed to take the highway north to the Dempster and add the remaining link to Tuktoyaktuk.

One of the reasons that I am interested in the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway is because this will provide much needed economic stimulus to our North and provide a transportation loop that will encourage tourism and tourism-related businesses to develop and expand.

Another reason is that the communities in my riding of Nahendeh will benefit greatly from these increased traffic volumes and if we follow the plan from the Connecting Canada proposal, a new bridge will be constructed and allow us year-round mobility to points south.

I would urge our government to work with our aboriginal groups to develop a unique and joint strategy for Ottawa to show that the North can and will work together for everyone's benefit. To date the lobbying efforts in Ottawa has been led largely by a Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Corporation and the Denendeh Development Corporation.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway can bring real benefits to northern communities, helping them lower the cost of living, improve their access to other NWT communities and assist with economic development. I quote from our Connecting Canada Highway Proposal. "Connecting Canada is crucial to the socio-economic future of Canada." For my constituents and I, the completion of this highway is an important project, a legacy that will span from one generation to the next. So, once again, I urge our government to take the lead on this project which everyone supports. Like Obama, Mr. Speaker, we must be leaders and inspire our people with hope and positive change. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BENEFITS OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to add my voice today to supporting the construction of an all-weather road down the Mackenzie Valley. I support the construction of the highway for many reasons. It will connect communities which will foster closer ties to families. It will undoubtedly lower the obscene cost of living in communities down the valley. It will create numerous jobs and economic activity at a time when we need it the most. It will give tourism in the Northwest Territories a solid shot in the arm. The road traffic will bring economic benefits to small communities along the route.

How can this highway get built, Mr. Speaker? It is going to take a partnership between the federal government, our territorial government and aboriginal governments in the MAC group to get this done.

The Prime Minister often states the importance of Arctic sovereignty, nation building and the importance of the NWT to the future of the Canadian economy. It is time the federal government stepped up to the plate. Our government has to lessen its shotgun approach to infrastructure. A bridge here, chipseal here, is not the approach we need right now to take to Canada. Yes, we have many infrastructure needs across this country, but we need to have focus and resolve in order to get the federal government to agree to such a large-scale infrastructure project.

I personally want to be actively involved in helping the MAC group, our government and the federal government to advance the construction of this highway. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank those people who live in the Mackenzie Valley communities for all of their patience, and also thank you to Cece McCauley and her group of Women

Warriors for all of their support and hard work in this initiative. Hopefully sooner rather than later this much needed roadway will become a reality for those residents down the Mackenzie Valley.

Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, and his government have an opportunity to go down in history as a government and a Prime Minister with a vision for the North and do their good for building this country of ours, Canada, to be all that it can be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am really pleased to hear of the Mackenzie Valley Highway construction working together as a government to proceed. During the economic climate, this government must get creative, use our influence and instruments to get various projects off the ground.

There are many shovel ready projects that can start within one year or less in the Northwest Territories. One such project is the Mackenzie Valley Highway construction project. This project will be \$1.2 to \$2 billion of infrastructure spending in the Northwest Territories, especially the areas not currently benefiting from large mining projects. It would also push the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline one step closer to reality. This project will create 181,000 person years of employment, generating \$35 million annually in highway operations and maintenance, contracts up and down the valley and would seriously reduce the high cost of living in many of my communities.

The government must lobby the federal government. They must show commitment. They must allocate multi-year funding even though the government is currently financially stretched. There are always ways and parties that would work together to get this going.

Currently the Gwich'in and Denendeh Corporation, the majority of shares in the MAC group also initiated a P3 lease arrangement for the MAC highway project. I know the government is well versed on P3 leasebacks. Currently there are many similar arrangements across the Territories.

Lastly, this project will generate \$250 million worth of construction activity in the Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk portion alone. This would be a huge shot in the economic arm for my region and this Territory. Cost of living would be decreased. Sovereignty would be solved. The impact and

development in a report card from the GNWT is \$60 billion in increased revenue, cost of living to \$1.2 to \$2 billion. Mr. Speaker, 177 is just a start. This will open up the Western Arctic. And on my to-do list, Mr. Speaker, is my deep sea port.

---Laughter

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, my deep sea port, that's the next thing for me.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to drive from Tuk on my way down to Yellowknife, to Norman Wells, to have tea with the honorary Chief Cece McCauley and all the good work that she does in promoting this project. At this time, I thank the government and all my colleagues for supporting this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NET BENEFITS FROM MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in these difficult economic times, many people are concerned about what we can do about the cost of living and others are concerned about economic development to benefit our people. These concerns must be addressed within the context of the accelerating impacts of climate change and fuel costs. As the 16th Assembly, we are committed to sustainable communities which are those that choose economic development that will ensure benefits to everyone in the community in ways that reduce our environmental impacts and strengthen our health and social structures.

The Mackenzie Highway project, therefore, must address the hard questions that these conditions impose or we will not be better off. Are the reduced costs of living for communities newly connected by highway real? Currently, GNWT subsidizes cost of living in these communities with about 40 or 50 million dollars per year. If costs are reduced by 50 percent with the highway, our new costs will be \$20 million plus \$35 million annual maintenance. Families will save but ultimately the people of the NWT and Canada will pay additional costs through taxes. If induced development is to provide for these costs, how will we commit to managing it to again yield real benefits?

What are the potential risks and benefits to social health such as increased addictions? Dollars and

strategies will need to be in place to enable communities to respond effectively to these concerns.

Will the highway reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Currently, flying everything in and use of ice roads causes high emissions, more than transport by automobile. However, increased vehicle traffic, road construction and an induced rate of industrial development associated with highway means attention will need to be addressed to this issue. Climate change is already causing havoc to our highways. This means higher road construction costs and higher maintenance.

What sort of development will a highway enable? The majority of the economically, socially and environmentally sustainable developments that benefit our communities are by definition modest in size and locally empowered. How will we ensure that a highway results in a wider distribution of economic benefits to all our people rather than a select few?

Finally, what are the alternatives? Recent studies indicate airship technology has come a long way and is now a viable economic alternative to expensive northern highways. With them they bring year-round transport, reduce the product storage costs, safety and environmental benefits, a positive contribution to the sovereignty issue and better emergency services.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. Industries have indicated that they would give airships serious consideration if they were available -- a business opportunity here. The connection of all our communities is critical and to the degree that these questions can be fully and positively addressed, Mr. Speaker, I support the idea of a Mackenzie Highway to be constructed by Northerners. Mahsi.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege of recognizing an elder from Deline, Mr. Andrew John Kenny, a good friend of the people in the Sahtu and the Northwest Territories.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Darrell Beaulieu, president of the Dene Development Corporation and also a member of the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to recognize Darrell Beaulieu, a resident of Weledeh and he's been a long-time supporter of economic development in the North. Welcome, Darrell.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to recognize Darrell Beaulieu. He's representing the Minister's Advisory Committee here this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Welcome to everyone in the gallery today. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 17-16(3):
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION NO. 3,
2008-2009

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Supplementary Appropriation No. 3, 2008-2009. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger.

TABLED DOCUMENT 18-16(3):
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ABSENCES
FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER 18, 2007 TO
FEBRUARY 3, 2009

Pursuant to section 5 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the summary of Members' absences for the period October 18, 2007 to February 3, 2009.

Item 15, notices of motions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 13-16(3):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, February 27, 2009, I will move the following: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that the Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Government of Canada immediately commence negotiations with the GNWT to conclude the proposed infrastructure partnership;

And further, that the Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Government of Canada advance the funding and planning for a Mackenzie Valley Highway and consider this project as a national stimulus initiative that would be a lasting legacy for all Canadians;

And furthermore, that the content and results of these proceedings be forwarded to the Prime Minister, the federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and the Member of Parliament for Western Arctic for their consideration.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

Motions

MOTION 13-16(3):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY
CARRIED

MR. YAKELEYA: WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway through to the Arctic coast should be a strategic priority for Canada and is the final link to connect Canada from coast to coast to coast;

AND WHEREAS the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a strategic priority for the Government of the

Northwest Territories (GNWT) as documented in the funding proposal entitled Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast, submitted to the federal government in November 2005;

AND WHEREAS last fall the GNWT proposed a 10-year infrastructure partnership with Canada to cost-share the development of new economic infrastructure in the NWT that will create sustainable benefits for the NWT and Canada;

AND WHEREAS the GNWT has demonstrated its commitment to this priority through continuing investments in Mackenzie Valley bridge and grade improvements;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would help to lower the cost of living in northern communities and contribute to their sustainability;

AND WHEREAS climate change trends in the NWT have and will continue to pose challenges by reducing the length of winter road seasons and by increasing the uncertainty of opening and closing dates of winter roads;

AND WHEREAS there are northern environmental and socio-economic review and permitting processes that would ensure that this project results in net benefits for Northerners;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would enhance Canada's national security and emergency response capability;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would enhance the assertion of Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would further the economic, social and political development of the NWT;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would connect the Mackenzie Valley communities and Beaufort-Delta communities and improve access to services;

AND WHEREAS a Mackenzie Valley Highway would provide opportunities to diversify the NWT's economy through expanded renewable and non-renewable resources development and tourism opportunities;

AND WHEREAS expanded renewable and non-renewable resource development in the Mackenzie Valley results in significant benefits of employment and business development outside of the NWT in provinces across Canada;

AND WHEREAS the construction of a Mackenzie Valley Highway should proceed through a call for expressions of interest from Northern and aboriginal businesses;

AND WHEREAS the federal government is responsible for the costs of constructing and maintaining new highways in the NWT;

AND WHEREAS the Dene Nation has acknowledged the importance of the Mackenzie Valley Highway during its most recent Dene leadership meeting in February 2009;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Deh Cho, that the Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Government of Canada immediately commence negotiations with the GNWT to conclude the proposed infrastructure partnership;

AND FURTHER, that the Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Government of Canada advance the funding and planning for a Mackenzie Valley Highway and consider this project as a national stimulus initiative that would be a lasting legacy for all Canadians;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the content and results of these proceedings be forwarded to the Prime Minister, the federal Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities, and the Member of Parliament for Western Arctic for their consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. A motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly be supporting wholeheartedly this motion. I would like to give the opportunity to the Members of this House to speak on the motion and I will be speaking to close the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I would like to thank the Members for bringing this motion forward. I think it's very timely that we have a discussion on the Mackenzie Valley Highway. It's been in the media for some time now. It's a road that's been talked about for many years, since the 1950s; Diefenbaker's Road to Resources program.

The road is roughly 940 kilometres long. From Wrigley to the Dempster is 800 kilometres and the Inuvik to Tuk portion is 140 kilometres making a total of 940 kilometres. For many years now the department has worked towards putting bridges on some of the crossings in the Mackenzie Valley Road system. That really helps us when we look at extending our winter road season and improves the safety and things of that nature for the road.

We have looked at many options to try to attract additional funding to construct this road. We've looked at partnership opportunities with the federal government. We've also been talking to other groups. We've been quite fortunate that the federal government has highlighted several new programs over the last few years, including a P3 infrastructure fund that was quite exciting to see come forward. We have yet to see how the details are going to allow it to flow and move forward.

This has been a subject of discussion on many different tables, including the devolution table, resource revenue sharing discussions, and it's been something that we've brought forward as an economic stimulus for the recent federal budget. We've been trying to do a lot of work towards improving our business case. We've undertaken to do some more detailed engineering and environmental scoping and baseline work required for some of the pre-permitting and environmental assessment phases for some of the projects that we're working towards in the Building Canada plan. Also, through the Managing This Land Initiative we've more recently hired a consultant to do some of the environmental stimulus.

We have recognized that in our Northern Connections document we've highlighted the many needs and challenges that were faced with and the land-based transportation is something that we've flagged as being very limited. Only one-third of the land area in the Northwest Territories is within 100 kilometres of an all-weather road and only 19 percent of the residents have year-round access. Sixty-five percent of the NWT residents, including Yellowknife, do not have highway access for all year or there are a couple months in there that they don't have access for seasonal transition because of the ferry service. Thirteen percent of our population has only access during the winter roads and there's 3 percent of our population that still doesn't have any land transportation access at all. Those are very concerning statistics.

We all recognize that the Mackenzie Valley road at this time, considering the economic downturn, would be of great benefit to all of us. It would create jobs, a lot of employment that we need in our communities. Certainly it would help us address the high cost of living in our communities. We've all heard from many Members in this House over the last while about the high cost and the continual increase in buying groceries and fuel supplies and things of that nature. We certainly would see an increased interest in oil and gas exploration and other kinds of exploration in different parts of the Territories. This would open up a portion of the North. Benefits, because of increased opportunities in other areas such as tourism, have to be recognized.

We have to recognize that we can't build a road without the ability to maintain it. So when we talk about investment in building a road, we also have to look at the investment in allowing us and assisting us to maintain this road. That would create a lot of jobs. We already know and recognize the benefits of our existing roads and the different contracts we have with the communities, and also our own staff that have stable, long-term employment as a result.

Up to now, as I've indicated, we've taken an incremental approach that's allowing us to move forward, but, in my opinion, not fast enough. We have tried to redesign our maintenance schedules. We've tried to redesign our construction seasons and methods. We've also tried to open up the door so that people that are in the industries, for example oil and gas, can invest and work with us as partners to extend seasons.

This is an issue that's been highlighted, as indicated in this Assembly through this motion. It's been highlighted in the opening address of the 16th Assembly. The 2007 Pan-Territorial Transportation Blueprint and Northern Connections has flagged it as a priority. The strategic committees that we've formed within our government have recognized it as a priority. So this motion today, along with the motion that was brought forward by the Dene Nation, certainly has to identify it. It has to send that signal to the federal government that this is a priority, we are supporting it, and we'd like to see it brought forward.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in support of this motion. The Mackenzie Valley Highway has been in the thoughts and dreams of many Northerners for decades; definitely since 1958 when the Prime Minister at the time, John Diefenbaker, and his Conservative government implemented his northern resource policies and coined the phrase Road to Resources. Yet today there still is no road.

In our motion we identified that the Mackenzie Valley Highway would provide opportunities to diversify the NWT's economy through expanded renewable and non-renewable resource development and tourism opportunities. There are clearly resources, both renewable and non-renewable, throughout the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, where they are located often determines how they can best be utilized. Many of our northern resources are a long way away from southern markets or even communities within the NWT themselves, which makes it incredibly difficult to justify the creation of secondary industries that

bring more jobs into the NWT. For the most part, any resources that are extracted from northern soil are exported south to be processed, as it has proven to be more economical to do so.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway will open up the Mackenzie Valley and increase our ability to access renewable and non-renewable resources. Further, it will ensure a reliable method of transportation to get NWT resources out of the NWT, but also make it more affordable for some forms of processing within the NWT as we'll be able to get processing and secondary materials to remote locations with greater ease and regularity. Either way, it creates significant opportunities through easier access to resources. Suitable transportation infrastructure will encourage economic expansion, production, and highlight the northern resources as a reasonable alternative to other locations throughout the world.

In his report titled "The Mackenzie Valley Highway: Should it be Completed" Mr. Alan Windhorst said the report on Canada's National Highway Policy, Infrastructure Canada 2004, notes that investing in highways can lead to improvement in productivity by reducing costs, securing inputs, and reaching markets. The Mackenzie Valley Highway extension will perform all three of these. I agree with his comments, however, as a note, recognizing the importance of economic opportunities that the Mackenzie Valley Highway offers does not suggest that I believe that we should blindly open ourselves to all development. As Northerners, we have a duty and responsibility to protect our land and resources. Any resource extraction and development must go through a thorough socio-economic, and environmental assessment to ensure that our best interests are maintained.

Also in our motion we identified that the Mackenzie Valley Highway would help lower the cost of living in northern communities and contribute to their sustainability. One of the priorities of the 16th Assembly is to reduce the cost of living to northern residents. Individuals living in small, remote communities with no all-season access clearly pay more than individuals on highway systems. Today winter roads are the only way for many communities to get resupplied in bulk. Construction materials and other large items can only be supplied and delivered in short blocks of time, specifically when the winter roads are open. In the future it's safe to assume that this will become increasingly more difficult as winter road seasons get shorter and shorter due to global warming. To ensure that northern communities can survive, we need to ensure that we can get materials to them in a reliable and affordable way; specifically roads. The Mackenzie Valley Highway ensures that our remote communities have consistent access to southern markets, which will make the cost of

things like milk and fresh vegetables cheaper and increase their availability. This is a good thing.

Also in our motion it indicates that the Mackenzie Valley Highway would enhance Canada's national security and emergency response, contributing to asserting Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic. In Mr. Windhorst's document he states that although it is not completed, the Mackenzie Valley extension would ascertain Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic. These facts alone justify consideration for the addition of the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Further, on October 17th, 2007, Prime Minister Harper responded to the Speech from the Throne, supporting sovereignty and security. Within his speech he said, "For the federal government there is nothing more fundamental than the protection of this country's sovereignty. Our most important potential sovereignty challenge today is our Arctic doorstep where retreating polar ice, rising global demand for resources, and the prospect of year-round shipping are creating new challenges and exciting opportunities for the North." This is an important statement. It is clearly obvious to Northerners and it also highlights the importance of the North to the sovereignty of this country.

Mr. Harper went further to say, "Protecting and asserting our sovereignty in the Arctic and elsewhere requires real effort, sacrifice and expense." I couldn't agree more. The Mackenzie Valley Highway will cost, but in the end it's the right thing to do for both the country and the Northwest Territories. Later in his speech, Prime Minister Harper went further and stated, "We have to use the North or we risk losing it. Half a century ago Prime Minister John Diefenbaker extolled his northern vision. He foresaw that Canada's future development and prosperity would depend on an efficient transportation network linking northern resources to southern markets. Road to Resources, he called them. So he built, among others, our northern-most road, the 700 kilometre Dempster Highway from the Yukon to the Mackenzie River Delta. The opposition of the day has always dismissed such activities as unnecessary, fanciful and wasteful. History has always proven them wrong." The Prime Minister of Canada is right. Now I encourage him to listen to his own words. Build the Mackenzie Valley Highway. It is not unnecessary, fanciful or wasteful.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has demonstrated commitment to this project. As outlined in my Member's statement, this government prepared and submitted a funding proposal entitled Connecting Canada Coast to Coast in November 2005. It outlines the GNWT's position and how the Mackenzie Valley Highway will enhance northern and Canadian security and sovereignty and improve the GNWT's

ability to respond and adapt to changing climatic conditions. The highway will support the renewable and non-renewable industry, facilitate the diversification of the NWT economy and improve the quality of life of its citizens who will gain better access to essential services, increased mobility, and lowering the cost of living. These benefits will help us experience safer, healthier communities, which is consistent with the 16th Assembly's strategic vision.

Regardless of the significant benefits this highway will have for Northerners, it should be, and must be, a national project. It can and will benefit all Canadians. It will be part of a national highway system which links all three of our coasts, which is crucial to the socio-economic future of Canada. Building it will create significant economic stimulus in Canada and the Northwest Territories, which is good for all Canadians. At the end of the day we'll have something permanent rather than temporary, as I fear many of the stimulus projects supported by the federal government will be.

I encourage Prime Minister Harper to listen to us today, to put some of his stimulus dollars into long-term Canadian projects; a project that will increase the employment across this country, employment opportunities for Canadians from every province and territory, a national project. Let's connect Canada from coast to coast to coast. The federal government should advance the funding required and proceed with the planning and construction for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and make this project a priority as part of the Conservative government's stimulus initiatives.

I support this motion. Cece McCauley has said it a thousand times, if not more: the Mackenzie Valley Highway is needed and now is the time.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset I want to state that I am in support of this motion wholeheartedly. I mentioned in my Member's statement that I feel that it's the responsibility of the federal government to fund and look after new roads within the provinces and territories within our country. The GNWT is unable financially to fund a project the size of the Mackenzie Valley Highway on its own and we shouldn't have to if the federal government their responsibility and they should.

There are a huge number of positive impacts for this particular project. The positive impacts for our communities for me, probably the foremost one, is that we should see a decrease in the cost of living and an increase in our general quality of life is what should occur. With costs of food, housing, gas,

home heating fuel, all those things going down, it can only be of benefit to all of our communities, particularly those who are now off the road network.

There will be an increased accessibility to services for residents of our communities. I think that's going to be all communities.

And there will be an increase in the economic development projects that are available to these particular communities. Having a highway access is going to make it far easier for them to bring in materials.

There's a positive impact for government, both the federal government and the territorial government. This particular project is large enough it's going to create an economic stimulus within the NWT, but also within all of Canada. It's not a project we can complete on our own. We certainly don't have the manpower.

It's going to be a benefit to the federal government in that it's going to increase our claim to sovereignty over the Arctic, and that's been mentioned already by Mr. Abernethy. As well, it's going to increase the security of our country and the security of the northern part of our country. That's a huge benefit to the federal government.

It's a positive impact for businesses within the North and outside, as well, through the South. It's going to be an increase in the access to resources for many businesses. I think it was Mr. Abernethy who mentioned exploration. I'm sorry, it was Mr. McLeod who mentioned exploration for mining and exploration for oil and gas. If we have a road going north it's going to open up huge tracts of land within the NWT to exploration and to companies who want to start a business here. It's been well known that many companies don't come to the NWT to establish a business because of the huge costs that are involved because we don't have infrastructure. They've said that out loud. Their costs are going to go down. It's likely going to encourage them to come here.

I see a benefit for the Mackenzie Gas Project, should we ever get approval from the federal government to go ahead.

However, there are negative impacts of a project this size, as well, and Mr. Bromley spoke to many of those. It's a huge project and it will bring a large influx of people into our Territory; people who are here temporarily, but people nonetheless who are going to have an impact on the communities close to the highway as it's being built. We have to consider really carefully whether or not we want this project because of the negative impacts and what those negative impacts are going to be. We also have to plan to work around them.

Our communities are going to be affected socially by the numbers of peoples that are going to be around. The fact that they're transient as opposed to being permanent residents often makes it more difficult to deal with them.

There's going to be an increase in greenhouse gas production because of this particular project. Any construction project is going to add to that. So we need to weigh one against the other. Is the negative impact going to outweigh the positive? In my mind it does, but we still have to look at it.

It's going to have an impact on the environment. We can't carve a strip from Wrigley to the Arctic Ocean without looking at the impact it's going to have on our environment. It's going through our lands. We need to consider the effect it's going to have on all of these lands as it goes through. My feeling is we can't have construction at any cost. We need to weigh one against the other.

This project has long been ignored by the federal government in spite of all the overtures that the GNWT has put forward to the feds to try to get them to come to the table. We've made requests for assistance, we've made proposals to try to partner, and they are, so far, studiously ignoring us. This project should be a priority for the federal government on so many levels and in so many quarters that it's hard to mention them all. It needs to be a priority for them now and it's a project which must be started now; not now, but right now. I think we've waited 50 years for this project to be finished. That's way too long. As I said the other day on another project, let's get started.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad I have an opportunity to speak to this motion generated by all the Members. We share the same interest of building our Mackenzie Valley Highway and completing it right up to Tuktoyaktuk. The time is right now that we take initiative and jump on the federal government to say, look, this is something that our North wants.

I think the key thing that I mentioned in my Member's statement was that we have to develop a joint strategy. I know that the Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Corporation is doing their lobbying. I know that the Minister is doing his share as well. But I believe that what Ottawa likes to see is a combined effort, that we're at the door at the same time, lobbying them. This means that we're unified in what we want and I believe that's important. I urge the Minister and our government to take the lead in this, sit down with the MAC group, develop a joint strategy for going to Ottawa and talking to the Minister of Transportation, to the infrastructure

Ministers, to get support from our Member of Parliament, and some of the opposition parties as well. All these are key in Ottawa. They operate much like us. The Ministers have to be lobbied from all sectors to show that there is support; not only unified support from the North but also that we've done our legwork in Ottawa. All that has to be done soon, because ever since the federal government announced their infrastructure plan for Ottawa they've gotten many, many infrastructure projects being lobbied and bandied about. Many of them are probably further advanced than ours. So they're there and knocking at the doors. In fact, I think Minister Flaherty was in the news the other day saying how are we going to get this money out when there's so many challenges, so many projects out there. I think our key thing is we have to get ours on that book too. Just how to develop that.

The important thing, too, if I can get specific to when that highway was first constructed in the '70s, was that it was created through a federal initiative. But the whole thing about it was that we created a project called Hire North. It was about hiring Northerners, getting as many Northerners involved in that project. It was about training them. In fact, what happened was we trained a whole generation of heavy equipment operators. We provided, at that time, the stimulus for aboriginals to become business owners and a whole skilled force that was around for the construction industry. In fact, after the project was completed it benefited many other northern projects throughout the North, that Hire North project. We still feel the benefits from those people who learned and trained from that Hire North project. But it's time for another generation to step forward and do that again. It's time for the federal government to step forward and provide us those resources to train our people, to provide a whole level of stimulus and a whole level of new workforce. The investment in jobs, put money in our people's projects, and it's also investment into the North.

As well as the federal government, one of their big projects that's been at their door for many, many years, of course, is the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline project. Everybody up North here has always told any federal Member of Parliament or any federal Minister that the cheapest way, the best way to provide a stimulus package to the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline project is to build a road. And here we are at the juncture. I believe that. I always say the point of power is in the moment. Now is the time to act. We have to sell this point, that here's another way that if you're indeed interested in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, provide us the resources and the guarantee that we can fast track this Mackenzie Valley Highway project.

I concur with Mr. Abernethy that it's not only an NWT project, it's a national project. It will take joint

effort. I believe we can get it done. It's important to all Canadians. I think in my Member's statement, as well, I mentioned that the road will begin from Simpson and developing a bridge is very important and I believe that starting at the Liard River Bridge is equally important to this strategy. In fact, I think I mentioned it last week in a Member's statement that we have to start doing some baseline work around bridges and provide at least a bird's eye view of how much they're going to cost. I think I mentioned a class D estimate. I believe we can come up with the resources to do that in our next business planning cycle or capital planning cycle. At least provide some of those resources to get that baseline work done so we know where we stand. It will probably also be part of redoing our Connecting Canada proposal as well. I'm not too sure if the Minister has looked at that yet, but it's indeed a lot of work that went into Connecting Canada. It's a well-thought-out, well-planned package, and I believe that the ministry is going to have to sit down, redo it, provide a nice package that we can present to Ottawa. In fact, in this case it will probably have to be a joint effort working with the Mackenzie Valley group, because they've got their own engineering estimates. They've got a lot of the background work done. In fact, they've already got agreements, as well, with a lot of the regional corporations and regional groups throughout the valley.

Just in closing, it's a very good package, a very good motion. I urge our government to move forward with it as quickly as we can. Like I said, there are many infrastructure projects from across Canada that have been bandied about in Ottawa and we have to get our foot in the door. Just showing a united front, that it's something that all Northerners support, that all aboriginal groups support in the North and we, as a government, support will go a long ways in opening up eyes in Ottawa.

There is no better way to stimulate our economy by a huge infrastructure like this. It will employ people. It will create training. That is one of our roles in government. I believe this fits it to a tee. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion and thank Members for providing such a worthwhile motion. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, of all the Member's statements that I have done in this House, one that I always remember was brought to my attention when I was down in Tuk just before Christmas. This little lady came up to me and said, I really like your 'I have a dream' speech. That is when I stood up and said that I have a dream and

that dream is the Mackenzie Valley Highway. It is something that I am glad to see the motion come forward. I think we have had another one before but this is one where I think it is, especially in this day and age, badly needed.

I am not sure what more we have to say on this issue. They have heard us. Some of us have even voted Conservative, so I am not sure why they are not listening.

---Laughter

They spoke about Arctic sovereignty. They went up to Inuvik to make this announcement and it was a much anticipated announcement. We find out that they are naming a boat after a man who had a dream, and that dream was the first part of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I am just hoping 50 years from now we can gather in Inuvik and we can say that we are going to name a battleship after Stephen Harper because he went to war for us on this highway which he truly believed in. I am hoping to see that in 50 years and not name a rowboat or something after him.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here. We have a huge opportunity. This could be the start of something very good to hopefully speak to Ottawa in a unified voice. Because I think up here in the Northwest Territories it is the only way we are going to be able to get any big amounts of money, is if we go down there with a unified voice that applies to the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We can't be all just down there doing our own thing. This would also apply to devolution talks. If we are able to get on the same page and go down there and speak to them as a unified voice, I think we would go a long way into moving our issues forward.

I think sometimes they just kind of stand back and let us have at it and just continue to carve off the Northwest Territories as they see fit. I think it is time and this could be the start of something where we stand up and say enough is enough. We will all get on the same page and sing from the same songbook, get down there and hopefully get some items done.

They talk about Arctic sovereignty a lot. I was just thinking of the U.S. back in the Second World War when they felt that their land was going to be threatened. They didn't just talk about it for 20 years. They just went in, bang, they built a road. That legacy project is still there today. But they didn't just talk about it, Mr. Speaker, they acted on it.

This is a project that I think will have...You hear some of the negative comments. Everything we do, there is going to be some negative impact, but we have to do what we can to mitigate that.

This is something I see that would be of great benefit to people across the Northwest Territories. We have in every community along the way, Mr. Speaker, people that have equipment. There are people that know how to operate the equipment. I think, in one of the Members' statements before, they spoke about how this may reduce the cost on the social programs part of it, reduce the cost on social housing. I have always been a firm believer that a lot of people out there, Mr. Speaker, will want to go out and get an honest day's dollar for an honest day's work. This is something I think they would be able to go out, take some pride in being able to contribute to something. We have enough people in the Northwest Territories, I believe, without having to bring in 75 percent of the workforce to be able to do this work. If it is one thing that people in the Northwest Territories are good at, it is operating equipment, because we have been doing it for a long time. Every community has contractors in that community who would be able to benefit and if there are more than two or three in each community, then they can partner up.

This is something that I see would be just a great benefit, Mr. Speaker, and I am glad to see that this motion is being brought forward again. There is just so much I can say and so much I would like to say, but at the end of the day, I think the people in Ottawa have to be listening. They realize that this is a project and, as somebody said, not just benefiting the Northwest Territories but it is benefiting a lot of Canada too, a lot in Alberta. A lot of the equipment and the stuff we get up here, we are going to have to get from somewhere because we don't make it ourselves. It is going to have to come from somewhere. I would be pleased to support this motion. I thank the Members on the other side for bringing it forward and I will add my voice to it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the motion. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak in support of the motion. I think the motion was very well composed and worded and it was a joint effort between the Cabinet and the Regular Members, the composition of this motion. I think it really covers all the bases. I think that there is very little that can actually be added to the motion. I think that this project is a natural. It fits the times. It fits the aspirations of the federal government in terms of sovereignty. I think that any potential negative impacts can be managed.

Mr. Speaker, it is fine for us all here to pass a motion, speak to it, say what a great idea it is, but how are we going to get the attention of Ottawa on this matter? Now we go down to Ottawa in all

different kinds of approaches to the North and the things that we want to see done. There is also a novel idea out there to the government. We are all busy here doing stuff. Maybe we shouldn't send any of the Cabinet Ministers down to Ottawa. Maybe we should hire Cece McCauley, put her on contract, get her to get some other women together, send her down to Ottawa with some very powerful outspoken women from the Northwest Territories and maybe we will get some results. It is just an idea. I don't know how we can do any worse than what we generally come home with. No insult to our friends across the floor, but perhaps Cece could torment them. Maybe when we name a battleship after somebody, it won't be Stephen Harper. Maybe we will name a battleship after Cece McCauley. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will be supporting the motion. I am really pleased to see it come this far in regards to all 19 Members working together. In my riding in Nunakput, this will directly affect it and help the cost of living. Maybe, you know, quality of life will pick up and maybe we wouldn't have to struggle so much for the food for our families, fuel to heat our homes and gasoline to go hunt caribou. If those prices dropped, I think there would be a lot more ease to the people in my riding.

Jobs from the project would be well utilized from Northerners. I know there is a lot more skilled labour up in the Beaufort-Delta and the Territory, and then the Beau-Del in the Sahtu will be connected to the capital. Right now the Beaufort-Delta is connected to Whitehorse, Yukon. That is where we do all of our shopping. That will change. I always say Nunakput has all the oil and gas. Now we will be able to tap into that resource. Norman, you have gas too.

---Laughter

The upside to that, we are going to open up the Western Arctic for a deep sea port. That is going to bring the cost of food and everything right down. Our sovereignty issues, you know the rangers will have backup then. Right now we have to get them flown in. They will be able to drive in. Rangers are such an important program up in the Beaufort-Delta and the Northwest Territories. It is good to have them.

If we want to go out on a holiday, we would be able to drive out, not fly when you pay almost \$1,000 a ticket. I have nine kids. That is almost half a year's wage.

---Laughter

I am trying to bring this into reality for everybody. My family is big. Then we could always say it is not sea to sea to river, it is sea to sea to sea.

Mr. Speaker, I helped Mr. Abernethy again in his statement so I ran out of stuff, so thank you and I am supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the motion. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. There's not really a whole lot to add to what all that has been said in the House here today on the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

I'll just make a couple of comments on the statement by Minister Michael McLeod saying 3 percent of the people of the Northwest Territories have no access, winter or otherwise, at all from the highway. That includes Lutselk'e.

I know that the benefits from this Mackenzie Valley Highway are tremendous. I know for Tu Nedhe it is employment for the guys out of Fort Resolution that are heavy equipment operators, the guys out of Lutselk'e that are heavy equipment operators and so on.

I think one of the key things is that when the government is able to build a highway through communities and effectively lower the cost of living in those communities, then we are able to make a concentrated effort on the communities that do have a high cost of living that have no highway access at all, like winter road access like Lutselk'e. I think, when you take an issue and you concentrate it down on the very worst of it, then the communities that have no winter road or an all-weather highway access like Lutselk'e, Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour in Mr. Jacobson's riding, then I think we are able to then make better progress. Right now, the issue is so spread out that it is difficult to try to get right down to concentrating on which areas of cost of living we are going to address.

As I mentioned in my Member's statement, the impacts and benefit of tourism, I think that is probably bigger than even the actual construction. There will be a tremendous amount of business and, regionally, the spinoffs from the construction of this highway, not only the operators but the businesspeople and everything that it takes to have that many people working in the Northwest Territories, there are tremendous economic spinoffs from that. Once that is completed, I think the fact that you are able to have communities that are connected, you have a good loop for tourists and so on. I think those tourists that come up do leave

money behind in the Northwest Territories and that is the idea. That is a reason they come. I think that is another thing that is going to be very positive if this Mackenzie Valley Highway was to be built, elimination of isolation.

I know there are issues sometimes with some elders that don't want to see an all-season road because of the social impacts and so on. That happened in the past. There are communities that stop the highway from going right through their community because of the fear of social impacts that accompany an all-season highway. I think those were the times then.

I think today we have dealt with a lot of those types of impacts. We have dealt with it certainly when the diamond industry has come into the Northwest Territories and a lot of money that has come to Yellowknife and surrounding communities. We have had to deal with the social impacts of that, socio-economic impacts. I think that if we are cautious and we work with the communities and so on, that we can deal with those things.

I think when you put people on the highway, you do make them independent a little bit. You are relieving the dependency on the government. You are allowing people to get out, to travel. And if it is travel for employment, it is a lot easier to put your family in a vehicle and travel somewhere. If you are travelling on holidays, it is cheaper and so on. I think those will benefit.

Like I indicated in my Member's statement, I do believe that there will be a reduction in the reliance of social programs in that community. Going back to what I just said earlier, once you have less people relying on something, then it is a lot easier for the government to concentrate on the people that are still on the social programs and so on, and easier to work with them and a smaller group and, for sure, more progress will be made.

I support the Mackenzie Valley Highway definitely. I think it has a lot more benefits I think than what we have come up with here today. I think we will recognize that and will see that when the time comes when the highway is built. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. To the motion. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am obviously going to speak in favour of the motion that is before us today, for a variety of reasons. I just wanted to start out by thanking Cabinet. This is a joint initiative, a joint effort on behalf of the government as a whole. I appreciate their efforts. It was very nice hearing my colleague, Mr. McLeod,

and the passion in his voice. I am glad to hear that again, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start out with the cost of living. The cost of living is something that many Members, especially Members from small communities, talk about, and communities located in the Mackenzie Valley. They need some reprieve from these outrageous high costs of goods. They need more surety in the movement of goods. Mr. Jacobson spoke of the quality of life that this would add to residents in those communities. I couldn't support that any more than supporting this motion today is one step in that, Mr. Speaker, but it is a big issue and something that we need to address.

Also, the fact that it leads to mobility for our residents, brings communities closer together. Many of the communities located in the Mackenzie Valley share many family ties. It would be much easier to get in your truck or vehicle and drive to the closest community to visit your family and friends. That is something I think that isn't lost on me. I think that is a big aspect of this in bringing communities closer together.

Some Members have already spoken about tourism. A bit of my background is in tourism. Believe me, if you had a newly constructed Mackenzie Valley Highway, people from around the world would want to drive on it. They would want to stay in communities. They would want to stay in parks, in campgrounds. It would certainly add to the economic development activity in smaller communities, looking at gas stations, restaurants, parks, hotels and other service related businesses.

Also, Minister Michael McLeod spoke to the aspect of exploration and development in mining and oil and gas. That is something that we shouldn't overlook, especially at the price. It is between 1.5 and 2 billion dollars of construction costs. That would mean work for Northerners. That would mean training opportunities and development of our workforce, especially when times are tough and the economy is slumping. I think it is a perfect opportunity now more than ever to take a look at how we can get this highway constructed.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we need a unified approach. We need to understand that there are numerous infrastructure needs across our Territory but, from my time here, Mr. Speaker, what I see oftentimes is we go forward with smaller projects. I am not saying we don't need those projects. Yes, we do. They are important but I think what we have to do in terms of trying to get this highway built, and I try to put myself in the shoes of the federal government. If I am the federal government or the Prime Minister, I want to look at something that I can put my name on, I could support wholeheartedly. It is a project, like I said earlier, a nation building project, a legacy

project, something that is going to develop this country. Many politicians in this country have used that quote "from coast to coast to coast" and we can finally get that highway down the Mackenzie Valley and into Tuktoyaktuk and finally we'll have a highway system in this country from coast to coast to coast. I think it's a project of this magnitude that the federal government is looking to put its stamp on. I firmly believe that the federal government is interested in this project. I know the government has helped us get this motion here today. We need to focus. We need to work as a unified northern people here. We need to go to Ottawa with one voice. We have to come up with a plan on how the highway is going to get built, what the involvement of our government is going to be, what the involvement of the federal government is going to be and our partner, the MAC group, as well. These are some of the things, Mr. Speaker, that are important. I'd like to see that move forward.

Certainly we need to also...I know the Premier has come to us recently with a plan to up the stakes in Ottawa. You know, to get our message out, to ramp things up there. I support the Premier 100 percent in that. I support Cabinet in what they're trying to do in Ottawa, but what we've been doing to date, Mr. Speaker, just hasn't been effective. Like I said, we need to step things up a bit. I'm glad the Premier has come forward with some suggestions on how to do that. I support that wholeheartedly. I think we need to keep our eye on the big prize, Mr. Speaker, and that big prize is the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Now, more than ever, I think we have to support the construction of this highway. Again, it has to be everybody pulling in the same direction in order for it to happen.

Again, I appreciate all of the comments that have come from all the Members and look forward to the others that are coming along. I certainly will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, will be supporting the motion. I, for one, feel that this project is long overdue. I think as a government we have to make this project a top priority of the 16th Assembly. We have to send the message loud and clear to Ottawa that it is a top priority and that we need federal investment for this major project.

Mr. Speaker, this highway was serving back in the '70s. Even during our land claims negotiation talks this highway was withdrawn from those negotiations to allow for the right-of-way of the Mackenzie Highway to stay intact and that those

agreements clearly defined that right-of-way for the Mackenzie Highway.

Mr. Speaker, this is going to be one of the biggest capital projects for the Government of the Northwest Territories in history. We're looking at somewhere in the range of \$1.8 billion to possibly \$2 billion at the end of the day. Mr. Speaker, no other project was bigger than that except for the Mackenzie pipeline, which is \$16 billion. Again, Mr. Speaker, there are ways of economy of scale by doing this jointly along with the Mackenzie Highway pipeline construction and the highway construction which can reduce the cost.

Mr. Speaker, more importantly, we can start this work tomorrow by way of working on this project from the north, from the south, between the communities up and down the valley and making those connections where we've started with the bridge projects and now just start joining the points along the way.

Mr. Speaker, this will stimulate the economy of the Northwest Territories. Especially now with the downturn of what we're seeing in the oil and gas industry, the mining industry, this is a perfect time for the Government of the Northwest Territories to get the message to Ottawa that this investment will only improve the economy of Canada and it will also benefit all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, there are opportunities by way of job training. People have been able to work within these construction camps and develop the infrastructure that's going to be needed to construct future developments.

Mr. Speaker, earlier on in my Member's statement I touched on what it costs to drill one well in the Mackenzie Valley. It's \$30 million to drill one well. In Alberta, somewhere in the range of \$300,000. I think that's the challenge that people that do invest in the North to develop the industry in regard to oil and gas and mining, the bottom line is what will it cost us. I think with a highway it will reduce those costs, it will bring certainty by way of knowing what those costs actually are and, more importantly, deal with the economic challenges we're facing in the North with the high costs of putting in winter roads, the high costs of maintaining ice crossings and the high costs in regard to opening up resource rich areas because of logistical challenges where we're seeing more and more winter roads with shorter seasons.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we as government send the message loud and clear to Ottawa and ensure that we do make the investment, but also, more importantly, show that that investment has to be there for the well-being of all Northerners and Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that working together with the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation and this government should be jointly going to Ottawa rather than individually. I think that's half the problem, is that we're not speaking from the same page.

Mr. Speaker, today there are ways of building infrastructure in Canada and it's called P3s. Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to see on our trip to Manitoba a couple of months ago in regard to checking out the hydro industry, an aboriginal company built a road 50 kilometres for \$20 million. I was very much impressed with the workmanship of the aboriginal communities but, more importantly, that the provinces have basically bought on to allow these aboriginal corporations to build infrastructure in the different provinces. I think that's something that we have to do in the Northwest Territories by way of supporting that idea and finding ways to finance this project. Yes, it is a major capital expenditure, but I believe that if we extend it over 50 years or even 60 years, you are able to pay down this capital expense knowing that it will give you year-round access to communities and if the movement of goods and services and people.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to realize that this will not only stimulate our communities, it will stimulate our other economies from tourism, in regard to oil and gas, our renewable and non-renewable sectors. I think that we do have to be able to make this capital investment now knowing that the time is right, the efforts are there, and with the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation and this government working jointly together lobbying Ottawa to move this project. If not, let's find a way to finance it internally by other investors. Like I mentioned, this is an aboriginal partnership from the Deh Cho to the Sahtu to the Gwich'in to the IRC regions, and I believe they are willing to find the capital that's needed to build this. I think we do have to move on that, so I will be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the critical need to connect our communities and I support the Mackenzie Highway as a possible solution, as I mentioned in my statement earlier. I'd like to pose these hard questions I suggested earlier and also basically to ensure that they are posed and to make sure that they're fully addressed.

The first question I asked was are the reduced costs of living for communities newly connected by highway real? For example, if we look at milk costs in communities being reduced by perhaps 50 percent as a result of a highway, we need to recognize that a milk subsidy to bring community

prices in all of the NWT to those of Yellowknife is estimated at \$1.3 million. We need to then contrast this to a \$2 billion project with a \$35 million annual maintenance fee. In other words, we can't be robbing Peter to pay Paul. We can't take one step forward and two steps back. We need to seek real reductions in costs. This question is meant to crystallize the economics of the project and make sure that we are making real reductions. What are real reductions? To me I see them as local economic development that actually benefits local economies through employment of people and the skills they represent locally and using products locally and so on. How will this project ensure that that develops?

Secondly, what are the potential risks and benefits to social health such as increased addictions? I mentioned that some communities, a number of communities have expressed serious concerns about the potential for increased rates of addictions and the associated challenges there. We'll need to be planning the dollars and strategies to be sure that they're in place and that we know how to respond to these concerns.

Another question: Will the highway reduce greenhouse gas emissions? In here, the Northwest Territories is about double the average North American per capita emissions of greenhouses gases. We're many times that of the world average. We have an obligation to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We know, of course, that our costs are escalating as a result of climate change, so the need is obvious there. We enjoy a very high standard of living compared to the rest of the world. Are we fully prepared to meet the challenges that this represents? The challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in light of a project like this, in light of an additional 700 or 800 kilometres of highway and the likely increases in greenhouse gases that could entail without thinking and planning ahead of time to deal with them.

What sort of development will a highway enable in relation, again, to the needs of small communities that we're talking about connecting here? About 2,600 to 3,600 people will be connected to communities by this project, to highways. What are the alternatives? The major motivation here is connecting our communities. I mentioned airships. Rail is something else that could be considered. Are there other options that will meet all of our objectives, including the real reductions in cost, improved connections of our communities and that's useful to economic development?

Mr. Speaker, what will the real costs of the highway be? My impression of the current estimate of \$1.8 billion is that it's very preliminary and I don't know whether it considers the challenges of climate change, the increasing challenges, and the almost

certain rapid rise in fuel costs that will be associated with an economic recovery. Maintenance, for sure, has a proven track record with a relatively modest amount of impact to the climate change we already have of being grossly underestimated on an annual basis. What will the impacts be when the real impacts of climate change start accruing within the next five years to a decade?

We must also recognize that there are different perspectives and concerns amongst communities about the Mackenzie Highway project, as evidenced last week at discussions of the Dene leadership meeting. I'm not saying here that there's opposition to this project, but four leaders abstained in the vote for it and wanted to, I believe, wish to return to their communities to talk to their people about it and how to address the concerns that they might have. We need a responsible way of acknowledging that there are needs and concerns out there, to identifying those and to ensuring that they're addressed and all legitimate concerns are taken care of.

A number of people have mentioned tourism and I would fully expect that the circle route, finally a true circle route, would increase the likelihood of tourism along our highways. This is potentially a positive thing. Of course, with it are the additional costs of servicing that industry in a very high-cost environment. What are economic benefits from tourism now relative to the costs? And let's have some real analysis there.

My colleague Mr. Menicoche made reference to President Obama and what his approach would be. I think that would be an interesting exercise worthy of exploration. How would he approach a project like this to ensure that there are full benefits realized and costs minimized?

I'd like to also acknowledge that the Minister of Transportation mentioned that there's already \$2 million of work planned over the next two years to look at the socio-environmental concerns that the project poses, so I'm very happy to see that we're already being progressive on that front.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest thing to me will be connecting our communities. But a second major contribution will be as a huge subsidy to economic development through increased and seemingly cheaper access. This requires the capacity of our government and a commitment to manage this induced development. Now, I'd also welcome a real economic analysis, given the cost of the project. It's unlikely that this project will occur in time to be an economic stimulus in this recession as others have hoped. Particularly, of course, if our Governor Mark Carney is at all correct in when the recovery will take place. However, with work being done by

northern businesses and employees, I'm very hopeful that economic benefits would be considerable and would accrue to our northern communities.

Finally, Mr. Chair, we clearly need to connect our communities in ways that serve us better. In the old way of thinking, the Mackenzie Highway is obviously a good project. However, given our challenges today, and particularly the increasing and looming impacts of climate change, I would welcome a critical approach to evaluating this project against alternatives. We need a better understanding of what is economically and socially and environmentally sustainable here. Assuming the positive outcome of a full assessment such as this, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to advance these types of projects, and certainly the Mackenzie Valley Highway would benefit the North and would certainly make a significant number of opportunities feasible. In Canada there's a history of projects that have been built to open up different regions of the country and I see no reason why this couldn't happen here in the Northwest Territories as well.

This morning I mentioned in my Minister's statement that the Minister's Advisory Panel met and we talked about a number of issues, economic and otherwise, and one of the questions I posed to the panel members was what were the top issues for the Northwest Territories. One of the top issues that the Members agreed upon was the importance of a Mackenzie Valley Highway, so I thought it was very timely to have this motion brought forward. They also talked about what do we have to do to get Ottawa's attention. There have been a number of attempts to do...We had a Business Advisory Council and we all packed up and went to Ottawa on many occasions. I think it became very apparent that in order to make any progress we had to have a very focused message, we had to be very strategic and I think that this will have to occur again.

As far as the benefits of building a Mackenzie Valley Highway, I go back to growing up in Fort Providence. I remember my older brother worked on the Mackenzie Highway which opened up Fort Providence, Behchoko, Yellowknife, and certainly we benefited from the highway. I remember groups of workers from Fort Providence going off to work on Hire North projects for many years, and as the Member from Nahendeh indicated, they developed

a lot of capacity and skills and I expect the same thing would happen on a Mackenzie Highway.

I think all of the Members talked about the benefits from the highway. Tourism, obviously, will benefit. I know the tourists that come up here say they don't like travelling the same road twice, not only in coming up to Yellowknife but also going up to Inuvik. Certainly it would increase the number of visitors. I mentioned oil and gas. Several Members have talked about how expensive it is to drill or develop any oil and gas opportunities. Certainly a highway would reduce the cost. Of course, the cost of living. Another area is there are a significant number of businesses that have invested heavily in equipment and certainly if we could find a way to even start taking bite-size portions to start building the highway sooner rather than later, that could benefit some of the local businesses and entrepreneurs.

I also lived in Norman Wells for a couple years so I'm familiar with the isolation that some of the Members talked about when the only way you could get in is by plane and there's no other way. Certainly if you can drive, that would certainly improve the attractiveness of the communities.

I've had a number of meetings with MAC, the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation, and they have undertaken work on their own whereby they did an analysis of the cost of not constructing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. How much would it cost? How much money are we losing by not having the Mackenzie Valley Highway? So they've concluded a study. I don't have the study here and I don't have the information, but I know that every year the longer we wait it's costing money. So I'll be supporting the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an opportunity for Cabinet, since it's a free vote today, to stand and speak on an issue and say what may be on our minds. I want to talk about roads today.

I look around this Legislature and my count is there's 14 MLAs that have constituencies that are all hooked up by roads. I would suggest that if any of us 14 were not hooked up by roads we would be absolutely as passionate about having that kind of transportation as our colleagues are that have to suffer on winter roads or, as Mr. Yakeleya has said over the years, goat trails through the Sahtu.

Since the very beginning of time and since man stood upright and started living together there's two things that have linked us or allowed us to link

together. That's waterways and initially trails, that once we invented the wheel we developed roads. In the Northwest Territories we've used the waterways for thousands of years. But we're an evolving jurisdiction and we have a significant portion of our jurisdiction that doesn't have the access of basic roads.

I think, like all my colleagues in this House, it is now time for us to push to get this done. As we look at the North West Passage and, as my colleague Mr. Bromley indicated, the climate change, there are things happening in the Far North. For better or for worse they are happening. An ice-free North West Passage. If we're looking at the North West Passage becoming a shipping route, the issue of deep-water ports, we need more than ever to be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities that are there in an environmentally responsible way, to be sure, but we are in need and we want to anticipate the future. The road is important.

We also, hopefully, will have a major project, if it proves out. We have qualified support for the pipeline. I know the two aren't necessarily inextricably linked, but they are both going up the valley, they are both going the same way. We want to be as prepared as possible in all ways to take advantage of what the future may hold for us.

I don't see this as a huge subsidy. If we did everything we do in the North, including in Yellowknife, would be seen as a subsidy. I see this as a huge investment, an investment in the future, an investment in our children and our grandchildren and giving them opportunities that we don't currently have up the valley.

I am in support of this motion and I think it's going to be high time that we get it done.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to also rise and speak in favour of this motion. I think it's very important that we speak as a Legislature in one voice in support of a project. It will empower the Ministers in charge of relevant portfolios and the Premier, the business leaders from the North, aboriginal government leaders to speak in one voice that we support the building of the Mackenzie Valley Highway to the Arctic Coast.

As I sit here and listen to the debate it is quite daunting, this project. It's a huge project at \$1.8 billion-plus. This is a huge investment. But I also sit here and remember that when I came in here in 1999, apparently I used to rail about a lot of things. One of the things that I used to rail about was reconstruction and completion of Highway No. 3. When you look at Highway No. 3, it cost over a

million dollars per kilometre just between Behchoko and Yellowknife, which was not done when I came here. In today's dollars that would be about \$150 million for 100 kilometres. But we got that done with the help of the federal government and investments from the territorial government. I know it's becoming winding in different ways, but I remember looking at that and looking at our capital budget saying this is a huge project to argue for, but we did that and we got it done. It was always understood that we need to expand this work.

The third thing that I'd like to mention is the fact that there's something not right about the fact that northern communities and our people are not connected by road. I understand it is the only jurisdiction that does not have a road system, but for every other province you should be able to get from point A to point B within their province on their own road. Whereas our NWT residents, our brothers and sisters in the North of the Territories, have to go through Yukon to get to us. There's something not right about that. It's time we connect these roads and it's important that the politicians and leaders stand up and make a point and put an exclamation point to our desires and wishes.

The fourth issue, and last issue, I want to speak to is about the fact that the cost of living issue is the single most important issue that faces all of us. While I make reference to the fact that every resident in Range Lake, for example, speaks to me about cost of living issues -- high cost of fuel, high cost of electricity, high cost of milk or whatever -- but when we travel to communities it is unbelievable how much our residents have to pay for most basic goods that we need to live on. It's so important that the government, especially the federal government, step in and make investment for the long term and to connect our communities so that our residents could have the most basic necessities in life that they can afford for the long term. Because air travel and air freight is just not going to be viable for the long term and that makes this project more important than any other.

So I'm happy to be standing in favour of this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Members for coming forward and bringing this motion to the House, working together on it. It's an initiative that we've highlighted on quite a number of occasions since the start of the 16th Assembly. I've taken the opportunity on a number of fronts, whether it was with the Prime Minister or on a recent trip to Ottawa on the federal budget looking at an economic stimulus plan and trying to have this project recognized and

established with the federal government. It is, indeed, good to see that Members have pulled together on this project and support a joint initiative.

We've heard some figures put on the floor here about the cost of the project. We know that there are interested groups in the Northwest Territories. We've heard of the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation who has been a part of the work in trying to get the federal government to establish this project as well. They've done some of their work. Our Department of Transportation is highlighted by Minister Michael McLeod on their initiative to get this work done and do an analysis of the cost-benefit side. We know at some point we're going to have to go out. If we get the federal government to establish this project, put it on the books and fund it, then we can talk about how we're going to get that project built and work with groups like the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation at that time to see this project move along. Most importantly, we need to get this project established and put on the books with the federal government, as they still hold the key responsibility in this area.

I again thank Members for bringing this forward and I look forward to our building on this together and having a joint initiative, whether it is the approach down in Ottawa with our aboriginal partners in the Northwest Territories, to see the federal government establish this project for the benefit of all people in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will now allow the mover of the motion to have some closing remarks. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I surely want to thank the Members for their comments in terms of this motion here. There are three eras that I look at in terms of the Northwest Territories. I look at the first era I spoke of earlier today, about the stories of our people here from the lard pails to the oil pails generation. Then somewhere down the line we went from the moose skin boats to the jet boats. Now today we're talking about the goat roads to the gravel roads.

Certainly there are lots of discussions from our communities talking about this motion. Some very good comments I have heard and taken notes on this motion. I heard some very good ideas about how and if we could build and how to get the attention of the federal government.

When you go into our communities, any of our communities, and you have coffee or tea with people and sit and listen and talk to them, as Mr. Miltenberger has said, some of our communities do not have access all year round. In my region when the winter road is open, there is lots of excitement. When it's closing there is also lots of excitement,

because people have to come back with truckloads of groceries that could be bought at cheaper places in the South here.

The one question I've been asked over many times is how come we are unable to build an all-season road up the Mackenzie Valley. How come, in this day and age, we can't be able to get together and build this road? You certainly heard around the table, there's lots of complexities in terms of how do we get this road built. You heard a lot of issues that will come forward. Some people do favour. Some people want to wait and see what type of impacts it may cause or bring. The access, as Mr. McLeod has listed in terms of the percentage, maybe there's something this government could look at introducing a legislation that no community be left behind in terms of the equality and fairness of all people in the communities of the Northwest Territories.

You heard Members talk very expertly in terms of the benefits that this highway could be a major contributor not only to the Northwest Territories but to the rest of Canada. You heard about the exploration, the tourism, decreasing the cost of goods, and increasing the standards of living in our communities. We also heard from notable authors on the study of the Mackenzie Valley Highway from the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s and '90, and the federal government's statements on sovereignty in the North.

This motion we need to put on the books, as the Premier said. That is the key to the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Put it on the books and the federal government's office. We have the willingness, as has been noted by Robert C. McLeod, that we have well-trained people in our communities. You all know in your own communities' people who can operate machines, people who can get up and do some really good work in terms of the projects that are happening in your communities. Some of them are waiting to put the heavy metal to the ground and start working on this Mackenzie Valley Highway.

I heard how do we get the attention of the federal government. I think the other night when I was watching a movie with my boy, Horton's movie I think it is, with the little village and the flower plant there. Anyway, my son loves it. This elephant is carrying around this little flower. The other animals want to trample it. He's trying to save this little village. So in order for the elephant to get the other animals to believe that this is really truly a little community down here, they had to make noise. But they couldn't break through the sound barrier until they got the whole community up and rattles and roaring and yelling and that. They finally broke through the sound barrier because of a little boy that has an invention. Anyhow, my son loves that

movie. I think that scenario is something like in Ottawa. How do we break the sound barrier for them to hear? I think Mrs. Groenewegen talked about that. What a novel idea to have one of our elders who has been most vocal in our papers. Some people read it very passionately and some people read them for other purposes. But she's always been very consistent in talking to us as politicians and talking to us as leaders about opening up the resources and having the Mackenzie Valley Highway be the forefront in the government's eyes. I'm thinking here why not have something like Mrs. McCauley situated in Ottawa on the front lawn with a tent or tepee, if you want and give her some living expenses, and constantly rattle the halls of Ottawa and the federal government? To yell at them, because that's what I'm hearing. It's the federal government's responsibility for construction and maintenance of the highway.

Yet when we want to make a statement, I think we have to do something radical also as people in the Northwest Territories. They passionately are looking forward to opening this road. As Mrs. Groenewegen has also said, it's natural. Members talked about northern and aboriginal corporations getting involved. I think that's very significant in the areas we have in the Northwest Territories.

I read somewhere that 44,000 construction workers were laid off last year. This project alone in our regions, when you look at our own communities, how many operators are there? How many slashers in terms of clearing the areas? How many administrative workers do we have? There's not enough. We're going to need some people to help us. If we plan it right, Northerners will be put first on the project. Northerners will benefit first on this project, then we'll invite the outside people to help. I think that is the way to go from the communities on this project here.

The Mackenzie Valley and the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline are at a crossroads. It's been noted by Members that this project, should it go ahead, could save the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline millions, if not billions, of dollars. But we were told that they and Ottawa, the pipeline companies do not want to see this project tied with the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline. They have their reasons. However, I think this project here should be the first to go.

There are lots of reasons why we should make this go. There are a number of meetings already happening in the Mackenzie Valley. It happened with the members of various communities down the Mackenzie Valley in 1998-1999 on the discussion. There's lots of information out there.

I want to say that the CANOL Road, when it was built in the 1940s, took 30,000 men 13 months to

get the oil flowing from Norman Wells to Whitehorse. Surely we can do something like that in the Northwest Territories. It's critically important that people in the Northwest Territories also look at the environment in terms of our land. It's very important and I think that approach should be in the forefront when we start looking at mega projects, how we are going to protect our land, our water, and our air.

Mr. Speaker, coming from a community that has no roads in terms of all-season roads, it's very difficult to say how much and badly we need to look at all-season roads in our regions. Mr. Jacobson is right; when we have to travel, we pay the high cost of getting airline tickets, we fly out to the communities. Some of the families leave during the winter to take their families out for holidays, even when there is school. You just can't afford those types of prices. Sometimes people on the Mackenzie River in my region jump in their boat and drive down to Wrigley and get off, jump in another vehicle and take off.

Ms. Lee is right; the price of food is astronomical in terms of what we pay in our small communities. I know the Minister of Transportation has tried various options. I think we need to support him with all the people of the Northwest Territories on this one focussed initiative.

Mr. Krutko talked about the Mackenzie Aboriginal Corporation. I, too, met with them and I met with the regional leaders. This is one corporation that is trying to assemble leaders and corporations together to look at this project here as a means to open up and sustain the Northwest Territories in terms of its resources and economics.

Mr. Speaker, it has been noted by Prime Minister Diefenbaker and those who served in his Cabinet understood very well about vision and his leadership abilities to open up the road to resources. This Conservative government has the ability today to put a stamp on what the former Conservative government did; to end it here. I would like to thank the Members because it's been on very few and rare occasions that Members join together on a motion and see how consensus government works and creating positive benefits for all people in the Northwest Territories.

We've come a long way in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s, yet we have many, many, many years to go yet to become a true partner in Canada. I think by this project here, this one would unite not only the people in the Northwest Territories but it would unite us with the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it's been said the greatest progress we have made and the greatest progress we have yet to make is in the human heart. Mr. Speaker, that was said by Martin Luther King. When I hear

people talking passionately about their thing, people talk about this road very passionately in our communities. I think people believe in this government, believe in the leaders around this table here, to make something like this a go. Where there is a way, there's a will, I hear.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where there's a will, there's a way.

MR. YAKELEYA: Oh, she corrected me, Mr. Speaker. Where there's a will, there's a way.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sounds better.

MR. YAKELEYA: So I wanted to thank the honourable Member for the Deh Cho for seconding this motion here. We support this motion very clearly and the people of the Northwest Territories have spoken up. Lots of Members have said some very good things in terms of supporting this motion here and I hope the message gets to Ottawa in many different ways and that they react in a positive manner to this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Member is asking for a recorded vote. Mr. Clerk. All those in favour to the motion, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Yakeleya; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South; Mr. Krutko; Mr. Bromley; Mr. Abernethy; Mr. Menicoche; Mr. Ramsay; Mrs. Groenewegen; Mr. Beaulieu; Mr. Jacobson; and Ms. Bisaro.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the vote: 16 for, none opposed, none abstaining. The motion is carried unanimously.

---Applause

Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, 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 17-16(3), Supplementary Appropriation No. 3, 2008-2009; 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. By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 10-16(3), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have Tabled Document 7-16(3), Committee Report 2-16(3), Tabled Document 11-16(3), Bills 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, Tabled Document 17-16(3). What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today the committee would like to...Are we finished Industry, Tourism and Investment? Okay. We would like to consider the budget of Environment and Natural Resources department and then as time permits, move on to the Department of Transportation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, we will take a short break and begin with the Department of Environment.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break, we agreed that we will start our session of Committee of the Whole with the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Miltenberger, if he has any opening remarks with regard to the department's estimates. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources promotes and supports the sustainable use and development of natural resources to protect, conserve and enhance the Northwest Territories environment for the social and economic benefit of all residents.

Through these proposed main estimates, the department is requesting a total of \$60.8 million for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. This is a 6.9 percent increase over last year.

The residents of the Northwest Territories want sound and wise management decision-making on

the sustainable use and development of natural resources that will ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of our environment for the social and economic benefit of current and future generations.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources recognizes that sound decisions are based on open and inclusive discussion. We will continue to work collaboratively with aboriginal governments, communities and the public in making resource management decisions.

As Members have stated in this House, energy conservation and reducing energy costs are high priorities for many residents. During 2009-2010 the department will spend \$3.3 million to develop alternative energy supplies and investigate the potential of emerging technologies such as biomass and geothermal energy. An additional \$1.6 million will be used to install wind turbines in Tuktoyaktuk.

This investment in alternative energy sources and technologies will help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and support our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. These include investments in hydro by this government. Implementation of the NWT Hydro Strategy includes funding for specific mini-hydro projects in Whati and Lutselk'e as well as the proposed Taltson Hydro Expansion Project.

Another \$1.8 million has been dedicated to other initiatives which will enhance the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program and expand programming offered by the Arctic Energy Alliance through the establishment of three new regional-based positions to provide basic education awareness and advice on energy conservation.

Climate change remains a serious issue for the NWT. During 2009-2010 the department will implement the NWT Climate Change Adaptation Plan and work with partners to develop initial regional climate change scenarios. This work will assist other GNWT departments, communities and regional governments address adaptation problems. Coordination and delivery of actions contained in the Greenhouse Gas Strategy will also continue.

ENR strives to provide wise stewardship, management and protection of our natural resources and environment.

A number of actions will be taken to support the Managing This Land Initiative to ensure our environment and forest and wildlife resources can sustain present and future generations.

- 1) A large part of the department's budget, about \$27 million, is spent on the prevention,

detection, monitoring and suppression of wildfires and the management of forest resources in the Northwest Territories.

- 2) During 2009-2010 the department will be undertaking a program review of fire operations. One of the key components of this review will include working with communities to assess how the current program defines 'values at risk' and how this information is used in decision making.
- 3) Work will also continue on the development of new comprehensive legislation that will provide the tools necessary for ensuring the sustainable management of our forest resources.

The development of community wildland fire protection plans fosters improved public safety while making better use of existing fire suppression resources. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year the department will work with the communities of Fort Smith, Fort Providence and Norman Wells to finalize their community protection plans. Tsiigehtchic and Kakisa have also been targeted to develop FireSmart community interface protection plans.

Almost \$1 million will be spent to implement actions contained in the NWT Barren Ground Caribou Management Strategy and to develop a NWT Wood Bison Management Strategy and management plans for the Mackenzie, Slave River Lowlands and Nahanni bison herds. Surveys will be conducted this summer to get new population estimates for several caribou herds, including the Bathurst, Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-East and Bluenose-West herds.

Another \$1 million has been earmarked for the enhancement of environmental stewardship. This includes developing a new Wildlife Act, implementing the new Species at Risk Act and finalizing the NWT Water Resources Management Strategy and the land use framework.

These initiatives will guide our actions in protecting all species, water supply and quality as well as GNWT participation in land and governance issues. They will also help to increase northern control over land and resources.

Traditional knowledge is a major element of environmental stewardship and resource management in the Northwest Territories. During 2009-2010 the department will implement the ENR Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework. This will formalize our efforts in incorporating traditional knowledge in our decision making and allow us to better track and celebrate its use. ENR is the lead department for the GNWT in traditional knowledge implementation.

As the success of the Beverage Container Program illustrates, residents are more than willing to participate in programs that will help keep their communities clean. Starting this spring, the department will be distributing reusable bags in NWT communities to encourage people to limit the use of single use plastic and paper bags. A 25-cent environmental fee for single use retail bags will be established by the fall of 2009. Work will begin on investigating the feasibility and approaches to establishing an electronic or e-waste recycling program for the NWT.

The department intends to advance our waste reduction programs during 2009-2010. A number of options are being considered on how best to add milk containers to the Beverage Container Program. In addition, a paper products diversification program will provide funding for communities and businesses to investigate and implement actions to deal with paper.

As Members know, environmental issues are high on the agenda of NWT residents. Creative initiatives, such as the interdepartmental Green Team, being led by ENR, will help to ensure these issues remain front and centre. To this end, the department will continue to work with federal and territorial departments and agencies, aboriginal governments, communities and other stakeholders on these issues.

I am confident the main estimates for Environment and Natural Resources will address many of the concerns residents have about protecting our environment for present and future generations.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure for their comments and suggestions during the review of the department's business plan.

I look forward to the committee's comments today and I am prepared to answer any questions Members may have. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Gary Bohnet, deputy minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and Mr. Jeffrey Dalley, the director of finance and administration, shared services, for ENR and ITI. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. Are there general comments? Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened very attentively to the Minister's comments, opening remarks, on his department here. I want to say that I would look for some clarification as the Minister of ITI has noted to me in our exchange yesterday in terms of the specific mini-hydro projects specifically named Whati and Lutselk'e. I just want to again remind the Minister that Deline also has a mini project and I am quite upset that, for some reason, this wasn't mentioned in the Energy Strategy or just in terms of the move forward initiatives from the Energy Strategy for the GNWT as these projects have in the past been named specifically. Somehow this project from the community's perspective is not getting the attention that Whati or Lutselk'e is getting in terms of identifying projects in presentations or even in the ads in the newspaper. So the chief isn't very happy in terms of the government's announcements on the Hydro Strategy. That is from the community's perspective. I noted yesterday and read in the Hansard that Minister McLeod, the Minister of ITI has made some reference to the Deline mini-hydro project and the funding going forward. I am going to take those words on trust that the Minister is going to move forward on the Deline mini-hydro project in that area. I will leave it at that, Mr. Chairman. The community is going to wait and see.

Mr. Chairman, the initiative I like is the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program. I look forward to how these regional based positions will provide the basic education awareness and advice on energy conservation to all our communities in the Northwest Territories. I hope these new regional based positions certainly will be a benefit to the people in our communities. I look forward to that. Certainly, Mr. Chairman, the climate change is something that is in our discussion now with the changes to our environment here. I look for further information from the Minister in terms of how we are going forward in a respectable way that the communities could be involved in the Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

One issue that I do have is with the wild fires and the management of forest resources in the Northwest Territories. Again, the Minister has indicated that there is a program review of the operations. I am going to see how this whole fire review program takes place. It is being noted that a

considerable amount of discretion or decisions are made at the Fort Smith head office. Regional offices have to, from time to time, check in to get the green light to go ahead on certain fires. Sometimes my community members are saying, how is it that people from another area so far away can make a decision on our land? As we know right now in the back door in terms of what we know so I guess I hope this type of review does go to some of the regions that we are impacted by decisions. This is something that has been on the minds of our people. I know the people in Fort Smith do have a tremendous amount of work. I know people who work there. They do a lot of good work. It is just how the system is set up. I am very happy that you are going to look at the review of the operations, Mr. Minister. I think that is a good move. The community wildland fire protection plan is also something that I think is kudos to you and your department to start looking at something like this for our communities.

Mr. Chairman, the Barren Land Caribou Strategy is something that is very close to my people in the Sahtu, specifically the residents and citizens of Colville Lake have a special connection to the caribou in their area. Certainly the Sahtu Renewable Resource Board has had some good discussions with this specific animal that we feed on to keep us alive here. I look forward to some further discussions with the Minister.

Mr. Chairman, one issue I think that is going to be very contentious in the future and something that we should look seriously at is the water control of our waters in the Northwest Territories. I know the Minister is working hard with the Government of the Northwest Territories to look at the quality of water, the management of water and also the tightening up of water coming into the Northwest Territories. It is very scary when you hear reports on the radio and reading the paper about the tailings ponds leaking into our water system. We really don't know the damage that it will do in five or 10 years from now or the amount that has been leaking, the amount that has come into our great lakes and Mackenzie River. This one here if anything and this whole government is the key to the survival of the Northwest Territories. If we don't have water for 10, 15 or 20 years, then we are in big trouble. I encourage the government through this Minister to really fight hard for people. He's at the forefront because his riding is right there. He has a lot at stake here. I know this is something that is very important. I am very happy that the Minister has indicated that there is some work being done in terms of this water quality and monitoring. I should point out that we should really start looking at locations where we could monitor water along the Mackenzie River and report it. So often we see changes. As I said, Mr. Chairman, in the House that

my father-in-law was a fisherman on Great Slave Lake for... he's 82 or 84 years old. He used to fish from the Great Slave Lake for many, many years. I think he said he went around Great Slave Lake five times in his lifetime. He has seen the changes of fish over the years in Great Slave Lake. He is quite concerned. He has seen the changes in the last couple of years when he has nets at the mouth of the Mackenzie River. There are lots of changes. He is quite concerned.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to say to the Minister and to his staff, thank you for the traditional knowledge implementation framework. This is long overdue. I think the traditional implementation framework is a start for a lot of people. I hope it is done in a respectfully in terms of our traditional knowledge like my father-in-law. He knows the land that we passed on and used in the government system in making decisions, understanding certain things with the people and their ties to this land. So this traditional knowledge implementation framework would be something that I look forward to seeing in the next couple of weeks. I hope to see something. I want to thank the Minister.

Another one that the Minister has indicated on page 4 of 5 of his presentation is the Beverage Containers Program. I think that is a dynamite project. I am glad he implemented a plastic bag project also for our communities. When I was in Fort Good Hope, elders talked about those plastic bags being on their land. I hope we support this strongly in terms of this approach as we did with the Beverage Containers Program.

Mr. Chairman, I have other comments probably later on with the Minister but I want to say to the Minister that they are not doing too bad of a job. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this opportunity for general comments on Environment and Natural Resources. I see there is an increase to this department, but I am happy to see that this budget is actually the same as it was two years previously so they are maintaining position. This is critical and important to me and I think to many people in the Northwest Territories and, of course, he is the one responsible for stewardship of the resources which allow us all to have a healthy life and a good future. There are good things happening in this department. I see the progressive work happening on emerging technologies such as biomass and geothermal energy. I appreciate the progressive work on wind energy. This is clearly an investment. I don't think we can expect to learn things immediately and jump

into an economic situation but I think this is a good investment in the long term.

The climate change has been recognized as a serious issue as the Minister says for the NWT. That is putting it mildly. We now know, in fact, that we have been doing much too little and much too late as well acknowledged. I believe within the life of this Assembly, this Minister recognizes that the Greenhouse Gas Strategy does not go far enough. I would have thought there would be some attempt to either tune up the targets there or at least make sure that that is well understood and the public knows that we understand that and much more is needed. There is a certain gravity to this situation that must be recognized by this government and reacted to.

I am wondering where the reference is to community forest inventories, the need for community forest inventories and the important follow up to that, the sustainable harvesting plans for those forests on a community basis. Perhaps this is part of the Biomass Strategy and so on but we do have a number of or at least a few community forest inventories out there but we need to take that the next step to a sustainable harvesting plan and the education and support to actually get that happening on the ground. I think that will be an important step in any Biomass Strategy. Again, perhaps it is there.

I think also that there is room for new approaches in innovation in the area of traditional knowledge. This is an area that I think is extremely rich as we grapple with increasing challenges in how to make a living in and economic benefits from our land while minimizing the impacts we have on it and, in fact, now recovering the capacity that we have obviously lost and will realize increasingly.

The department is obviously doing things to implement traditional knowledge and bring it in when they can but there is concern that we are losing it out there. We have lost it in a number of areas. Most of the in depth knowledge holders are well known to communities and so on. I think there are real opportunities for having programs sponsored by this government that bring those traditional knowledge holders into play in a much more meaningful way. Get them out on the land. Perhaps subsidize their annual budget so that they can play an important role training young people and sharing their very meaningful knowledge that they have and also bringing that in in a more meaningful way to the challenges. We have to make a living in different ways off the land but drawing on this old knowledge.

I also appreciate the recycling programs that the Minister has mentioned, the beverage containers and so on. This is proven to be workable and I am

sure there are new challenges given the current recession. I also like the work that is finally beginning on the feasibility of recycling things like electronic equipment. I think we have been talking about that for a long time. I am happy to see it is finally starting although we are beginning to investigate through feasibility studies as opposed to actually getting to the action stage. So I would encourage the department to focus on that one. That is a serious concern in our environment.

The Minister also mentioned the milk containers being added to the Beverage Container Program. This Assembly has discussed quite a bit for a need for milk subsidies and so on. I am a little bit concerned and only a little bit because it is quite a modest cost but the recycling containers will add I think 20 cents a litre to the cost or something like that for a container with only 10 cents back. I wonder if this is an area where, in fact, we could give 100 percent back to the consumers because, again, we don't want to discourage the use of milk which we know already is insufficient for a number of our families because of the exorbitant cost of milk in some of our communities and perhaps it could be on community by community basis or regional basis. I would appreciate some thinking there.

I wonder if this department could play more of a role on the opportunities we have for development of our fisheries. I know our renewable resource officers play an ex-official role with the enforcement of fisheries and so on. Perhaps we should be thinking about that and perhaps that could be profiled in any devolution talks as an immediate area for fruitful discussions.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I applaud the energy initiatives that are being carried out by this department and I support their important role as the lead on climate change. I hope that gets a lot of profile and within the proper context of our current knowledge. I definitely like and support the work on the NWT Water Strategy. I think it is critical and, in fact, is being seen as a real model on how to recognize and steward resources that have such strong ecological values as well as economic ones. Perhaps only our climate is of greater concern and need. I want to honour that work and give it the recognition it deserves. That is all I have for now, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Regarding the Minister's opening statement, it is really good to see the wind turbines going to be going up in Tuk this year. If we could make sure that we have the turbines hooked up directly to the power plant and try to save the people some money

on their power bills in the community, I hope to see this in the other communities in the future as well.

Moving on to climate change, it remains a serious issue. We could talk about down here in Yellowknife, but people in my riding are living it every day through the different circumstances of weather. In summertime we're losing the shoreline to erosion. I plan to work with partners to develop the initial regional climate change scenarios. I'd really like if not all my communities involved in that, for Sachs Harbour, anyway. It's on the side of a bank and the permafrost is starting to let go in parts of the community. That could cause a landslide and I really worry about that. For Paulatuk, waterfront, the banks are sliding in. The mayor took me on a tour and it is sliding. There are some really bad areas in the community that are sliding through the permafrost melt. In Tuk, for sure, shoreline erosion is right through the whole community. It's really important that we take a good look at this to see where we could help the community government try to protect the community.

In regard to the survey that is being conducted this summer on population estimates on the several caribou herds including the Bathurst, Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-East and Bluenose-West caribou herds. I think traditional knowledge should be taken into consideration in having local guides. Not just the staff of ENR but people that could go and explain to the communities after the fact of what's really happening, because we rely heavily, in my riding, on caribou to feed our families due to the high cost of beef and stuff that's trucked into the community. I think it really should be looked at to get the numbers correct. Not only that for the community, but for the sport hunting situation in regard to caribou. Right through the whole Territory I think it should be really looked at carefully.

The Wildlife Act, implementing new Species at Risk Act and finalizing that. For me, I talked about sport hunting of polar bears in the communities numerous times. I've travelled with the Minister of ITI. He knows the situation I'm in. I think you knew before we...It's 85 people directly impacted. It's a \$1.7 million hit to the economy, i.e., the airlines, local stores, local guides and helpers. I really think this should be taken into consideration before we even think about the Species at Risk Act and finalizing it for the Northwest Territories.

I would just like to say to the Minister in regard to the success of the Beverage Container Program, it's a real success, I think, in all communities, especially in Tuk, because I live there, seeing not a pop can, not a bag in the community. It really helps. Anything like that is always good to see, to bring stuff back to the South and not just left in the communities.

That's it for my opening remarks and I look forward to page by page. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Jacobsen. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just in regard to the Minister's opening comments, I look forward to the new comprehensive legislation that they're bringing forward in regard to dealing with the sustainable management of our forests. As part of that, I'd like him to open it up even more to allow the land claims sections of their land claims agreements which talk about forestry management in the land claim agreements, and also that they're able to be included in the forest management of those forest sectors in their regions. I'd like to get the Minister to respond to exactly how, with this amendment or change in legislation, will that also include the land claim agreements similar to how we're making amendments to the Wildlife Act to enact those sections of those land claim agreements so that we are able to fully implement those agreements that have been signed between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada.

I think the same thing applies in regard to the Wildlife Act. It's long overdue and I'm hoping that we can bring it forward in the life of this government, because it has been quite some time since there's been any real movement. We've spent millions of dollars dealing with consultation and developing the legislation. Again, it's something that I look forward to seeing implemented. I think it's important, also, in regard to the question dealing with the millions of dollars to develop some sort of action plan dealing with the Barren Ground Caribou Management Strategy because, like Mr. Jacobson stated, that caribou is an essential food source for the people, especially in the Mackenzie Delta and the Beaufort Sea area. I think a lot of people in the communities are concerned about what's happening to the caribou and, more importantly, what the government is doing to look at what some of the implications or the effects on the caribou species are from the changing climate, the changing weather, the increased number of species such as wolves that we're seeing more and more are preying on the caribou.

I think also one of the issues that they're dealing with is the forest fires and the effect it's having on the food source. Also, with the changing growth in vegetation, changing from the lichen that the caribou depend on, just seeing more willows and forested areas moving north towards the coastline. I think that also has implications on the migration of these caribou herds.

More importantly, I think the biggest threat is the change in climate. For me, it has a very significant

impact and I think we are seeing it by the health of the herd by way of their migration route and the changing trends that people have identified. I think it's important that we do ensure that traditional knowledge is used when you do any research on the caribou species, or any species for that matter, because that knowledge will tell us what has changed, how it has affected the animals and, more importantly, how it's affected the people.

One of the things that we need to seriously consider looking at is the whole area of water resources. We're at the end of the flow in which most of these river systems flow from southern Canada or from the Yukon into the Northwest Territories, and a large portion of those water sources come from the glaciers in the Rocky Mountains or the mountains in western Canada. I think with the shrinking glaciers that we're seeing, that we are seeing lower and lower water levels in western Canada and also there is going to be a major affect to ourselves being downstream from where a lot of these water sources come from.

One of the biggest threats we're seeing is dealing with human impact by way of what's happening in the tar sands, what's happening with the oil and gas development, mining developments around watersheds and, more importantly, the effects we're seeing downstream in regard to the bird species and fish species, that we're starting to see the different effects. For myself, I think the biggest threat we are going to see to our water system is the melting permafrost. The effect of that melting permafrost and the runoff of that permafrost into our water table, regardless into our rivers, into our lakes, and the effects it's going to have on the fish species that most people depend on as a food source which we're going to see higher traces of mercury more and more, as well as other types of ailments in the fish. For me, that's the biggest threat that we are going to see by way of the effect on our water table and our water systems.

Also, I'd just like to ask the Minister in regard to the whole area of energy and looking at finding new ways to generate energy. I think that we have to somehow, as a government, find a system that's unique to the North, but it's portable, it's transportable, you can move it from one place to another and allow for, you know, instead of dealing with one community at a time, have a system that you put it into 10 communities or put it into 20 communities. I was very impressed with a system we saw when we did a tour in Manitoba in which they basically have a... (inaudible)... river system where they have these turbines which basically sits in the river and it runs the turbine. They're testing it out in, I believe it is Ruby, Alaska, so they're already testing these systems in Alaska. I don't see why we, as government, can't look at something like that. They're not as costly as wind turbines. I

think we're looking at somewhere in the area of \$200,000 up to \$250,000. Especially during the times of year when we have open water in the river systems, you can look at possibly going all the way from May right until October with these systems and hook it into our communities. It's those types of things. I know they are looking at a possible pilot project in Fort Simpson, I believe, on this system. Again, working with those types of organizations, either the University of Manitoba or Manitoba Hydro, groups that are looking at these initiatives for their northern communities, I think we should also be ahead of them and try to look at those types of initiatives.

I think we do have to look at other things such as biomass and geothermal, and I know that the Yukon has done a lot of work on geothermal in regard to research and studies in regard to the whole Precambrian Shield and looking at where the volcanic fault lies along the Rocky Mountains into the Yukon and all the way up to Alaska. I think that's something that we have to start researching in the Northwest Territories to see where those fault areas lie and where the highest potential is in regard to using geothermal.

In regard to biomass, I think that we are focusing a lot on pellets and everything else, but in my view, at the end of the day, it's just like a question of supply and demand. It's just like the fuel prices: the supply is there, the price goes up; the demand is there, the price goes up. I think because there's only one distributor of this product and at some point he's going to basically realize there's potential to make money out of this system. If you get enough people consuming a product, the price will go up.

I think, right now, with the price of fuel being where it's at, if anything, through this department I think you should be working with communities, people within your forestry departments, identifying those fire stands where we have had fire and we should be cutting down the deadwood that's out there, using that wood by way of biomass in communities and using big wood boilers, basically hooking them into the schools or hooking them into where we know the cost of using the wood pellets is unrealistic because the cost is just unbearable, but we have wood products around our communities. It also generates not only employment opportunities but it also gives us a real say on exactly how we are harvesting our forests and, more importantly, how we're maintaining and managing that resource. I think it's important that this government does everything it can to look at those types of things.

Again, I think this government has the potential for doing good things but, again, you have to be able to show that you are looking at all communities throughout the Northwest Territories and seeing how we have systems that basically will ensure that

we are able to serve communities with these new products that are out there and not simply go at it one project at a time. Maybe going with five or 10 projects at a time. Then you will see a real difference by way of reducing the cost of living and also reducing greenhouse gasses.

With that, I look forward to asking questions during the budget process.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Next on my list is Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a few comments on the opening remarks from the Minister. I'm obviously pleased to see the mini-hydro in Lutselk'e. I think it's something that will be very positive in the long run for the community as far as the cost of power in that community goes. I think mini-hydro should bring the cost of power right down which will have a very positive impact on the cost of living in Lutselk'e.

Just more on the amount of money that's spent on the forest fires, I know that is a huge budget and I know that it's a huge operation, fighting fires across the Territories. Maybe using some of the traditional knowledge...I think that the department is a lead in the area of wildlife management, so I think traditional knowledge can also be used for fighting fires. I recognize the department has a long history with fighting fires and they recognize and have a good ability to value the risk and determine whether or not those values should be protected.

I'm pleased that they're continuing to do the Barren Ground Caribou Management Strategy and also the development of the Wood Bison Management Strategy, I think those are two very important species for the Northwest Territories and for the supply of food for the people in the Territories. I wonder if it wouldn't be wise to expand beyond the Bathurst, Cape-Bathurst, the Blue-Nose herds and also include in the strategy, I suppose the Beverly Qamanirjuaq, Ahiak and the Porcupine caribou herds. I think that especially the BQ and the Ahiak herds do mix with the Bathurst and possibly even the Blue-Nose herds, and I think that the Porcupine herd also has an impact on the NWT. The Porcupine herd, I think, are based out of Alaska. I think that's where their calving grounds are, however, they do spill into the Territories when they move off their calving grounds and so on. I think that in order to get a holistic shot of what really the condition or the numbers of the barren ground caribou are, I think it's important to look at the BQ and the Ahiak herds as well.

I would also like the department to somehow during our government, during this Assembly, complete the Wildlife Act and the Species at Risk Act. I think those are very important tools for the management

of wildlife in the Territories and how they make decisions on what type of species will need protection aside from always having essentially being governed by the Species at Risk Act that is federal and that sometimes doesn't fit well with the herds. Well, not necessarily the herds, but the species that the Northwest Territories or the Environment and Natural Resources is protecting.

I'm pleased with the traditional knowledge implementation. It's good to see the department implement the Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework. I think that's very valuable. I think that the traditional knowledge will give us a lot of information on especially the caribou. Caribou seems to be a very key species in the Territories, and I think that science and traditional knowledge a combination of both of those systems will allow us to get a better handle on what we can anticipate for the caribou herds in the upcoming years.

I think there is some history with some of the people that have lived off the caribou for years, even down into Saskatchewan where at one time there was no caribou at all, they came back, and now they seem to be lessening again. Also, even in this part of the Northwest Territories, at one time there was no caribou coming down here at all and sometimes people indicate that it could be the food and some of the traditional knowledge people say that it is a cycle that should be coming back and cycling every 30 years or so. The herds will go up and down and so on. It might be interesting to apply both of those.

I will have some questions in the detail on the Beverage Container Program. I think that adding milk containers might be a good recyclable product. I like the idea of plastic bags and trying to work to lessen the use of the retail plastic bags. I think that is important. I thought that the department would expand beyond that. I think that, at one time, we had travelled to the Yukon. I think they recycle tires over there, and I think that there are a few things that are in abundance that are no longer being used, tires being one of them. Maybe computers being another thing that could be recycled. I think we have warehouses full of computers that are obsolete. There is a lot of, I guess, product there that maybe could be sent somewhere to be reused, rebuilt, recycled.

Aside from that, I think a good department, I like the work that they do in environment, wildlife management and so on and I look forward to the detail. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Next on the list I have Ms. Bisaro and Mr. Ramsay.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of comments. I am appreciative of being able to make some opening comments relative to this department. In general, I am approving of what I hear from the Minister in his opening remarks. In the statement about the development of alternative energy supplies and emerging technologies, I welcome that and I am glad we are spending money in that area. I guess my concern is that I would hope that we don't spend the money studying things and looking at things, that we are actually going to be -- and not in five years time but hopefully in this next budget year -- able to ensure that the actions that we are undertaking are going to be evident on the ground and in communities, so that we are going to be seeing the results of this work of developing alternative energy strategies and looking at emerging technology, that that is going to be evident in a concrete way in our communities. In particular, our small communities who endure the highest energy costs. I think there is kind of small things, small projects, small changes which we can effect now that will assist in some of this stuff and I know that Mrs. Groenewegen has said quite a number of times, you know, why don't we put a wood burning stove in every house. That is the sort of thing that I am thinking of.

I am really pleased to see that we are going to have wind turbines installed in Tuktoyaktuk and that that is going to be in this next year. For some reason it was in my head that it was going to be a longer-term thing, and that is great that it is hopefully going to be operational in '09-10.

The expanding programming and the extra funding that we are giving to Arctic Energy Alliance I think is an investment that is extremely worthwhile. My experience with Arctic Energy Alliance is that they do extremely good work and they are providing a service to our communities that is necessary. They have got an expertise and they have with the addition of some new positions here. It is going to spread their services much further across the Territory than they are right now, so I am totally approving of that expense.

I am a little concerned -- and I don't know if it is quite referenced in the budget or not, but I know we talked about it in the business plans -- about the federal regulations relative to wastewater effluents and the effect that that is going to have on our communities. I don't know whether ENR is involved in that. I think it is probably a joint departmental project at this point. But I need to caution the government in general that this is going to have a huge impact on our communities, and we need to make sure that we are out in front on this and ensuring that communities are going to be able to deal with whatever regulations the federal

government puts in place and that it's not going to cost us an arm and a leg.

I noted in the budget that the funding for fire suppression resources was considerably reduced this year from last year, so I will have some questions when we come to that part of the budget. I am just wondering whether or not it is going to have an impact on communities and on lands within the NWT and around communities in terms of whether or not we are going to be able to keep our fires under control, basically, or whether we are going to be losing more forests to forest fires than we may have been before.

The Caribou Management Study which we recently received, I was really glad to see that that was done and that it has been shared with the public. I guess I do want to know, that when we come to that section of the budget, whether or not it is going to have an impact on quotas for outfitters and, if not this year, when it might be. There certainly are outfitters out there who want to know.

The Beverage Container Program I am fully in support of. I think it has been a very successful program and I am really pleased to see that it is being expanded. The fee for single use bags, I support, and I think this says the fall of 2009. The sooner we get that in place the better. Plastic bags are the bane of our existence and I hate them with a passion.

The suggestion that we are going to expand to electronic and an e-waste recycling program is wonderful. Mr. Jacobson mentioned we have warehouses full of e-waste and I think every house has probably a cupboard full of e-waste as well. It is something that certainly the City of Yellowknife has difficulty with because there is nowhere that it can be recycled, but there is an awful lot of...There are contaminants within all the e-waste that gets taken off to the dump here in Yellowknife.

With regards to adding the milk containers, I agree with that, I think that is a great thing. To Mr. Bromley's suggestion of returning the whole of the subsidy for the milk containers, I could live with that. I would also consider, or ask the department to consider, that the extra money that comes from the deposits on the milk containers be put aside and used for a milk subsidy. If we can't get the money from somewhere in the budget, maybe we can get it by adding a deposit on our milk containers. Not an extra one, but if we are retaining any funds, then let's put it into a milk subsidy instead of putting it someplace else.

I was pleased to note that the department highlights an Interdepartmental Green Team, which is being led by ENR. That is great. That is wonderful. So following up on my statement from last week, I look

forward to seeing a bottled water policy coming very soon from this Interdepartmental Green Team. That would make me very happy and I did get communication from the Minister -- thank you very much -- recently that it is being looked at, so hopefully I will hear about that policy soon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, that is all I have.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Minister and deputy minister and Mr. Dalley for walking us through the business plans. I have got a great deal of faith in the job Mr. Bohnet and the Minister are doing in the department of ENR. I think both of them bring a lot to the table. I know Mr. Dalley serves in both capacities with ITI and ENR and is new to the job, so I look forward to working with him in the future. Just a few comments, and like I said, I think the department is headed in the right direction. Many Members have already covered off a lot of the issues I was going to cover, so I will just highlight a few things that are of interest to me.

I think, and this crosses a few departments, but \$2.5 million that we are looking at spending this year on the Taltson expansion...Given the current economic downturn, it would make more sense to me if we took that \$2.5 million and spent it in Whati and Lutselk'e and got those mini-hydro systems up and running sooner rather than later. I think we spent a lot of time studying and analyzing and, you know, it's time and I am glad to see those wind turbines going into Tuktoyaktuk, but we need to get more alternative energy devices and infrastructure on the ground and in communities where they can make a difference. That \$2.5 million that we are looking at spending on the Taltson expansion -- and I am still a big fan of the Taltson River Expansion -- however, I just don't know who is going to sign on to a power purchase agreement, especially the mines north of the city, when they are laying folks off, they are going through some tough times themselves and the market for diamonds worldwide is at an all time low, so that is going to be problematic. So I would suggest that we may have a better use for that \$2.5 million.

I don't have quite the disdain for plastic bags as Ms. Bisaro has, but I put them to good use at my house. I am not looking forward to paying 25 cents for them like the next guy, but I do, you know, if people aren't going to use plastic bags for their garbage at home or for their litter box for the cat or for whatever purpose that they do end up using them for, they are going use plastics of other kinds, from Glad and those cat box liners and things like that, so I am not sure. I know that what we are trying to do is we are trying to get plastic bags out of the waste stream, and I can appreciate that. This item,

though, we never had a discussion on the charge of 25 cents in committee. It was something that was sprung on us during the budget address. That was really, I believe, the first time I heard about a 25 cent charge going onto plastic bags. You know, if you look around the world in other jurisdictions, I think they charge five cents or 10 cents. I am not sure where they came up with 25 cents for a plastic bag, but anyway it is something I can, I guess, buy into.

If people are going to need to carry the multi-use bag around with them to the grocery store, then that is what people are going to have to do. I am interested, when we get to the page by page, I am interested in knowing -- we are going to distribute these types of enviro-friendly bags in communities across the Northwest Territories -- in finding out how much that is going to cost, and I will have some questions in that area as well.

Like Ms. Bisaro, I have some concerns on the impact on quotas for outfitters in terms of the barren ground caribou and where we are headed with that, but I will save those questions for the detail, Mr. Chairman.

I think for me the bottom line is the department is in good hands and it is being managed quite well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): General comments. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I like the opening remarks by the Minister. He certainly covered a lot of ground and my colleagues covered a lot of ground as well. I just wanted to let him know a bunch of concerns from my riding that we have been working with his department on.

I think this summer we had a concern from the smaller communities of the fire protection zone. Maybe, my suggestion is, if the department can do better to explain the guidelines and policies with respect to proximity fires and observation zones, because they obviously give me a call and say why isn't the department fighting this or that and I really have no explanation other than, well, I will call the Minister. But I think a better strategy is to inform the communities before the fire season. Let them know the departmental plans and strategies around proximity fires. Because it is rather scary because some of those fires can get pretty huge and if they see us not fighting them, then the whole community gets worried. To pre-empt that, a better community communication plan would certainly help in many, many cases. I have many communities in my riding that sure could use those explanations.

I was asked about creating fire buffer zones. I don't know if that is a program of ENR or is that another department that has a look at it. That is creating firebreaks around the communities, Mr. Chairman. It is a beneficial thing, because it does create some work, as well, for the community. To create this strip it brings a greater comfort level to the communities that are being proactive, if there is a forest fire nearby, and that is something I would certainly support and I would convey to the department or maybe convey to the appropriate Minister that that is something that we should be looking at once again, if it is not already there. Maybe we should communicate the program to the communities.

Another issue that the Minister knows I have been following up on is the Bison Management Strategy, and I was pleased to see that during Christmas that the ministry has created a Bison Management Strategy. I advise that you have to get to the communities that have been raising that with me. That is the communities of Fort Liard, and, for the most part, Nahanni Butte, who had the very same bison management issues, where buffalo are roaming around the community, destroying gardens and very expensive transplanted trees that people want to improve their yard and home with.

As well, another issue that they face with buffalo, especially in Fort Liard, is that because the highways are salted, the buffalo go near vehicles, lick them or damage them, rub against them. People are really curious, constituents are really curious as to why don't we look at a compensation program of some nature, even a small gesture or something. I would like the department to consider that. I think that we do it in other areas, right? A fire burns down a trapper's cabin, that is like an act of nature. Buffalo are like an act of nature. But the other key thing is that people want to be compensated, because buffalo are not indigenous to Fort Liard or Nahanni Butte. I didn't realize, I thought it was the '50s or '60s, but it was only in the '70s that the buffalo were brought there, and the herds are getting rather large now and they are causing great concern. So the Bison Management Strategy, my first initial reaction was I am glad I got it, but they really have to sit down with the community in well-advertised meetings and get as many people out as they can. I know that I have been pushing this for some time and for whatever reason, Mr. Chairman, the members of the department would go to the communities and one or two people would show up. It doesn't mean that they are not interested. I think it is maybe because it was not advertised. People are very, very interested. At all my constituency meetings that I have in Fort Liard, and all the Ministers they bring to Fort Liard, they continuously raise it. When department officials go there and nobody shows up,

it doesn't mean that the issue is not real and I would urge them to sit down with the community with an open mind, not just to say that this is the Bison Management Strategy and that is it, because there are some concerns that they want to add up to and including, I know, there was an incident where a local fellow discharged or shot a buffalo in the community. We don't want to get to that stage again. What we want to do is a strategy, like, if a buffalo is in your yard or damaging your vehicle, what is the strategy to address that incident other than phoning up our wildlife officer who may be out on patrol or something. So those are the questions that people want action on. In fact, last week in the House, too, I asked about some of the other initiatives like electrified fencing and some of those things being worked on in other areas. Those are real strategies that people want to see some action on.

A recent concern, too, is we need a better public campaign as well about the cadmium levels in the South Mackenzie Mountain moose. It affects people I represent. They're concerned. What does this mean? I believe that a public awareness campaign has to be done better. I know there were a couple of articles in the paper that addresses these concerns, but I believe the department has to be proactive and get out there to the communities and to the band councils and Metis councils and explain to them and the people exactly what it means. The internal organs of our larger animals are actually delicacies to our elders and people who use the land. Far before we get to the ribs, we're snacking on the innards and kidneys and...(inaudible)...et cetera. They're a delicacy. But I think the key thing is, my message is to get out there and advise the people, do a public campaign. Nobody likes to find out at the last minute on any matter.

My colleague, the Member for Frame Lake, raised in the House about the bottled water policy. I have to stand opposed to it. I don't know what she's after. I don't know if she wants to add an additional levy to it. I just want to say that some of my communities, because they have potable water issues with the water reservoirs, which I have yet to speak about, depend heavily on buying bottled water for their drinking water from the stores. Every time they go to Fort Simpson and/or Hay River they're buying huge quantities, and at great expense. So if the concern is to add more expense at this point until the water issue is resolved, I would have to indicate my concern about how far you're going with this policy. I'd like to be involved with it. Please put me on your distribution list, because I want to see what exactly it means to the people that I represent. Like I said, this bottled water policy, I don't know what you're doing with it, but it's something that I'm going to have to say I cannot support at this time, because I don't know

what it means and my people use bottled water all the time in my small communities. I've got five small communities that depend on bottled water only because their drinking water may be safe, because we tell them it's safe, but they're not drinking it and there's a reason for it. They'd prefer crystal clear water, something they can see through if they're going to drink it.

I just wanted to reiterate those concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the opening remarks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I have nobody else on my list. Is committee agreed that we've concluded general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. What we'll do is now go to Mr. Miltenberger to respond to committee's general comments.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of common concerns and I'll try to just speak to the broad areas of alternate energy, the forestry issues, the wildlife issues, recycling, traditional knowledge and climate change.

The Alternate Energy Plan that has come before this House is spread among a number of departments. It is the first time the Government of the Northwest Territories has actually put serious money towards getting things done in a whole host of areas. Up until now we'd been studying a number of projects but never had the capital to move forward on them. So the intent is during the life of this Assembly to show significant, actual progress on projects. We're trying to cover a broad range of projects.

A lot of the focus is cost of living oriented. Looking to communities that are reliant on diesel and trying to come up with ways to get them off of that. This is the first year and the message hopefully for the life of this Assembly that we're going to be working very hard to carry out the plan. The hope is that the 17th Assembly will see the value of this work and the need to continue it. It's not going to be complete in three years.

If we move towards biomass, for example, we have to be able to prove out the technology and then we have to come up with funds to look at implementing it across the North where it makes sense. We are very seriously considering the value-added industries that could come with biomass, specifically the manufacturing of pellets. Right now there is a big, fixed site plant in La Crete and we believe and know that there's technology for portable, smaller pellet-making operations which we think have, in the longer term, greater applicability

across the North and that communities could manage on their own because there is an industry here that could be community specific. We are looking at biomass.

The mini-hydro as well. We recognize that there are far more sites than just Lutselk'e and Whati. The key, as was indicated yesterday by Mr. McLeod and Mr. Vician, is that we are also doing the mapping and we want to identify all the other sites that are there. Deline has been of interest, but the two that are farthest along in our opinion were Lutselk'e and Whati. The intent is to carry on that work but look as well to other communities in the coming years.

The wind turbines we, as well, believe are going to be portable once we get it operational in Tuktoyaktuk to get it done. The broader issue of the Taltson project, we've spent a significant amount of money getting it ready. It's into the environmental assessment phase. The upfront cost, as Mr. McLeod indicated yesterday, is that this is a half billion dollar project. The investment we're making is recoverable by a lot of standards in terms of required upfront investment. It's a good investment and we understand that there are still serious discussions underway with De Beers, and we have to take the long view with De Beers and the diamond mines that once we're through this current downturn, the long-term prospects are good. Right now there is a benefit to proceeding because steel costs, for example, are at not an all-time low but the lowest they've been in decades. Those type of costs, the costs of wire, the costs of copper, have all come down. There's a benefit to that.

We also, as we look at the alternate energy piece, there are short-term things, long-term, and midterm things we want to do, and we've applied money, as well, to beef up subsidies to encourage people to in fact convert to more energy-efficient appliances, to get into wood. In fact, we've got money in the budget to work with communities to reintroduce wood burning and sort out some of the issues of installation, insurance and those type of things.

This is one of the most significant issues we have, I believe, in terms of making serious impacts on cost of living, alternate energy, greenhouse gases, and those type of areas that are of significant concern to us. Part of this is going to be...There's about a sixth of the Territory that's been mapped out with forest inventories. We have to proceed and continue on with the mapping as we look at things like biomass and what resources are there and what's the best use we can make of those resources. We are going to continue with that work.

We're also going to continue with communities to develop and complete, where they haven't been completed, the community energy plans as well as the inventories around communities.

We also do have a FireSmart Program where we've identified communities where work is being done. We know there are a lot of communities in the boreal forest area that should be looking at this and our staff stand ready to work with communities to get started on that process. There are things individuals can do. There are things communities can do. There are things ENR can assist in doing, as well, to get each community fire smart where there is a risk of forest fires.

We are also, if I could speak quickly now about legislation. The forestry act is about 50 years old and, like the Wildlife Act, we're committing to getting that done. We recognize fully and will involve the co-management boards and aboriginal governments in the development of these pieces of legislation the same as we have with the Species at Risk Act. We have set the model with the Species at Risk Act. The Wildlife Act currently has had a number of meetings and is moving, we believe, very effectively and efficiently based on the trail broken through the Species at Risk Act process. We believe that same approach will be used with the Forestry Act, recognizing that we have long-overdue commitments as a government that we are required to honour through the land claims that have yet to be honoured. We are very sensitive to that issue as it pertains to many of the aboriginal governments with the land claims that have been settled.

The Species at Risk Act, there was some concern raised about polar bears. The polar bear issue is not based on our Species at Risk Act. It is because there is a difference of opinion between the experts in Canada, COSEWIC in particular, and what the American government decided to do in terms of recognition of the polar bear. We saw it as a species of concern. The Americans decided their assessment was more significant and severe than that and, as a result, they've put restrictions on that have affected the ability to move polar bear hides across into the States, which has put a significant damper on the polar bear outfitting.

The work on caribou we intend to continue with. The Yukon government and the Americans are going to try once again to do the assessments of the long-overdue inventory of the Porcupine. We are going to look once again at the Cape Bathurst, the Bathurst, or the Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East, and the Bathurst. We did work last year on the Beverly, which gave us pause for serious concern. We're working with Nunavut looking at the Beverly. Sorry, the Ahlak and the Qamanirjuaq. The work to date has not given us any pause to celebrate. There are still significant concerns, we believe, that are out there. We've committed, though, until we can finish a more thorough assessment with the outfitters in the North Slave, especially to maintain the 750 tags that are

currently there per year. We've also committed to working with the outfitters in terms of the process of how tags are allocated to come up with a way that is more timely. If there are going to be tags that are not used, to have them come back into some type of pool where they can be accessed before the hunting season is over.

The issue of recycling. We believe we are going to hit about 100 million containers by June since the start of this program that have been recycled and not put in the landfills or scattered across the land, which I think is an achievement which should be celebrated, which we intend to do. We also estimate that there are roughly nine million or so single use bags every year that go into landfills, which is why we're putting the levy on. It's a consumptive levy that people can avoid. We anticipate that we're going to be able to fund some of our other recycling beverage container initiatives with some of the funds that are going to be collected through the levy. We are working with, for example, Alberta, who has an Electronic Recycling Program that we would like to partner in with them on rather than try to set up our own. We are looking at options on the milk containers. The best way to do this that it's going to have the minimum impact and not negatively impact the consumption of milk on both these areas, we will be coming back to committee before we launch the final program.

I also forgot to mention, as I talked about alternate energy, we know that there is significant interest in two areas specifically -- Yellowknife and the Simpson area -- on geothermal. We want to work with those communities to look at the proposals they have underway. Yellowknife has already invested a significant amount of money and we would like to see how we can assist in that area.

The Bison Strategy, I know the Member for Nahendeh has been concerned about that. We anticipate that within two to three weeks we will be able to sort out a date with the community of Liard, for example, to have the meeting that we talked about in this House. We are committed to do the proper notification and make people aware of the issue to try to get as good a turnout as possible. We are definitely interested in consultation and feedback both in that area. And we take the advice and concern raised by the Member in terms of the cadmium levels in the Mountain moose.

Climate change is probably one of the underlying issues that are driving a lot of our concerns across the board. As we look at all the things we do with housing, with capital projects, with trying to sort out what's happening with the animals, we recognize that climate change is one of the factors and it's affecting things like permafrost, it's affecting things like invasive species, insects, the rate of predation. It's making things more accessible. We have to pay

more and more and better and better attention to this in all the work that we do. The Climate Change Committee that Mr. Bromley and Mr. Krutko sit on is in the process of working collectively to develop a policy lens that will help us look at how we look at these issues as a government, and where there's a need as we look at things through our macro-economic lens, we also want to be able to look through things through this climate change lens to make sure we're paying the proper attention to this issue.

Traditional knowledge has been on the books now since 1997. The intent is within the life of this sitting to be able to table in this House the plan going forward. The step prior to that is going to be to send a package to Priorities and Planning of everything that's been done to date in terms of getting ready to roll this out as a government so that they can have an opportunity for some feedback. But our goal, as we try to beat the clock, is to have this ready to go forward to the public by early April. It's going to be, as people will tell us, in many cases, long overdue. We've heard it over the years from Members about getting it done. Well, we're ready to in fact do that.

A final two things I'll just quickly touch on. The issue of water is one of the major issues for this Assembly, this government. We've been working very hard on our Water Strategy, which we will hit our deadlines in terms of having a document that we can bring forward to this House, to the Members and to the people, the results of the last 14 months' work. We hoped by fall to be able to have a policy that we can accept and adopt as a government and as a Legislature. We're also hoping, because of all the work we've done and the fundamental concern about this issue, that we will have the aboriginal governments on side as well. We've been working with them as we develop this. We've spent a lot of time. We've listened very carefully. We've heard over and over again over the years from the aboriginal governments the concern of all governments, every Northerner we've talked to about this issue of water. Both transboundary issues, but also how we deal with water in the Northwest Territories. I know there's a lot of concern about what's happening to the south of us and the issue of cumulative impact. There are many things happening in Alberta in terms of resource development, proposed dams. The folks from B.C. are here talking about Site C, the Bennett Dam. We also know that in the headwaters in the mountains, the Rockies, the glaciers are disappearing and the snowpack is diminishing as the temperatures rise. There's more extraction and impoundment. We have a whole host of challenges.

But as we look south we must not forget our own backyard. If I can use two examples, we have 320,000 metric tonnes of arsenic trioxide sitting in mine shafts in Yellowknife below the level of the

lake that we're trying to come up with a way to conclude the securing of at least in the interim. Across the lake we have what is left from Pine Point and the tailings ponds that are there. When you fly over that it looks very similar in many cases to some of the pictures that you see on Google Earth of what's happened in Alberta. So we have to be comprehensive in our approach. We have our own issues in the North, as well, that we have to make sure we pay attention to. Those are just two examples. There are other mines we've tried to deal with, including Port Radium. So it is a major issue for us and we're going to continue that work because it is so important and it's going to tie into the land use framework that we're doing that's going to give us, as a government, the ability to have our thinking clear so we can be constructive and supportive when we go to the tables that are there negotiating land use frameworks that have been highly recommended by Mr. McCrank, for example; one of the recommendations that we think has significant pertinent value to us as a Territory.

So there are many things we have on the go. I appreciate the kind comments and I do support the recognition of the hard work that the staff has been doing and continues to do.

Finally, we are looking at the values at risk for forest fires. We know this is a concern. We've had values at risk for some time. There is concern that circumstances have changed, as climate change increases and the forest fire seasons expand, and there is loss of habitat for caribou, the issue of how we are doing values at risk has been brought into question and we've committed to look both at values at risk and the command and control of how decisions are made on fighting fire so that we can be as responsive as we can as close to the fires that we can. We recognize that over the years we've had a concentration on decision-making that may not have always worked in our best interest. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. The committee has already agreed that we have concluded general comments. Is committee agreed that we move onto detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Alright. First page is 13-7, but we will defer this page until we've gone through the detail throughout the rest of the document for ENR. Our first page for consideration is 13-8, which we'll do after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. We are on page 13-8 which is an information item,

infrastructure investment summary. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 13-9, also an information item, revenue summary. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 13-10, information item, active position summary. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regards to this information item, I have been asking every department if we can get a breakdown by class of affirmative action, P1s, P2s, and P3s. Also, do you have anyone within the department who is working within the department with a disability?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We have 120 P1 candidates, about 51 percent of the workforce; 37 are P2 and 78 are P3. In terms of women, we have three in senior management, two in middle management, 16 in non-traditional occupations and one employee with a disability.

MR. KRUTKO: I have a question in regards to the staffing of these positions. How do you staff positions in the different regions? Do you at any time have any cultural awareness programs for your new employees who come in from, say, the south or basically are in a new region, so they can understand the culture and the aboriginal groups that they are working with? I think that what you find is that there are people who don't take the time to really understand the culture and the people from those regions. They just assume things without really understanding their cultural history that is there, in which people still have a lot of respect in regards to how they treat the land, the water and the wildlife. I think that and also understand that the traditions of those regions. I think it is important especially for people that do come north. Sure, they might come out of school and have a degree, but at the end of the day they don't know the land, the people and the language. There is no way they can communicate with those people. Is that part of the training for your people that you have in the field?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As we move forward with our traditional knowledge implementation, one of the things we are working on to actually formalize and build in especially for, as the Member has indicated, new Northerners, is a Cultural Awareness Program that will be tailored to be regional-specific, recognizing the differences as you travel or live in one region versus another, to

try to give better information to new employees who are new to the North background of some of the very many unique complexities that we have in our regions and communities. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Just if the Minister can give me the information that he read out earlier, because I would like to compile and see for myself exactly what the different departments are doing in regard to enacting the Affirmative Action Policy.

One of the other areas I think is important, that this government realizes, is we do have a lot of people who are retiring in this area. We will have to be replacing them. I would like to know, are there any programs by way of we used to have the Natural Resources Program in regards to Arctic College. We have had other courses where people went south. Is there any type of specific training to recruit those new individuals that we will have to find to replace the people within this department who are going to be retiring over the next couple of years?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: First, we will share the information on our statistics for affirmative action with committee. We will pass that on. We have, of course, significant investment in the NRTP program and are working with the college to get that as current and cutting edge as possible, given all the changes in the areas of environment, with climate change and monitoring and resource development. As well, we are taking the steps at the community level to come up with positions like patrolmen and those types of positions that don't require necessarily the same type of high level of qualification but will allow us to get local people in the door and if there is an interest, then we can work with them through our training that is available in support to move on further into the department.

We also recognize the need for succession planning at the senior level. I think, when we get the numbers, if you look at the senior management statistics, we are trying to recognize the fact that folks the age that I am or the deputy minister of a shelf life that is rapidly approaching the best before time and we want to plan for the day when we are not around, not so much MLAs. They are much easier to replace than deputies, but we recognize the need. It is a point of concern to the government as a whole, where we recognize about 30 percent of our staff are going to be eligible to retire in the next five to 10 years. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. If you can share that information on the numbers with all of committee, that would be great. We are on page 13-10, information item, active position summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We are moving along to page 13-13. It is an activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$10.645 million. Are there any questions? Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just looking at contract services. There has been steep and steady rise over the last couple of years. I am wondering if we can get a brief explanation of what that is all about. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, there is the money we spent on the Water Strategy. There is the other initiative being the traditional knowledge as well, but one of the big ones is the Water Strategy. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for those comments. Are these retained services or are they services that are let as needed? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: With the Water Strategy, we have been using the services of Terra Plan and on a relatively consistent basis as we have done the work that is required, in addition to working with the staff and the communities and regions. We have been using Terra Plan for the most part.

The other thing I want to point out is that we have been and give credit to INAC. The federal government has been very supportive in this whole process and it is a contribution that without which we would not have been able to do the work that we have done. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Are those INAC dollars part of the dollars being spent on contract services?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: What is reflected here is just our expenditures, not the dollars that INAC has spent out of their own budgets.

MR. BROMLEY: What would be the Terra Plan contract? Is it a steady amount over the last two years plus this 2009-10 for a three-year period? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically the contract is based on work performed as an agreement on an agreed upon work plan. It is as and when needed, depending on the work and how much work we are actually doing on the Water Strategy. They are the main consulting firm. They have a number of experts from southern Canada to

work with them on this particular thing. They are the lead proponent for us.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate those remarks. Did we approve positions for our own water experts to be coming up soon and have we hired people in that area yet that are new? Thank you.

MR. BOHNET: Yes, we have one full-time water position that was approved. That person is presently employed. We also have a couple of casuals. We are starting to build the capacity within the department, so in future years on ongoing work we wouldn't rely on consultants as much. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I see that the amount still is going up rather significantly despite having those people on staff, so hopefully next year we can see that trend reversed. Thank you. Just a comment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. There is no question there. It is just a comment. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Just in regards to your geographical information systems in regards to data systems, I think that we have to realize with the technology we have these days that we could use those systems for more than just forest fire management. We should be able to use those systems in regards to identifying the wintering grounds of the caribou or looking at the change in vegetation. I think that there are things that you can use, if you use this system for other areas, than simply looking at forest management. Are these systems used in other areas to look at things such as the water in regards to the water issues in regards to water levels in the different lakes or looking at the different types of vegetation or looking at the things in regards to possibly identifying the wintering grounds of caribou or even the different animal species? I think that you probably can use this system for a lot more than just simply forest management during the summer months to monitor forest fires.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, we try to multi-use these systems as much as we can. There are a lot of specific issues with the resolution of the equipment, what is capable by the satellite in terms of our satellites, by taking pictures. Some of the big computers that we have that have these enormous memories for maps and the information systems, we try to put that to as many uses as possible, not just with forestry but where there are opportunities with the wildlife, as the

Member has indicated. Some of it is not transferable, but where it is, we try to do that. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Even nowadays with Google Earth, you can almost pinpoint anything around the world. If you want to find someone's cabin in the middle of nowhere, you can almost find it now with the systems and the technologies. They are so accurate nowadays; you are able to identify a lot of the systems with just basically using those types of system. I know for a fact that you can talk to somebody over the phone and they can just get on the computer and you can sort of illustrate where the river crossings are or look at where the cabins are or even look at where there are granular materials and whatnot without even having to put a foot on the ground. I think that this government should look at that as possibly a cost savings if we use the system and have it more user friendly, that we can use it in all different venues instead of simply just one area. I think that I would like to know, is there a possibility of looking at a study to see exactly how compatible this system is and is it capable of doing these other functions than simply just buy a high-tech system for one use.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We would be happy to provide committee with a brief couple pages to lay out the systems that we do have and of their multi-use and what use we do make of things like Google Earth. I think it is high definition enough. I agree with the Member on those things where there are fixed resources that we are looking at. A lot of the Google Earth information that I have used or seen is not live. It is refreshed periodically. I would be prepared to provide that to committee. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We are moving on to Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just trying to get a bit of clarification. You talked about our Mackenzie River Basin water management stuff we are doing. Is this \$65,000 that is identified here the only money that we, as the GNWT, are putting towards a transboundary water agreement? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ABERNETHY: I am obviously a little concerned about the water in the Mackenzie Basin with the tar sands directly upstream from us and the toxic tar ponds that they have in close proximity to the river. We have already been able to notice, and we have seen, that individuals in Fort Chip, by

example, the cancer rates have been going up. I have seen photos myself of incredibly ugly fish out of the river that is just downstream from where the toxic tar ponds are. I don't think most people in Alberta are that concerned, because the vast majority of the people live upstream and/or are completely outside of the basin altogether. Research I have done has shown that if any one of these toxic tar ponds were to ever break loose, we in the Northwest Territories would be the ones who would suffer the most. That is obviously a concern to me. I think \$65,000, when I think that amount, it seems like a lot of money, but we need a transboundary water agreement with some teeth, something that will actually make a difference, not caving in to Alberta completely.

I understand that Alberta has done some things recently. They have changed some of their regulations around water usage which is going to limit the tar sands producers to some degree, but that is only going to be a positive benefit to us if, in fact, their exploration and extraction does not increase from where it is and that glaciers continue to provide plenty of water, which we don't believe will with the amount that the glaciers have melted. At some point it is going to have a significant impact on the water flowing to the Northwest Territories. Like I said, if any of these toxic ponds were to have a major breach, and I do know that the majority of them are a little ways from the river so it would take quite a bit to get into the river in raw form, but if any of them were to breach and get into the river, we'd have some major, major, major ramifications in the Northwest Territories. It could, in fact, kill the basin. The 2,364 people in Fort Smith would be the first people in the Northwest Territories to experience the negative aspects of a breach of the tar sand toxic ponds into us. Then we've got 484 in Fort Res who would obviously be next. We've got a significant number of people in Lutselk'e, Ndilo, Dettah, Yellowknife, Hay River and Hay River Reserve who technically live on Great Slave Lake. Great Slave Lake is the fifth largest lake in North America and the deepest one in North America. Just recently, DIAND did some studies out in the East Arm in the deepest part of the lake and were able to identify new species of fish. That's in the area that's soon going to be a new national park for the Northwest Territories. If those tailings ponds break, that toxic water will flow into Great Slave Lake and all of us who live around it are going to be negatively affected.

It's not just going to be us; it's going to be the people in Fort Providence who are the first people on the river who are going to get hit by the toxic water that's making its way down to the Beaufort Sea. There are 727 people who live on the shore right in Fort Providence itself. We've got 1,216 who live on the shore of the river in Fort Simpson. There

are 122 in Wrigley, 505 in Tulita, 761 in Norman Wells and 557 in Fort Good Hope. All these people are going to be severely affected by the toxic water flowing down our river. That river is the lifeblood of the Mackenzie Valley and if we can't fish in it, if we can't hunt alongside it, if the animals that are relying on the river to survive are poisoned by the toxic ponds, we, as 44,000 people in the Territories, all lose. Those aren't the only ones. We've got a couple communities along the river that aren't on the Mackenzie River itself like Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, Aklavik; the last two are on the Peel River. But ultimately the Mackenzie is still a lifeblood for them as well and if this leaks we've got a problem...Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk are two of the last ones that are going to be affected by any leaking of these toxic tar ponds.

The reason that I bring all that up is because \$65,000 doesn't sound like an awful lot of money. How can we ensure that whatever we develop by way of the transboundary water agreement is going to have the teeth required to actually protect the 44,000 people who live in the Northwest Territories? We don't sound like much. I don't think Alberta is really that concerned about us. I think they think about their bitumen production and their extraction of that stuff from the tar sands and I think they think to themselves, no biggie, it's only 44,000 people, billions of dollars, everything will be alright. But I look around this room and there isn't one person who isn't going to be affected.

To the Minister: What are we doing and how are we ensuring that our transboundary water agreement will have the teeth required to protect the people of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First and foremost, we've been working very hard for the last 14 or 15 months on the Water Strategy. Between ourselves and INAC we're going to have spent, by the time we're finished, about \$800,000 to do this what I believe will be the best of its kind Water Strategy in the country that will give us all the key principles and elements of a comprehensive water strategy of what's required right from the groundwater, surface water and everywhere in between; precipitation, flows, the whole complex area of water. It will give us the best policy base to go forward to negotiate our bilateral with the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Agreement which, while it is not perfect, is the only instrument we do have.

The \$65,000 is our share that we put in along with money put in by Yukon, Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C., and ourselves. We have been saying now, since we got elected and we're trying to have a meeting with the Mackenzie River Basin Board, that we should be at least increasing our contribution by half, if not double -- every jurisdiction -- to give the

Mackenzie River Basin Board the resources to do business. They operate now, and have since 1997, on a budget of about just a shade over a quarter-million dollars a year, which, given the magnitude of the river basin, one of the biggest in North America, is a very miniscule amount of money.

We recognize that there's a need to rejuvenate the Mackenzie River Basin Board and that's one of our key intents. We've raised water at every meeting we've been at. We've had a partial meeting of the Mackenzie River Basin Board to try to get them together when I was in Whitehorse recently. We couldn't get all the members there, but I talked to Minister Renner and he indicated, yes, we do have to gather.

I just want to assure the Member...He uses the phrase "cave in completely to Alberta." I can assure the Member that our intention is to take all the steps necessary to protect the interests of the Northwest Territories. One of the reasons we're going to be effective at this is because we're going to have spent the time and money on a good strategy. We are going to have, as our strategy is titled, Northern Voices on Northern Water. We intend and hope to have all the aboriginal governments with us, shoulder to shoulder, as we look at the transboundary issues we have to deal with. We will be negotiating with these folks in Alberta and in B.C. and in Saskatchewan.

Very clearly we recognize now, more than we did in 1997, the complexity of the whole issue of water and we looked at things that have been done around the world. I've read information about what's happened in the Nile with the seven countries trying to negotiate water agreements, bilaterals versus multilaterals, things that have taken hundreds of years, wars that have been fought over this issue. So we recognize very clearly, as a downstream jurisdiction, that we have an enormous responsibility. We are going to discharge that, we believe, effectively. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: Just to be clear, I'm not meaning to criticize Alberta too much. I know since that major bird kill last year in the tar ponds that they have gone a long way to making differences in how they're actually treating their water and treating the tar ponds themselves. I think that's good. Like I said, they have made some improvements to the legislation. It's more the companies that I'm worried about. I think it will be easier for the oil production companies in the tar sands to beg forgiveness than ask permission as they destroy the water in the Mackenzie Basin, which causes me some concern.

My last question, seeing as how I'm running out of time, can you tell me what role the National Water Strategy will play in meeting our goals as the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There is one area of water that has yet to be tested in the courts that will be a major defining area and that is as we go forward in the North, and in every jurisdiction but in northern Alberta as well, and that's the issue of the aboriginal rights when it comes to water, through treaties, land claims, self-government agreements where it's been built in through negotiations. We believe that the opportunity is there working collectively to present a very good, effective case to Alberta.

The National Water Strategy, we are of the opinion, we're one water basin, but every section of the country has issues with water; that there is a leadership role that should be provided by the federal government that is not currently there at a national level. It's been identified in every jurisdiction. It doesn't matter if you look at the St. Lawrence, if you look at Ontario where Walkerton happened, you look at southern Alberta where they're water-stressed and things are going to get worse. We need to have standards. We need to have a national strategy because of issues like resource development, inter-jurisdictional issues, but also international issues as they pertain to the border with the Americans, for example, and where we share common watersheds and the demand under NAFTA and all these other places, agreements where there may be pressures put on our water systems.

We have been active proponents that not only do we need to be organized through Mackenzie River Basin but that Mackenzie River Basin is not separate from the prairie provinces water board area in southern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan. They're linked and they're tied in Manitoba. Groundwater is an area, for example, that has not been thoroughly mapped across the country. The aquifers, if they're like the United States, cross a multitude of states; in our case, cross a multitude of provinces and territories. Absolutely, we need a National Water Strategy. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I have next on the list, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple of questions on this page. One of them has to do with the term "field support." I understand the department is establishing a field support unit and I was wondering if I could get a bit of an explanation as to what this unit is going to do. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, we're on 13 or 14?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): We should be on page 13-13. I'll call now on Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Sorry, Mr. Chair. My enthusiasm here. They used to deal with compliance and have been renamed field units, but I'll get the deputy to speak to that issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The field support unit, as the Minister indicated, previously existed under a name of compliance but in some reorganization of the department we had a number of functions; for example, we have public education sitting in policy and planning. We had little chunks sitting all over. Training wasn't being addressed. What we felt was absolutely necessary to provide support to the communities and regional staff to be better organized within ENR to provide those types of services and have a coordinated function. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you for that explanation. It makes a lot of sense. To the question of dollars, is this unit, now that it's amalgamated a number of different pieces into one particular unit, is it existing with the same amount of dollars that existed in all the bits before or is it more or is it less dollars? Thank you.

MR. BOHNET: It's actually a re-profiling of existing positions that already exist, bringing them together. Existing dollars with, subject to this budget being approved, the area around traditional knowledge would also fit into that particular support unit, so that's where some additional resources would come from. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BISARO: I wanted to also ask about, and I mentioned it in my opening comments, the municipal wastewater effluent requirements that are coming from the federal government. I'm not too sure where ENR fits into this plan but it is mentioned in the business plans that we looked at in November, but it also mentions other departments. So I wonder if I could get an explanation of just what the department is doing. If it's in conjunction with other departments, what they're doing in conjunction with other departments and a timeline on this particular initiative. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We are working along with other departments -- Health, Public Works and MACA -- on the issue of water

from taking it from the rivers and lakes to the tap and from the tap and toilets back to be processed. This wastewater standard is an agreement that took seven years to negotiate. Now, for the first time, with the exception of three jurisdictions that haven't signed on at this point, we now have all the other jurisdictions accepting national standards for the treatment of wastewater. Minister Prentice, I believe, summed it up the best where he summarized it and said as a country we have to agree and start working towards the day when we no longer, if we say we're concerned about the environment and the water, that we're no longer going to agree or allow raw sewage to be pumped into the waterways across the land.

These standards set the plan in place over the long term. It's going to take decades and it's got many billions of dollars nationally tied to it to do this. The first step was thought to be the need for standards that we can now ascribe and aspire to meet. We're going to have to do our planning over the coming years to adjust our infrastructure development along with communities and keep working with the federal government for additional funding, to get this done so that we can have primary and secondary treatment of wastewater. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Two concerns: One is the financial, and I know the Minister mentioned about going after the federal government for dollars and that it will take a number of years to accomplish what needs to be done. At this point, is there a deadline by which communities will have to meet federal standards? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, ongoing northern work has been to assist us to continue to sort out the implementation, because there's a clear recognition through the northern part of Canada that there are special considerations in terms of what type of treatment, the cold weather, the distance, the cost. We're going to be working on that over the... This plan is going to stretch out for a number of decades, recognizing the long-term requirements. The federal government has told us that their Build Canada infrastructure and gas tax money is their contribution, however, I think the general sense from around the FPT table was that it's our opinion that they have further obligations, although at this point they were very clear that that was their contribution. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I was, unfortunately, expecting that response from the federal government. That seems to be their answer to everything. I'm particularly concerned with not necessarily the amount of money that's required -- that's one concern -- but I'm also concerned that the communities are not going to have the capacity, human resource capacity and the skills, whether it be either skilled people or enough people to deal with these large

projects. I guess I would like to know from the Minister if the department, in conjunction with these other departments, have you given any consideration to how you're going to assist communities. It's one thing to say that, okay, they've got gas tax money or they have infrastructure money and tell them to go away and, you know, provide the plants or the treatment of their water to meet these federal standards, but I really think that there's going to be difficulties on the part of particularly small communities to get these projects done, because they kind of won't know where to start and they won't have the human resources to help them get started. Is that something that's in consideration by this northern research working group or by just GNWT departments, the four that you've mentioned that are working on this particular issue? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It was a little over a week ago that we were in Whitehorse and signed the agreement. As we go forward now on the implementation side, it will be part of the business planning process and it will be one of the challenges that this government and this Assembly will have to build into their planning on a go-forward basis, recognizing that what has been laid out has a timeline of 20 to 30 years, recognizing the cost and the complexity of getting all the communities onside and recognizing the fundamental goal as a country is to no longer make it acceptable to pump raw sewage into our waterways. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: If I suggested that I disagree with this particular issue or initiative, I don't at all. I totally agree with the premise that we don't want to be dumping raw sewage into anywhere in our land.

I would like to ask the Minister one last question relative to working on this issue. Are they working with or have they considered working with the NWT Association of Communities? Are they advised of what we are doing as a GNWT and where they fit in, what they can and should do to help out? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The work that's gone on over the last number of years has been, from what I understand, a territorial effort including communities and NTAC. In fact, I know one of the water people from Fort Smith sat on working groups and the big push to try to move from guidelines to standards. Clearly, and the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs will be able to speak more thoroughly to this, but we are by just the very definition, since these are community-based systems, we're going to be continuing to work very closely with communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just in regard to the discussion about the aboriginal rights and water rights and the quality and quantity and rate of flow that's in their agreements. I think one thing we're finding is that you can have all the words in the world, but if you don't have the baseline data that's going to be needed to prove your case, it doesn't stand for anything. I think that as a government, I know in my previous experience on the land and water board, that we're totally appalled at the federal government. Once they handed that Mackenzie Valley Resources Act over to the Northwest Territories they shut down all the water monitoring stations they had in the Northwest Territories and there was only one in the Yukon at the Snake River. I think, as governments, in order to press your case, you have to have baseline data. I'd like to ask the Minister if we're doing anything by way of putting monitoring stations in place, say at Fort Smith where the Alberta water flows into the Northwest Territories or at Fort Liard where the water flows from Yukon into the Northwest Territories, and the waters that flow from other drainage systems such as the Peel River from Yukon into the Northwest Territories. I think in order to have an argument about the effects that water is having downstream you have to be able to monitor and develop that baseline that's going to be needed to argue those cases. I'd like to know what this government is doing to ensure that the monitoring is taking place. If that means that we put our own systems in place, that's something we can consider. There are remote systems in place that you can monitor from afar. In most cases if you have a community close by like in Fort Smith or Fort Liard, you can monitor right out of the community. It's just a matter of having that system in the water that monitors the flow of the water and the temperature and taking the tests that will be needed to determine what is in the water. I'd like to know if that is something your department is doing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could start back down in Alberta and B.C. I attended a water and hydrological conference that had all the specialists that come in to measure water, glaciers, snow packs, all the things in rivers and groundwater. And out of that meeting came a proposal that is going to go to the western Premiers to deal with making sure we build in resources for all these different involved agencies, provinces and territories to put adequate resources into the monitoring and evaluation of all the water for the reasons that my colleague talked about. As well, in addition, to try to track the very critical things like flow rates. Also built into our strategy is the plan and the need for us to, in partnership with the federal government, look at

trying to increase the number of monitoring stations that currently exist in the Northwest Territories. Of equal importance, of course, is to make sure that there's adequate monitoring done in Alberta right up to the headwaters of the Athabasca and the Peace for us down here in the North. So there are a whole number of different places that we're pushing to improve the monitoring. Because we recognize and agree, as well, that our baseline information is very poor and in the North our knowledge about groundwater is almost non-existent. That's one-third of the hydrological cycle and it leaves a huge gap in our ability to plan effectively.

MR. KRUTKO: I also have to agree with Mr. Abernethy that for \$65,000 of our portion into the Mackenzie Basin stuff...I mean, those dollars have been there for years as far as I can remember. I think that if we really mean to do justice and we really mean what we say that this is an important issue, then I think we should be putting more money into that.

The same thing with regard to traditional knowledge. I noticed that you have \$70,000 in there and I think that again...I mean, for \$70,000 how much data and information are you going to compile for \$70,000? There are a lot of cultural groups throughout the Northwest Territories, not just one or two. There are six or seven. You have to be able to work with all the groups to develop that traditional knowledge baseline and to compile the information by the studies. I'd like to ask the Minister if there are any plans to increase those amounts, realizing the importance of these two areas in dealing with the whole area of climate change, monitoring the water systems, and also the need to put resources into these areas so that we can expand the capacities so they can do more work in those areas?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: On the issue of the Mackenzie River Basin Board contribution we agree. We have made the case to the other signatories that we should be at least increasing the budget by 50 percent so that they in fact have money to do more meaningful work with the small amount that's there, which is tied up mainly in staff. We are prepared to, and plan to, increase our contribution to \$100,000.

On the traditional knowledge there's other money in the budget. Another \$110,000 for traditional knowledge. This is a contract, this piece. There's other money in the budget that I can get Mr. Dalley to speak to.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Dalley.

MR. DALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have in addition to the \$70,000, which is a contribution

and grant, we have \$110,000 which is in other expenses. Fifty-thousand of this is a strategic initiative related to traditional knowledge under travel and there's \$50,000 related to strategic initiative under contracts.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Dalley. Mr. Krutko. Nothing further. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking at the Interim Resource Management Assistance Program Agreement. I know that I was advised by the Minister that the idea will be, it's fairly consistent that you guys go through supplementary appropriation once the federal dollars are secured and this is 25 cent dollars. Would the department consider increasing that amount? Even a modest increase of \$95,000 would bring an extra \$280,000 or \$285,000 to this budget; to the overall budget. As it stands now I believe that the \$305,000 brings us \$915,000 from the Department of Indian Affairs. I was wondering if the Minister could...Because I feel I'm being advised by the people in Tu Nedhe that there could be more activity going on with the resource management in that area. I'm assuming it will be the same in Deh Cho. But I know for the Akaitcho they're saying that the monitoring and so on that they use this money for is very short term.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member did raise this in the House. I have the interim agreement lying on my desk in anticipation of our meeting that we're going to be having on Friday, I believe, to discuss this very issue. I can say in this House that we're prepared to look and have that discussion with the Member and we're prepared to talk to the federal government to see. I know the issue is about additional monitoring, the longer-term monitoring to see what funds we could possibly find from within.

I'd also point out that my understanding in talking to the deputy is that there is unsubscribed money from one of the Member's communities -- Lutselk'e, to be specific -- where they haven't applied for the money that's there for them that could be used if they would do that. But we're prepared to have that discussion with the Member.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Committee, we're on page 13-13, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$10.645 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Moving to page 13-14, activity summary, corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$135,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Moving on to page 13-15, information item, corporate management, active positions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Same question in regards to the affirmative action numbers by way of P1s, P2s, P3s and anyone who is in the department with a disability.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Rather than read the list, I will just commit to provide the list to committee that lays it out in detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Are we on page...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): We are currently on page 13-15. Thank you. I see no further comments on page 13-15, information item, corporate management, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): We are moving on to page 13-17, activity summary, environment, operations expenditure summary, \$9.174 million. Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the Minister's response to general comments, he talked about Giant Mine. I know that the federal government is moving forward with some remediation of that Giant Mine site which involves freezing in a significant amount of arsenic underground and using not just a freezing process but thermal siphons as part of the solution. If you go outside here and look at our lovely road, thermal siphons don't work or don't appear to work. I am a little concerned, honestly, about the method by which the federal government plans to contain the arsenic, given their method and obviously global warming. I am curious if the Minister can tell me what money, if any, are we investing to offer alternate solutions to the federal government. Are we doing anything to encourage them to do a more thorough and permanent cleaning as opposed to freezing this deadly toxin underground so that your children and grandchildren can deal with it later? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The best minds of the day have agreed to that particular solution. We have already booked the money a number of years ago to deal more with the surface

effects. The plan has been to get through all the steps necessary to actually implement this freezing in place concept and that is currently what is underway. There has been no move to go back to the drawing board and revisit what has been already agreed to and budgeted for. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: Fair enough. I am not convinced yet that the freezing in is the best method. I continue to have concerns. I would love it if this government could work with the federal government to come up with a more permanent plan that doesn't have to be cleaned up by our children or grandchildren. I will leave that alone now.

I want to talk a bit more about the plastic bags and the levies that we are going to place on single use bags. I think it is a good idea. I am very happy about it. I did ask the Minister some questions by e-mail and he provided me with a number of responses. I just, for the record, want to get clarity that this is for all stores. It is not just grocery stores. We are talking in Yellowknife the Canadian Tire, Shoppers Drug Mart, Wal-Mart, Co-op. All of these stores are going to have to charge a levy for the single use bags. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It is applied to the retail outlets that sell single use bags. We have pulled together a very rudimentary sample that I have taped to the door of my office, that people could look at as they go by, were the ones that cost 25 cents. The smaller ones, the produce bags and those types of things, prescription bags that will be exempt are there as well. Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is retail outlets. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you for that information. I have seen the display. It is pretty clear.

My last question has to do with the milk levy or the milk deposit that we are talking about. I have received the response from the Minister, which basically suggests it is going to be \$20 a year in the way of the portion of the deposit that you don't get back, which doesn't sound significant but we do continually talk about the cost of milk and other fresh vegetables as an example. Anything that we are doing to increase the cost of milk, I think we have to think about it hard before we make a final decision on that. I am not saying that the deposit on milk is wrong, considering that you are going to get half back, but I just want to make sure that we are content with the fact that we are going to be increasing the cost of milk in the communities.

I would like to just throw out there a possible alternative. Sugar drinks aren't necessarily good for you. All the pops and the juices that are really high in sugar are bad. They seem to be very popular and

people continue to buy them. Has there been any thought about maybe increasing the deposit on that and eliminating a deposit on milk but still providing the incentive to recycle the milk? Maybe go with a 10 cent deposit on milk which is fully refundable, but cover the difference that we need to raise to make this doable financially by increasing the deposit on some of the sugar drinks, which would really be great if we encourage people not to drink it. Has the Minister considered options like that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We are looking at those types of options, as I indicated earlier. Before we proceed with implementation, we will be coming back, both with the bags and the milk, with what our best thinking is and how to do this. We recognize the concern about milk.

One of the other options we haven't fully costed, of course, is with the retail bag levy at 25 cents. If we assume that at least for the first year or two we are still going to be using nine million bags that we are going to get a levy on, my rudimentary math tells me that is over a couple of million dollars that possibly there may be an offset that could be dealt with that way. We will come back with options to try to make this so that we address the need without creating another pressure. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: I would like to thank the Minister for that. I think it is a great initiative. I am happy you guys are out doing that. I am looking forward to seeing what you bring back. You did talk also about these recyclable bags that you are going to distribute. Do we intend to give one of those to every resident in the Northwest Territories? If so, how? If I can have a rough idea of what that one time cost might be, that would be great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): I will call on Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every household in the Northwest Territories will be receiving one of these environmental type bags for carrying their groceries. The cost per bag is less than 50 cents a bag. The total cost is yet to be calculated as we get them out. We hope to have a major public education campaign that will take place in early April to assist with this type of program. The bags would be out to households shortly after that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you. I look forward to carrying one of those bags to the grocery store next time I go or shortly thereafter or after they are distributed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): I didn't hear a question there. We are moving on. Next on my list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The levy on bags is very interesting. I was wondering if the department had considered that when you go to the grocery store and you want to put your groceries in a cardboard box, something that the grocery stores usually have a lot of but they tell you that they just crushed them all just before you got there. Is there anything you can do to ask stores that receive things in boxes not to ruin boxes? Boxes are good. They are recyclable in their present form, not just in bundles that they shipped off someplace for recycling. A lot of people that pick up groceries are putting them in their vehicles and packing them, taking them on airplanes and things like that. It seems a little bit ironic that we consume the energy to destroy perfectly good cardboard boxes, which are actually a much better way of carrying groceries than in a plastic bag that flops all over the place. Is there any consideration on the reuse of cardboard boxes?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I believe that they are there as reusable. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We haven't looked at any plan to encourage stores, especially grocery stores to do that. I do suspect that will be a natural next step as people start asking for that. I know, for example, in the store in Fort Smith, the owner there has taken it upon himself to buy a cardboard press and he bundles and ships all of his cardboard south. He makes a few dollars, but he saves \$1,200 a month on tipping fees at the dump. I think if there is a demand from people that don't want plastic bags, that would be looked at. We can make a note as we go forward to raise that issue with grocery retailers. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Another thing I find curious is we talk about the success of our beverage container recycling and how people are turning them back in and it is a wonderful program. When it comes to the collecting of those empty beverage containers from outlying communities, it is true that we, as a government, pay somebody to drive there in a truck to pick them up and do not take full advantage of back hauls. When you talk about wasting gas and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions...Okay, let's just say that we are bringing beverage containers back from Fort Smith to Hay River to the depot there. Would we be always looking to maximize the opportunities for backhauling in an empty truck for those containers or would we be giving somebody a separate contract to drive out there empty and bring those bottles back? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: We are also making every effort to use the backhaul method for hauling back. Some of the contractors or some of the smaller communities where they have less storage facilities to actually handle some of the beverage containers, we do issue contracts for people to go into some of these small communities and bring them back to the larger centres. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would suggest that almost every small community needs goods taken into the community. I would suggest that ENR coordinate very closely with the people who haul the goods in to put the bottles in the empty trucks coming out and not award contracts to drive into communities just to pick up empty bottles. That is just a comment.

Mr. Chairman, another thing I was wondering about was the issue of rubber tires and how much progress has the government made on implementing a deposit system and a refund system on tires, and what are we doing to recycle rubber tires that can be used in all kinds of ways? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The issue of tires is one of the items on our list. We have things in order which we think is a priority and doable given capacity issues. The focus is the beverage container, the single use retail bags. We want to deal with the milk cartons. We have our plans underway for electronic waste. We are working with communities on how to deal with paper, and then we also recognize that tires are on a need to be dealt with but we haven't got there yet. As well, we want to deal with the issue of batteries as well. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Rubber tires have been on the agenda of the government for a very long time. They are something which fill up landfills. They are able to be caught on fire and spew out some pretty toxic fumes. I would suggest that tires should be a priority of this government. Like I said, it has been on the agenda for quite some time now. I think I have been talking about it for five years myself. It would be nice to make some progress on the rubber tires.

The e-trash, I know at the Hay River dump they are implementing a new fee very shortly for dropping off any appliances like refrigerators, because there must be some processing that needs to be done

with those to kind of decommission them at the dump. So there is a new fee coming in place for that. That is good to see.

The other one I just wanted to ask about is the whole activity in the communities under environmental protection. Maybe I am in the dark ages here or something but we have...First of all, let me ask you. How many environmental protection officers do we have in Hay River? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: None.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I find it ironic, I guess, that you take stuff to the dump and you burn the trash. I think they still burn garbage. Maybe they don't burn garbage anymore. Maybe they just bury it all now. We have an environmental protection officer driving around the community all day sometimes looking for people that would be burning products like wood.

Okay, here is a better example. You can burn wood in your fireplace and the smoke goes up your chimney and out to the environment, but if you have wood pallets, there is a very huge kaffuffle that takes place in the community when somebody wants to burn something seemingly as innocuous as wood pallets. I just wonder if this person has enough to do for a full-time position in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. BOHNET: The individual actually has lots to do. He actually looks after the other communities in the South Slave as the environmental protection officer. All of our officers are also cross-trained. The other thing, as far as burning some of the pallets, some of the pallets are treated with chemicals and that. They are not the best things to burn if they are treated pallets. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I understand that sometimes the pallets aren't treated, the wood, but the nails that hold them together are treated and, therefore, are suspect for environmental contamination if somebody were to burn one. I guess what I am trying to say is that I'm all for environmental protection, but, as a government, I think we should make sure that our resources are expended in a way that really have an effect on the environment and aren't nitpicking people and harassing people for nothing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I didn't hear a question there. Next on my list, I have Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the big problems we are having in our communities is dealing with disposable waste. There is a no burn policy now that you are not allowed to burn the garbage at the garbage dumps. What we are finding in a lot of our communities is that they are now overflowing and basically having to move to different locations. There are a lot of vehicles, tires, old batteries, different wood products, old barrels and stuff at these garbage dumps. I think that, at some point, someone has to clean it up.

At one time, I thought the government was looking at a big mulcher that they were going to take to the different communities and drop it off and then go to another community. I know that it is something that they were talking about back in the 13th Assembly. It was a program that they had in place, but then all of a sudden we haven't heard anything of it. I am just wondering, what is the community doing to find ways to recycle old waste by way of products that can be recycled or even mulched to a point where you can put it on a barge and ship it south by way of different types of metals or, even Mrs. Groenewegen mentioned, tires and stuff like that? Those things you can leave in those different communities, but, again, they are an eye sore in most communities because you have nowhere else to put them.

I think the government has to have a plan in place of how do you dispose of a lot of this stuff than simply just hauling it out to the dump and leaving it there. What is the government doing? They used to have a program that they looked at sort of mulchers to deal with barrels and other things in communities. Why hasn't that program been reinstated?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, this is, as the Member has pointed out, an area that has...There are a significant number of issues with that program that the Member is referring to. I understand there used to be a federal program. We are laying out here before this Legislature the steps we are trying to take to deal with recycling and the different types of waste, recognizing that we don't have the capacity or the ability to deal with all the problems that are before us. We are looking at some of their newer models for crushing and shredding barrels, for example. I know down in the South Slave at different times they've brought in compactors to crunch up cars and haul them out of there. But we don't have any equipment that we have that we could take to communities and circulate them through, but it is an area of technology that we are looking at.

As the Member indicated, every community has got their similar issue and we don't want to have communities trying to buy their own. If we could get one that could be moved, that's one of the challenges we are checking into. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: In two of my communities, Fort McPherson and Aklavik, they are looking at new landfill sites because their sites are filled to capacity. They can't put anything else in there. I think that again under regulations, you talk about the whole new federal push to deal with grey water and have to train and everything else. What is the difference between having a garbage dump in the Delta, which seeps runoff and also when we have floods? All that stuff flows back into the water table. As a department, don't you think you should take that more seriously with regard to what that effect has by way of the environment and the effect is has around a community, where we are having to go farther and farther from the community to find these landfill sites? Without gravel, especially in Aklavik, the only reasonable place to put a landfill site is probably up towards the mountains. What is his department doing to assist communities dealing with the landfill problem and also, as Mrs. Groenewegen mentioned, you are the ones enforcing the law but at the end of the day you have to allow for some options. When you want to enforce regulations or legislation, you have to ensure that you are showing there are alternatives or options that those communities can look at. What is your department doing to work with communities to assist them in dealing with the problem we have in our communities with waste?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We're instituting all the programs we've been talking about. I also know there are requirements for landfills, that it's not like it was in the old days where you could dump whatever you want whenever you want and burn whatever you want. The standards have increased significantly in terms of the requirement for burning, separation of materials, the hazardous goods, toxic substances. We recognize that we are a consumer society and we have a tremendous amount of waste, and that is one of the challenges. Because setting up a landfill, as the Member indicates, is a very expensive proposition and our goal, as a government, in ENR, is to set up enough recycling programs and to divert as much material away from waste sites as we can, recognizing that there is a lot of challenges facing communities.

We've had issues raised in other communities as well about how far away landfills are, the requirement for roads to get there, the cost to actually construct them properly. It is a very expensive undertaking. But as a government, we are working with communities to try to deal with those issues as well recognizing that, once again,

we have many more challenges than we have resources. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Just with regard to the garbage bag issue, did the Minister receive any proposals from the Fort McPherson Canvas Shop regarding them providing canvas bags to the government? It is a government coronation. It is a northern company. I am wondering if you considered looking at northern preference when you were looking at putting out this tender. If anything, maybe we could do a better job than simply giving out bags. Maybe we could give out a packsack or a backpack and you can call it the Miltenberger Pack or something.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The 50-cent bag cost was one that was very tough to match in terms of affordability. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I am serious. Have you considered other options than simply a bag such as a backpack or a packsack or a Miltenberger Pack?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We are looking at the more traditional, simple, inexpensive bag with a couple of handles on it to carry your groceries in that is reusable, hopefully, for a considerable length of time. Trying to do every house and to keep our costs down given the economic stresses that we are all under as a government. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to respond to the concern of my colleague Mr. Ramsay, who was suggesting that he was going to have difficulty cleaning up after maybe not his pet, but other people's pets or that people were going to have difficulty with their pets. It made me think that perhaps there's a new business out there waiting to happen. People are going to need something to pick up their pet waste, so maybe somebody in the Territory can design a pet waste container, a reusable pet waste container. Get some funding from the government, build a little business and get it going. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Didn't really hear a question, but I know the Minister wants to respond to it anyway. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure about some of the other larger communities, but I think Yellowknife is the only one that has that bylaw. I do know that if you look at the bags on my door, there are produce bags, bread bags, you are going to have any number of bags that would be more than adequate to do the job required to waste not want not, as it were, as you move behind your canine. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No comment on the last comment.

---Laughter

I'd like to start by looking at the Biomass Strategy. I am wondering where we are with that, when it's going to be available and what the timing is being considered in terms of implementation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are a number of facets to the Biomass Strategy that is currently under review. We have things like setting up plans to swap woodstoves, encourage people to buy woodstoves. The bigger, more fundamental issue is going to be the co-generation, the generation of heat.

In the smaller communities we are looking at pilot projects, as the Member knows, to check out some of the technologies available to do a number of things. We are interested in heat, the way to heat communities and the ability to generate electricity with biomass and there are different types of technology that are out there. Once we are clear on a type of technology, then we can start rolling that piece out. We are going to be converting, as we've shown here, larger facilities to pellets and we are going to look at putting that money into a central fund to be able to...the savings that are going to be realized by biomass versus diesel, to put that money into a fund to allow us to do more retrofits in government buildings. So there are a number of pieces that are underway.

We are also looking at some jurisdictions in Europe that are far ahead of us in terms of how they use these particular technologies and we'd like to be able to look at and see that we aren't trying to reinvent the wheel. We have all these different areas that we're looking at. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, I am quite supportive of this approach. I wonder if gasification, wood gasification, is one of the technologies that are being looked at. I have to note here that I have seen this operating in a home. Actually, the father-in-law of Mr. Wunderlin of Arctic Green Energy, as well as an apartment building-sized operation in Victoria, B.C. It's apparently one of the most efficient uses of wood, biomass. I'm wondering if the Minister could confirm that is part of the consideration of the Biomass Strategy. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are, as a government, looking for the best technology that would be the most appropriate and then available and effective and efficient that we can find recognizing that it's an area of energy production that is not very prevalent yet. I think the Member can rest assured that as we do our work to try and focus in on the technology or technologies that are the best, we want to look at all options. We have no particular one configuration that we think is the silver bullet. We recognize there is going to be many options and the difficulty is going to be making the best decision we can to get moving. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I also wanted to ask and perhaps it will pop up under forest management later, but in association with the Biomass Strategy, are there community forest inventories, community sustainable harvesting plans and support for implementation of those plans on the ground for communities being planned as part of the Biomass Strategy or is that perhaps a parallel stand-alone exercise? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The short answer is yes. Part of the planning and money that we have available is to do the community inventories in addition to the broader inventories we'd have to do as a government on the vaster tracts of boreal forest. As we look at community energy plans, that is a piece that we have some funding put aside for to work with communities. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate the Minister's comments there. Again, I have personal experience and it didn't seem too difficult in working with the community to get forestry to do the community forest inventory, but the next stages somehow seemed to be insurmountable so they will require a particular focus, I think, and perhaps experience being gained along the way. Just a comment there.

One other question here is, what is our experience with the availability of, sort of, expertise in renewable energy technologies in the North, of the department? And if it's, sort of, not there, if we're having to go south quite a bit or find it's tied up with just a couple of projects, what is this department doing to ensure development of this expertise in the North? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There is, I think, a significant amount of knowledge and expertise in the north. Some of it is within the department, some of it is developed through personal interest or business opportunities. I know there are folks in Fort Smith. I know there are folks in Yellowknife. I know there are people that have proposals before us from other communities as well.

Of course, we are looking to other jurisdictions; we don't want to reinvent the wheel and, where necessary, we will contact people outside of our jurisdiction. We are planning, as I indicated, a fact-finding trip to go and look at some in-use technologies. We think there's some northern capacity here as well. We continue to hire folks. There are some graduates coming, interns that we can put to use as well in this area. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: My last question here is on greenhouse gas emissions inventories. I know it's a real sticky wicket and it's a very difficult undertaking. I believe the department has done it in 1996 and 2001 and probably due for another one, and I'm wondering when we might expect the next inventory that tells us where we are on our greenhouse gas emissions to be completed. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, that issue had been on the agenda for our climate change committee today at lunch, but we got bumped by another more pressing matter so that is still on the agenda for the meeting that we're attempting to reschedule maybe late this week or early next week. I don't have that detail before me right now, but it is on the agenda to have a look at, as the Member indicated, the sticky wicket of nailing down the targets and how do we measure them. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I understand that meeting is going to be Monday at 11:00. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's really all I had. I realize we will be getting an update and I was just wondering if we had an estimate of when that would be available. I think we'll have some more in-depth discussion. I know it is very difficult. It takes a focused and comprehensive effort, but obviously we need to know where we are on the trend line here so that we can focus our efforts even better. That's it for now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. No question. More of a comment. I have nobody else on my list. We're on page 13-17, activity summary, environment, operations expenditure summary, \$9.174 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Moving along to page 13-18. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was some talk earlier about the issue of pellets, getting pellets to the North, producing pellets in the North. What are the advantages of using pellets over wood? Why not wood? You don't need electricity to run wood

heaters and so on. What's the advantage of pellets? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of advantages especially for large applications. In terms of the product: the stove, what you need to burn, you don't need the same kind of chimneys, it's much easier to get insurance, it's recognized as safer, there is less handling of the material, it tends to be automated, the pellets that are properly squeezed have to meet standards that give them the equivalence to hardwood so they burn more efficiently and with less ash. To those of us that are traditionalist for home heating, that's a choice, that like I've made for normal wood. In terms of the big applications like the North Slave Correctional Centre, it's much easier. The Chief Jimmy Bruneau School and all these other larger operations where you...Plus you can fill a hopper and you can do regular checks as opposed to where you had a wood furnace you'd need basically a stoker to be going around to load logs and clean ashes. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I hear what you're saying for large commercial applications that pellets would be easier because you could buy them in bulk, there's less handling, you can put them in a hopper, that sort of thing. But for homes, before we run too far down the pellet trail, I think we should still think that wood has some advantages on a residential application. I have a pellet stove in a building that I own. I have a woodstove fireplace in my house, and I have to tell you, the wood is much more accessible. It's cheaper and the pellet stoves are forever needing to be unplugged, cleaned out, and they burn electricity. I guess just when we're encouraging people...If we're implementing any programs or anything, I would really like the department to keep in mind that on a single family home application I still think that wood is better than pellets. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Didn't really hear a question but I'll go to the Minister for a response. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The intention is to, of course, offer people a choice. We don't want to demonize one product over another or make one product look lesser than the other. I recognize what the Member is saying. I have been burning wood for my whole adult life as well, just regular wood. But the pellets are a product that are in wide use and some people find it convenient for the reason the Member

indicated, but we will have programs to allow people to do both. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Just one more thing. I just wondered if the Minister and the department are aware that you can actually buy a very long-burning log now that is made out of the same material that pellets are made out of. They are extremely heavy. They are about the size of a piece of wood, but they're not like little pieces. They are logs that burn for hours and hours, but they're made out of the very same material. Is the Minister familiar with that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I've seen logs like those in stores. They're each individually wrapped. You put them in and they burn for a long time, if that is what the Member is talking about. I just use jack pine, so I don't know.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: No, I'll get some of these new kind for the Minister. They are not those fire log things that you buy in the stores or the box of six. These are, like, heavy duty. They burn for hours and hours. They are a compressed wood product. They look the same colour as pellets and it's something new out. They are giving them out to people in Hay River to try in their wood burning stove. So, okay, I'll bring you one too. Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. No question, but next on my list is Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question and I guess it's a new type of energy that I am not aware of, but I wondered if the Minister could explain what wild energy is, please.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It's called a typo that never got caught.

---Laughter

MS. BISARO: Just in case anybody is listening at this time of night, what is it supposed to be, Mr. Miltenberger...I mean, Mr. Chair.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: You would replace the "i" with an "n."

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Wind. Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Mr. Bisaro. I mean Mr. Bromley.

---Laughter

MR. BROMLEY: My first question for the chair...Was that a typo, Mr. Chair?

---Laughter

No, actually, I did just have the very same question as Ms. Bisaro and I wanted to add it to my list of renewable energies, so it's there. I thought maybe I would use this time to ask Mrs. Groenewegen for a log too. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. It's wind, wind. I think Mrs. Groenewegen heard you, so no question. I will go to next on my list which is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: With regard to the Arctic Energy Alliance, we don't see much of them up in my region. I know they are based out of Yellowknife, but I notice there's a major increase in regards to funds that are going to that organization. I would like to know what are they going to do for an extra \$500,000. Now it's \$1.6 million. You might as well set up a separate department for this NGO that's in Yellowknife. What are they going to do to provide services to the northern communities in the Northwest Territories? Right now, whenever they come to our communities, they want to charge you \$100. That's why no one seems to be too fond of this organization.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Arctic Energy Alliance, there is money in the budget for three positions. We want to put one up in Inuvik; we want to put one in Norman Wells and we want to put one in the Deh Cho, probably in Fort Simpson. I think they are called Pathfinders. We also have \$550,000 to allow us to do more with energy efficiencies for individuals in houses. We want to look at an energy guide for houses. So we have that money slated to increase the service outside of Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: A lot of people in our communities who are income support clients who maintain their own home, a lot of them, \$100 for them...Is there any possible way that you can allow these guys to provide a service to low income people in our communities without having to charge them that fee?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We'll look at how we structure this to ensure that low income people aren't disadvantaged from being able to access the service. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Will there be a regional office in Inuvik? What type of system will they have? Right now it seems like they pop into a community, they show up and then they try to find their clients. If anything, before you go into a community you should at least have a client list of who you are

going to see, because it is pretty expensive to fly in and out of these communities. What I've seen from the people that I have been in contact with, these people going into our communities are only talking to one or two people. It's quite a cost to get people in and out of those communities. What are we doing to promote the program, but make it more accessible to communities so people know that this investment they are going to make is a good investment and at the end of the day, and that there are really going to be programs and services to help them out?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The intent is to establish some positions outside of Yellowknife where they will be on a permanent basis, so they can set themselves up to develop better knowledge of the region where they aren't going to be in and out from Yellowknife. We are adding money under a whole number of areas in terms of energy efficiencies, energy conservation programs and those type of areas to give people greater access as well as the benefit of the support, education, information and advice from these folks we are going to put out into the communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Nobody else on my list. We are on page 13...Sorry, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give me a breakdown of what that \$1.610 million is for and how that is going to be expended?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some numbers that may not be fine enough for the Member. Under energy efficiency, I have \$550,000; Energy Guide for Houses, \$285,000; and, for the Arctic Energy Alliance, \$775,000.

MR. KRUTKO: How much did you say was for the Energy Guide program? Was that for housing did you say?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There is \$285,000, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: Sometimes I think that this government depends too much on NGOs and we have people in the departments. They always say they have to have specialists in all the different areas from Housing to Public Works. If that's the case, maybe the government should give up those positions they have in-house and allow the private sector to provide that service. If you have people requesting these so-called specialists in the different departments, those people should do the jobs they are supposed to be doing instead of hiring consultants to do the work for them. I think that

practice seems to be the way a lot of government departments exist. They get the money and then they hire somebody else to deliver the service. For me, this should be a government responsibility either through the Housing Corporation or through the Power Corporation with regard to the energy stuff. Are there cross-references of these duties by way of what is being provided here by Arctic Energy Alliance and similar expenditures made under other departments providing the same service?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Arctic Energy Alliance was created...They are a third-party organization and we are a major funder. We sit on the board of directors and the Arctic Energy Alliance is able to access federal funding that we would not be able to. They've also developed their skills and services to deliver these types of functions. The concern has always been that it's a Yellowknife-focussed organization, mainly because they didn't have the resources to provide services on any kind of regular basis outside of Yellowknife. So we recognize that and we're putting money in, first, to increase the program area funding and, as well, to try to put some actual people on the ground in the regions to help focus on this whole area of energy and energy conservation and its complexities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Krutko. Okay. Next on my list is Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I'd like to thank Mr. Miltenberger and his witnesses. If I could please get the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort them out, that would be great. In the meantime, I'll rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 11-16(3), NWT Main Estimates 2009-2010, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

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

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, item 23, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Thursday, February 26, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Opening Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. 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
- Tabled Document 17-16(3), Supplementary Appropriation No. 3, 2008-2009
- 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

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 26, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

