

Northwest Territories   
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4th Session Day 17 16th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, January 28, 2010

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

**Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories**

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Paul Delorey

(Hay River North)

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*NWT Power Corporation*

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**Thursday, January 28, 2010**

**Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:37 p.m.

# Prayer

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Please be seated. Good afternoon, colleagues. Also a special welcome to all our guests in the gallery today. I would like to acknowledge a former Member of this House and our Commissioner for the Northwest Territories; Anthony W.J. Whitford is in the gallery.

---Applause

I’d also like to acknowledge the presence of the Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic; Mr. Dennis Bevington is in the gallery as well today.

---Applause

Orders of the day. Item 2, budget address. The honourable Mr. Miltenberger.

# Budget Address

**Introduction**

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, this, the third budget of the 16th Legislative Assembly, demonstrates the determined progress this Assembly has made in achieving its vision, even in the face of the economic uncertainty we’ve experienced over the last 18 months.

The initiatives we have pursued are on track to form a positive lasting legacy for the Northwest Territories in spite of the economic uncertainty. This budget continues to invest in this initiative and in others that will complement and build on our progress to date. I would like to thank my Cabinet colleagues, the standing committees and all other groups and individuals for their input and advice.

Two years ago we noted the storm clouds on the horizon; signs that warned us of the need for prudent budgeting on the part of our government. The measures we took in our first budget meant that we were in relatively sound fiscal shape when the storm hit in late 2008.

Last year’s budget mobilized government resources in order to help the NWT economy weather that storm. This government, with federal support, injected a record $485 million in capital spending

into our economy in 2009-10.We made the critical decision to delay planned tax increases and expenditure cuts and prepared to incur some debt, if necessary, to provide economic stability as the private sector struggled with the downturn.

The skies are slowly brightening and we are seeing some positive changes in the global economy, although significant risks and challenges remain. The storm has hit -- the worst recession since World War II -- and the clean-up will take time. With adversity also comes opportunity. We need to use this opportunity to make things better than they were before. This is our collective challenge and goal.

**The Economy**

The NWT economy took a number of blows in 2009. Territorial GDP is estimated to have fallen by 17 percent following a drop of 8 percent in 2008. Mineral exploration dropped 80 percent from 2008 and we expect diamond production to have declined in 2009. The employment rate, at 64 percent, is 7 percent lower than this time last year.

NWT private sector investment in 2009 is projected to be 46 percent lower than in 2007. Investment intentions by the mining and oil and gas industries for 2009 were half their 2007 levels.

There is also some good news.

Diamond prices are showing some improvement. Diavik and De Beers did not have to carry through on their planned December shutdowns. In addition, De Beers was able to announce a production ramp-up at their Snap Lake mine that will result in increased employment.

Commodity prices are recovering and the NWT mining sector has a number of projects scheduled in 2011 and 2012 which should boost the NWT economy. A decision by the proponents whether to proceed with the construction of the Mackenzie Gas Project is scheduled for early 2012. We are pleased that the Joint Review Panel has concluded its work and has supported the pipeline subject to a number of recommendations. The GNWT’s position is that, appropriately managed, development of NWT resources can create long-term benefits for our people, our Territory, and our communities and the rest of Canada. With the right conditions, major developments such as the Mackenzie Gas Project can help to stimulate our economy, encourage further developments of our resources, and generate local business opportunities. If it goes ahead, the project has the potential to make an important contribution to achieving our goals of sustained economic activity and strong and healthy communities.

The economic recovery will be slow, but it will be a recovery. We project the GDP will grow by 9.5 percent in 2010. Our two-year capital plan, which will inject $744 million into the NWT economy by the end of 2010-2011, is providing NWT businesses and residents with needed stability. This unprecedented capital investment has allowed breathing room for individuals and businesses to search out new opportunities as the economy recovers. As the economy recovers it will be in an environment of new and better roads, improved airport facilities, more and better housing, new schools, better community infrastructure, new energy infrastructure, more energy efficient public infrastructure, and better government information technology that will allow us to better serve communities and residents.

We are fully confident that the GNWT’s prudent yet farsighted planning has put the NWT economy in a better position to take advantage of future economic opportunities.

**Fiscal Strategy**

The global economic downturn has also negatively affected the GNWT’s fiscal position as revenues have weakened. Despite this, we have maintained our commitment to help mitigate the decline in economic activity in the NWT.

We entered the downturn in relatively sound fiscal condition, but we do not have the resources to maintain current levels of investment indefinitely. Therefore, the depth and duration of the economic slowdown continued to be a main consideration in our budget planning.

The emerging economic recovery will be slow and weak. Furthermore, the rebound of NWT employment and corporate profits and, therefore, government revenues, will take even longer. As I warned in October, GNWT corporate income tax revenues for 2009-2010 will be $29 million lower than forecasted last February.

Last month the federal Minister of Finance, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, advised that payments under Territorial Formula Financing, our key transfer payment from Canada, will continue to grow in 2010-2011 according to the formula set out in federal legislation. This was reassuring news, since the GNWT counts on this annual growth in the grant to fund our ongoing spending needs. The grant will be $920 million in 2010-2011, an increase of $56 million from the current fiscal year.

We continue to be concerned about the declining NWT population. The NWT was the only Canadian jurisdiction to lose population last year, with a drop of almost 1 percent. Although relatively small, this decline follows a decade where our population grew by only 7 percent compared to 11 percent for Canada. Not only will this directly affect future Territorial Formula Financing revenues, putting at risk our ability to fund core programs and services, it causes concerns for our future economic prospects.

Our ability to raise new revenues through tax increases is limited in good economic times and even more limited when the economic outlook is uncertain. At best we will see very modest increases in our revenues over the medium term. At worst we face considerable uncertainty around the effects of the downturn on our corporate income tax revenues. We must continue to budget based on best estimates, but must be prepared to make adjustments should reality prove substantially different.

We must also budget in the best interests of NWT residents. We are prepared to incur some debt over the medium term as we address the economic slowdown, but our approach must be sustainable. Borrowing means paying interest every year and eventually finding money to repay the debt. This puts burden on future taxpayers. We must also be mindful that our authority to borrow is limited by the federally imposed borrowing cap.

Our fiscal plan must include measures to return to a sustainable path. In the absence of significant expenditure reductions or tax increases, the best option is to maintain a tight rein on spending growth and plan to reduce capital investment over time to historical levels.

* In 2010-11 total spending will increase by $92 million, composed of $48 million in compensation and amortization increases, $25 million in forced growth, and $17 million in net spending on new initiatives.
* We will cap expenditure growth at 3 percent starting in 2010-11, net of compensation increases. This represents about $32 million for new spending each year for both forced growth and new investments. Reductions may be identified through targeted program review and could allow adjustments in these targets.
* Once we complete the projects included in the current infrastructure investment plan starting with 2012-13, capital investment will be reduced to $75 million per year.

Achieving these targets will be challenging. It will mean setting clear priorities, focusing on finding efficiencies and putting our dollars where they will be most effective. It will mean looking for creative ways of doing things, being open to new ideas and willing to challenge the status quo.

**Budget Highlights**

Mr. Speaker, the 2010-11 budget proposes operating expenditures of $1.293 billion, a 7.6 percent increase over the 2009-10 budget. After allowing for collective bargaining increases and amortization associated with our record level of capital investment of 2009‑10, this represents an increase of 3.6 percent.

Fiscal year 2010-11 represents the second year of our four-year, $60 million Energy Priorities Investment Plan. This budget includes $19 million in energy investments designed to further our goal of reducing the cost of living, mitigating climate change and reducing the NWT’s dependence on diesel fuel.

In October this Assembly approved infrastructure investments of $222 million for 2010-11. Our capital plan continues to support the economy and our residents with investments in badly needed infrastructure.

This budget forecasts revenues of $1.36 billion in 2010-11, resulting in a small operating surplus of $35 million. This follows a projected $21 million operating deficit for the current fiscal year. We estimate that we will need to borrow $89 million in the short term by the end of 2010-11. The size of our current capital investment plan means that the GNWT will carry some short-term debt for the next few years. With fiscal discipline, we project we will generate the ongoing operating surpluses needed to reduce debt levels over time.

**Expenditures**

Mr. Speaker, this budget continues to make the investments needed to better the goals of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

**Sustainable Communities**

This government is committed to the goal of achieving sustainable, vibrant and safe communities in the Northwest Territories. This budget includes $66 million for NWT community governments, an increase of 7.3 percent over 2009-10 levels.

The work of the Committee on Sustainability of Rural and Remote Communities has been particularly valuable in developing an investment strategy to help improve GNWT services in small and remote communities. Drawing on the committee’s recommendations, this budget includes investments totalling over $3.6 million including:

* $950,000 for a pilot project that will establish government service centres to improve community level access to services for residents in 10 small communities;
* $600,000 to enhance early childhood programming in rural and remote communities by increasing contribution funding for early childhood education programs and increasing access to early childhood consultants;
* $400,000 to support regional youth sporting events that increase opportunities for training, competition and healthy living for youth in rural and remote communities;
* $450,000 for three regional youth officer positions to better support youth programming in rural and remote communities;
* $400,000 for additional settlement maintainer positions in Wrigley, Fort Resolution and Behchoko to better manage maintenance activities. Three additional positions will be created in Tulita, Ulukhaktok and Sachs Harbour by reprofiling existing funding;
* $677,000 to increase funding for the Community Access Program which supports community projects that improve access to hunting, wood gathering, granular resources and recreation active areas; and
* $158,000 to support rural and remote communities in reducing drug and alcohol related crimes to provide additional training for court workers.

This budget also invests $350,000 to provide opportunities for youth in small communities to gain work experience through a Summer Employment Incentive Program for employers in these communities.

The stronger the language and culture of their residents, the stronger and more vibrant our communities will be. As part of the GNWT support for the continued regular use of aboriginal languages in NWT communities, this budget proposed $223,000 to establish an annual summer language symposium to focus on revitalization and maintenance of aboriginal languages.

Over the past two years we have pursued a number of avenues to reduce the cost of living for NWT residents, especially in our smaller communities. The most effective way to reduce the cost of living, including food for NWT residents and businesses, is to reduce energy costs, particularly in our communities that depend on diesel-generated electrical power.

In last year’s budget we introduced a four-year plan to invest $60 million in key energy initiatives. This budget announces the second year’s investment totalling almost $19 million in five strategic pillars including:

* $4.6 million to energy development and supply by focusing on hydro and transmission line development and on NWT hydro strategies;
* $4.1 million in investments in alternative energy technologies including biomass, wind energy and geothermal technology;
* $2.5 million to support energy conservation and efficiency including support for the Arctic Energy Alliance incentive programs and community energy plans;
* $4.7 million to reduce the GNWT energy use through upgrades to government buildings and public housing stock. The GNWT’s $7 million investment to date in biomass, geothermal and electric heat conversion projects has decreased the GNWT’s greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 9,000 tonnes annually and has saved the GNWT an estimated $2 million a year in reduced fuel consumption.

---Applause

* $3 million to complete and continue implementing the GNWT’s energy policies. The Electricity Rate Review Panel began its work last March and submitted their final report in November. The GNWT’s initial response will be released this spring. Our goal is an improved NWT electricity system that reflects the value of NWT residents and provides reliable power and at an affordable price.

---Applause

After energy, the high cost of food comes a close second in driving our high cost of living. This budget supports increasing the local food supply with a $450,000 investment in the commercial harvesting, processing and marketing of NWT fish and local game to NWT consumers. We will also be investing $250,000 in community-based agricultural development initiatives, with a goal to increasing local food production to replace expensive imports.

---Applause

Improving transportation access to our communities will reduce the cost of bringing in goods. This budget provides $250,000 for Wekweeti winter road construction and $150,000 to accelerate construction of ice bridges in the Fort Simpson region.

We recognize the public safety concerns of our residents and have increased the funding for police services by over $1.1 million, including more funding for the RCMP to support policing in smaller communities.

---Applause

**Supporting the Economy**

Mr. Speaker, we see the slowdown in the NWT economy as an opportunity for government. During the recent boon years, the cost of building infrastructure skyrocketed. Decline in private sector construction has meant that we have been able to proceed with a number of needed projects. By accelerating investment with a record $744 million injection in fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11, we have created a more solid platform for future economic growth.

Our $222 million capital plan for 2010-11 includes, among other investment:

* $42 million for school replacements, renovations and additions;
* $64 million for highways and roads across the NWT;
* $28 million in formula funding for community infrastructure;
* $24 million for upgrades and renovations to GNWT buildings;
* $17 million for airport infrastructure improvements; and
* $4.5 million for hospitals and health care centres.

In addition, the budget I am presenting today includes $37 million for the 2010-11 Housing Corporation Capital Plan.

Our two-year capital investment will not fully replace the decline in private sector investment but has played a key role in stabilizing economic activity in the NWT during the slowdown and will continue to provide business opportunities and employment for Northerners during the recovery.

However, this budget is not just about spending money to stimulate the economy. This budget is about providing value to NWT residents and businesses. GNWT investments in programs, services and infrastructure that reduce the cost of living will help residents and business. Further, the dollars invested to improve the education of NWT students will improve their job opportunities and our labour supply. Resources invested in improving the health of NWT residents will improve both the quality of their lives and the fiscal situation of the GNWT over the long term. Everything the GNWT does to protect the environment ensures that our quality of life will not diminish and encourages people to live in the NWT. All these investments are good for the NWT economy.

I spoke earlier about our declining population. This causes us concerns from both a fiscal and economic perspective. A rising population provides growth opportunities for NWT businesses and spreads fixed costs of power generation, transportation and other key cost drivers over a larger base, lowering costs for everyone. We know from surveys that our high cost of living is a major deterrent to attracting new residents. We need to stop the outflow and let people know what a great place the NWT is to live and work. We also need to let people know that this is a wonderful place to visit.

This budget adds over $1.3 million to promote the NWT as a great tourism destination and a preferred place to live and work. This additional funding will support the development of the NWT Growth Strategy built on previous national marketing campaign activities, support the Immigrant Nominee Program and increase the number of mine employees living in the NWT under the Mining Workforce Initiative. These initiatives will complement and support the investments made to date, including work to showcase the NWT to Canadians and to the rest of the world at the 2010 Olympics next month.

We also intend to ensure that NWT residents are properly counted in the 2011 Census. This budget allocates $155,000 to assist with the 2011 Census, similar to the successful approach used in the 2006 Census. The amount invested to raise awareness of the census and to ensure that every NWT resident is counted could potentially mean millions in future transfers from the federal government.

This budget provides an additional $300,000 for the Support for Entrepreneur and Economic Development, or SEED, program, bringing the total funding for this program to $3.5 million. An additional $300,000 has been targeted for the Sports Hunter Marketing Support Program to help the industry respond to events beyond its control. The arts and crafts industry will receive an additional $425,000 to support the production, advertising and marketing of arts and crafts productions.

---Applause

The economic slowdown has resulted in lower employment numbers, but this is time for Northerners to retrain and upgrade their skills to improve their future employment opportunities. This budget includes almost $1 million for apprentice support, Aurora College programs and to assist adults to complete their secondary education.

Finally, the GNWT is ensuring a coordinated response to the Joint Review Panel’s recommendations. We are providing an additional $140,000 in this budget to ensure that the GNWT’s regulatory requirements for the Mackenzie Gas Project are understood and adhered to.

**Investments in Children, Youth and Families**

Mr. Speaker, this budget allocates $307 million to the programs delivered by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. We often speak of the investment we make in our children and youth as investments in the future. In fact, previous investments in our children’s education are now producing results in the form of higher graduation rates. Between 2000 and 2007, enrolment in grades 10 to 12 and graduation rates have both increased by about 25 percent.

We will continue to build on these successes. To narrow the gap between the graduation rates of aboriginal and non-aboriginal students, this budget invests an additional $1.3 million to improve the educational achievement of aboriginal students. This new funding will provide a new aboriginal student achievement coordinator position, promote literacy, provide after-school tutoring pilot programs, support the development of culturally appropriate orientation for new teachers, and produce a long-term plan to improve aboriginal student achievement.

The seeds of higher graduation rates are planted in the first years of schooling. This budget adds $600,000 for the expansion of early childhood development programs. These programs will include culturally relevant education and support for aboriginal languages.

We will build on the Healthy Choices framework with an investment of almost $1.2 million to expand after-school physical activity programs to 31 communities and to expand the Don’t Be a Butthead anti-smoking campaign. The budget proposes an additional $200,000 for youth programs and an injection of $650,000 to stabilize funding for multi-sports games, such as the Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Games.

Because increasing safety awareness can reduce road related injuries and death, this budget adds $150,000 to expand the Drive Alive! campaign.

We have put significant resources into programs to combat family violence but recognize that more needs to be done. This budget includes $110,000 to expand support services for existing family violence shelters, bringing the total support for the shelters in this budget to $450,000. A further $67,000 has been added to the pilot program to help men who use violence in intimate relationships to change their behaviour. This will bring the total investment for this pilot project to $192,000 in 2010-2011.

This budget also supports families in transition, by providing $65,000 for two pilot programs: a mediation program for separating parents and an education program on parenting after separation and divorce to help parents gain the skills they need to be parents in changed circumstances.

One of our greatest strengths as Northerners is the value we place on our land and water. As a government we spend over $70 million annually on environment-related activities.

We must be concerned about the future of our water supplies. The 2010-2011 budget includes $1.1 million in new funding for water-related activities such as:

* $821,000 to finalize and begin implementation of the NWT Water Strategy through transboundary negotiations and partnership agreements, action plans, and research;
* $200,000 to develop a system for measuring the health of an entire aquatic ecosystem in addition to water quality and quantity;
* $115,000 to develop tools to help protect each community’s public water supply source.

We will invest an additional $791,000 to update and implement the Species at Risk Act and the Wildlife Act and related regulations. This will help us identify species at risk, protect habitats, and put in place processes to help species recover. The end result will be a more comprehensive legislation that is enforceable but respectful of aboriginal treaty and harvesting rights.

This budget includes about $1.3 million dollars in additional funding to continue work to develop and implement the land use framework and support the Protected Areas Strategy. We want to ensure decisions about land management activities are consistent and are based on timely and accurate land information.

Climate change is a serious concern for the NWT and we are continuing to take action in this area. We have committed to invest $60 million over four years in energy conservation and alternative energy sources such as hydro, wind and biomass, to replace the use of greenhouse gas-emitting diesel fuel where possible. The GNWT’s Greenhouse Gas Strategy will require renewal in 2011. Work will begin in 2010 including consultation with the public, industry, and other interested sectors to renew the strategy.

The budget adds $100,000 to bring 2010-2011 funding for the Climate Change Adaptation Plan to $350,000. This investment will fund further work on the geophysical permafrost survey so a plan can be developed to help affected communities. This budget also includes $264,000 financed by the Building Canada Plan for further research on climate change.

The NWT’s caribou populations are declining and measures necessary to protect the herds are having a serious impact on everyone dependent on this critical resource. We’re continuing to invest in the work needed to monitor the caribou populations. This work will be undertaken through the ongoing investments in the upcoming year.

Finally, in our ongoing efforts to drive our made-in-the-North scientific agenda, we are increasing funding in this budget by $120,000 for the Traditional Knowledge Implementation Strategy, bringing the total to $300,000 for 2010-2011.

**Squeezing the Most Out of Our Revenues – Refocusing Government**

There is nothing in our foreseeable future that would justify relaxing our diligence in controlling the growth in GNWT spending. Over the past two years we have kept a tight rein on expenditures through a combination of spending reductions and realignments. Maintaining this vigilance means looking for efficiencies and putting our dollars where they will be most effective. We need to look for creative new ways of doing our work and be open to new ideas. However, bringing about change in the way we operate often needs investments up front.

A key focus of this investment will be in support of our employees. A strong, capable and motivated workforce is essential for the GNWT to deliver the programs and services NWT residents have come to rely on. Last June we released 2020: A Brilliant North – NWT Public Service Strategic Plan. This plan will guide the development of our public service over the next 10 years. Investments in 2010-2011 will continue to implement the plan, with $1.5 million allocated in this budget for training and development, diversity, health, wellness, performance management, intern and student employment, and marketing and recruitment.

The Public Service Strategic Plan applies to all orders of public service in the NWT. For this reason we are proposing $1 million in this budget to improve community capacity in providing community government administration and governance. This funding will be used for training and mentorship programs.

This budget includes over $39 million to implement the provisions of the collective agreements negotiated in 2009-2010. Maintaining competitive compensation helps us recruit and retain the people we need to deliver our programs.

Information technology can help us make government more efficient and help us deliver more and better services to the public, especially remote communities where direct access to government offices is not possible. The GNWT is working to achieve more effective use of new technologies. We will do this through:

* development of a Knowledge Management Strategy that will guide our investments in, and use of, information systems and technology;
* a $106,000 investment that will allow work to begin on a separate dedicated Internet delivery system for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to provide for more distance education and a wider variety of courses for professional development for teachers;
* an additional $247,000 for expanded on-site lab and diagnostic imaging at the consolidated health clinics in Yellowknife. This will allow physicians and patients to get lab tests done at the clinics for the first time and get the results faster; and
* a further $99,000 proposed for electronic medical records imaging that will help increase the administrative efficiency of our health care system and increase the quality of patient care.

This budget includes $298,000 to implement our recently tabled Science Agenda that will allow the GNWT to better set the priorities and agenda for research activities carried out in the NWT and ensure that northern participation is increased as the interest in NWT by economic institutions and business continues to grow.

We will continue to work to make the machinery of government as efficient and effective as possible. Last fall we successfully replaced the GNWT’s 28-year-old Financial Information System with our System for Accountability and Management, or SAM. The next key component of our Financial Renewal Strategy supported with an investment of $250,000 in this budget involves implementation of shared financial administration and procurement services by April 2011. This will standardize practices and processes, consolidate specialized skills, knowledge and technology, and allow departments to focus on program delivery by merging administrative support functions.

This budget consolidates responsibility for GNWT-wide building maintenance and utility costs within the Department of Public Works and Services. Consolidation will permit better tracking of utility costs and consumption so that we can better manage the GNWT’s energy needs, help in efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and identify investment opportunities for the government’s Capital Asset Retrofit Program. It will help us standardize the operation and preventive maintenance of government buildings and will help us address our growing deferred maintenance challenge.

In 2009 the GNWT’s program review office led a comprehensive review of the government’s approach to acquiring general purpose office space. The review concluded that the GNWT could achieve considerable long-term savings, as much as $100 million over 40 years, from acquiring new owned space in Yellowknife. We will be seeking supplementary funding in 2009-10 to complete a planning study for rebalancing the portfolio of GNWT-owned and leased office space in Yellowknife. This initiative builds on the work that led to the decision to construct a government-owned office building in Inuvik.

The work to improve our relationship with our service delivery boards is continuing. We are looking at the barriers that limit service integration. We want to expand the use of interagency committees in communities and work towards improving the accountability mechanisms between the GNWT and our boards. This improved accountability will include clearly defined roles and responsibilities and reporting mechanisms. This accountability work will lead us to the development of standardized contribution agreements with existing boards by April 2011.

**Stabilizing the Health Care System**

We must reduce the cost pressures in our health care system if it is to be sustainable. At $326 million, health and social service expenditures are 25 percent of the GNWT’s operating budget, however, they make up over 30 percent of the forced growth.

We are not alone in this concern. Every jurisdiction in Canada faces similar challenges with respect to health care costs, but we face some unique northern challenges. Change is no longer a choice. But change must be planned, managed and take a system-wide approach. We will maintain our primary focus on quality basic care and services. We will continue to build on our strengths, ensuring a territorial system that supports regional and community health and social service delivery and that is sustainable in the long term.

We are seeking to better address these challenges through the elements of the Foundation for Change Plan. This system-wide approach is intended to address cost pressures while still ensuring that we are delivering the right health care services to the right people in the right way. The Department of Health and Social Services, with the authorities, is formulating a plan to ensure dependable, equitable and timely access to health care, improve the well-being of NWT residents and put the system on a sustainable, long-term footing. This is a daunting task. The approach will require a significant commitment by government and health agencies and will include accountability improvements such as streamlined financial systems and implementation of contribution agreements with the authorities.

Changes to the way we deliver health care services in the NWT must be made in conjunction with reinforcing people’s personal responsibility for their own health, by eating a healthy diet, exercising and not smoking or abusing alcohol. The alternative is to see ever-rising health care costs that erode our ability to invest in other equally important areas.

While we need to reduce the growth in health care expenditures, we recognize that we still have vital investments to make in our health care system. For example, this budget proposed:

* $530,000 for the consolidated primary care clinic in Yellowknife;
* $2 million to fund operational costs associated with the territorial dementia facility in Yellowknife; and
* $1.4 million for ongoing operational costs of the territorial supported living campus in Hay River.

**Revenues**

This budget includes no new taxes. We are keenly aware that the economic recovery will be slow and do not want to jeopardize its progress. However, we need to ensure that our revenues do not lose ground. Therefore, effective April 1, 2010, we will be introducing policies to ensure that property tax rates, liquor mark-ups and tobacco tax rates keep up with inflation. We intend to extend these policies to other fees charged for government services by April 1, 2011.

The GNWT must take a longer term view of its tax policies. How revenues are raised can have significant consequences for individuals, families and businesses. An approach that is not well thought out can hurt the economy, discourage investment and even push people into leaving the Territory. So it is important that we take a measured and balanced approach that is consistent with the NWT’s long-term vision and goals.

In October 2009 we held a second roundtable on these long-term tax and fiscal issues and also invited the public to give us their ideas. We heard support for long-term focus on investments in our future as a Territory, including support for proactive investments to encourage reduced fuel use and exploration of cost-effective energy alternatives. We heard an openness to support changes in a tax mix to better balance the tax burden, providing there was corresponding creative search for opportunities to diversify the NWT economy and address our high cost of living. These ideas will guide longer term work on the tax and fiscal structure of the NWT. Proposals for a significant change to the NWT tax system will require considerable research and analysis and further consultation before any changes are brought forward and implemented. This work will be undertaken in the upcoming fiscal year.

**Looking Forward**

Mr. Speaker, there are less than two years left in the mandate of this Legislative Assembly. We must ensure that the initiatives that we have already put in motion towards achieving our common vision have the resources and the commitment to get the work done.

One of the priorities of the 16th Legislative Assembly is to work towards a common vision for the political development of the NWT. The challenges and opportunities of the North are receiving increasing national and international attention. We need to make it clear to all that discussions and decisions about the North need to be made in the North, by Northerners for Northerners. It is our collective responsibility to ensure northern voices and interests are heard and recognized by those that do not live here. This budget proposes one-time funding of $864,000 in 2010-11 to support the work of the Northern Leaders’ Forum. This funding will be used for engagement with NWT residents, public consultations and research projects in areas of capacity building and governance. Through the work of the Northern Leaders’ Forum we hope to provide a unified northern voice which clearly communicates our common vision to the federal government and other non-northern decision-makers so we can successfully advance key priorities for northern governments.

In this same regard, we need to continue to press for the completion of an agreement-in-principle on devolution. While the resource revenues that are associated with a devolution agreement are important, we must not lose sight of the broader goal to achieve the long overdue transfer of authority over our lands and resources from Ottawa to the North. Without this authority, we have little power to influence or control NWT land management decisions. Over the past several months we’ve been working with the federal government to narrow the gaps and hope to soon be in a position to resume trilateral negotiations with Canada and aboriginal governments aimed at finalizing an agreement-in-principle.

The budget includes $210,000 to advance devolution discussions and to continue work to finalize and implement land, resource and self-government agreements.

During last fall’s revenue consultations we heard from many respondents that the NWT needs a heritage fund in anticipation of achieving control over our non-renewable natural resources.

The NWT is blessed with a vast treasure of non-renewable resources. However, once these resources are taken out of the ground, they are gone forever. Our challenge is to ensure that the transformation of our non-renewable resources to dollars provides a lasting legacy for NWT residents.

A heritage fund is a way to save for future generations. Before we establish a fund, we need to determine how much to save and what form these savings should take. During this session I will be releasing a public discussion paper on the establishment of an NWT heritage fund. If there is broad consensus, I commit to introducing, for passage, legislation to create a heritage fund by the end of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on ways that we can improve the delivery of housing programs and services to Northerners. As an important step in this process, we plan to make changes in the administration of the Public Housing Program. We intend to move responsibility for income assessments back to the local housing organizations.

---Applause

Moving responsibility for assessments back to local housing organizations will improve client service while maintaining the need for fair and equitable treatment of clients. We will also increase the certainty of operating funding for local housing organizations. Although not reflected in this budget, formal proposals for change will be developed in consultation with Regular Members, with a view to implementation during the 2010-11 fiscal year.

We want to look at other opportunities to improve the way we deliver housing programs, including divesting a number of older units and looking for efficiencies in how we maintain our housing stock through improved linkages at the community level between local housing organizations and the Department of Public Works and Services.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT has a significant infrastructure deficit. Only seven of our communities are connected by all-season roads 12 months of the year. As a Territory, we generate 225 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year running diesel fuel to generate electricity. Surveys of industry consistently report the lack of infrastructure as a deterrent to investors in our Territory.

Addressing this deficit is a priority for this government, as it has been for previous governments, and will continue to be in the future. Three extraordinary projects are a priority.

First, the Deh Cho Bridge is the largest public infrastructure project undertaken in the NWT. When completed, it will ensure year-round highway access for half of our Territory’s population. The project is 50 percent complete, with the most difficult phase of construction out of the way. The bridge is now on track for a completion date in late 2011. We are committed to seeing this project through to a successful conclusion.

---Applause

Second, the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project is in the environmental review phase. If given regulatory approval, this project, once completed, could displace up to 100 million litres of diesel fuel a year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the NWT by 15 percent, with an estimated cost of more than $500 million. This project is beyond the capacity of this government to finance on our own. However, if the project gets regulatory approval, given its importance to our economy and to our environment, we must ensure that it goes ahead.

We have sought Canada’s participation through federal infrastructure programs but even if our requests are approved, additional financing will be needed. Therefore, we are prepared to look for partners with the fiscal resources to help us get this project built.

---Applause

Third, the Mackenzie Valley Highway is an essential component of our vision for the NWT. Connecting all the communities in the Mackenzie Valley with an all-weather road would reduce living costs for residents and open up the rest of the Mackenzie Valley where a current seasonal ice road access is unpredictable. Completion of the entire road between Wrigley and Tuktoyaktuk would cost an estimated $1.8 billion and, therefore, will take time to see the project through to completion. However, progress has been, and continues to be made. Over the last 10 years, $55 million has been invested by Canada and the GNWT in the construction of winter roads, bridges and a Tuktoyaktuk gravel access road.

Canada and the GNWT have been working together to assemble the information needed to plan construction of an all-weather road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk. We are prepared to do our part to complete the project description report for the entire length of the Mackenzie Valley and have already included $2 million in our current capital plan to begin this work. This project description report is a critical piece that must be completed before any further development can take place. We are confident that Canada will partner with us in this important work. We must keep working toward our goal of an all-weather road from the Alberta border to the Arctic Ocean.

---Applause

**Conclusion**

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT recognizes the need to put ourselves on a sound financial footing before the global financial crisis broke. Our preparation places us in a good position to respond and we did so with a delivered plan to be a source of stability for our economy during this difficult time. We did this by maintaining our service levels and by making record investments in infrastructure. Our plan has not only lessened the impact of the slowdown of the NWT economy. It has also resulted in needed infrastructure that will benefit NWT residents and create a positive environment for future economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, we should be pleased with the work that has been started since this Assembly was elected. We are committed to ensure that this work is completed. This midpoint in our term provides an opportunity to check our course. This budget seeks to ensure that the strategic initiatives started in previous budgets have sufficient resources to progress during the final two years of this Assembly.

We have had to make adjustments to our plans to respond to global economic events, but we are confident that our actions have helped the NWT weather the economic storm. Furthermore, the opportunities we have seized during this period will create dividends that will last far beyond the end of the 16th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, our job is only half done. We have a plan. Much work is underway but much work remains. We all must recommit our efforts and apply ourselves fully to complete the work this Legislative Assembly has laid out. We and the people who we represent should expect no less. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. At this time I would like to call a recess and invite everyone to join us in the Great Hall for a reception with the Finance Minister.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 3, Ministers’ statements. Item 4, Members’ statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

# Members’ Statements

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON CONSTITUENTS’ CONCERNS AND BUDGET SESSION PRIORITIES

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Assembly embarks on budget debate and discussion following the Minister’s address, I want to use my statement today to address constituents’ concerns. I fervently hope that the 2010-2011 budget addresses these concerns.

Firstly, the Deh Cho Bridge is still a concern. It’s front and centre to us in the Assembly, but surprisingly many of the public are unaware that construction is steaming ahead. My constituents want to know how the change in general contractor will impact this project. They want to know if their tax dollars will be needed to get the project to completion.

Secondly, the cost of living is an issue that never goes away. Residents are reminded daily of how expensive it is to live in the North. Costs of goods are up, taxes are up, and it particularly affects people on a fixed income. They want to know what this government is doing to help them with the cost of living.

Third, the impending changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program concerns people in my riding. Over the last six months they have noticed a profound silence from the government around this issue and are still very concerned that the changes will negatively impact seniors and those with long-term medical conditions. In situations where no information is available, it’s human nature to expect the worst, and people are starting to worry again. Is the Health department doing its research work to develop a plan to communicate with our residents? The September 1st implementation date will come all too soon. A good consultation process demands that Members and, more importantly, our residents know of the proposed changes well in advance of any implementation of those changes.

Another item: appeals for assistance with housing problems come to my office every week. I am pleased and gratified to hear the announcement in the budget address of the change in delivery for the Public Housing Rental Subsidy Program. It’s long been demanded by MLAs and clients alike and it’s definitely needed. As part of this program change, both Education, Culture and Employment’s income support division and the NWT Housing Corporation must look at their policies and procedures and find ways to make them more user friendly. Both programs provide services to our residents and GNWT staff must have a service mentality as they do their jobs. We, the government, say that these programs are here to help people, but program users don’t always “feel the love,” as they say.

Other things brought to my attention: the need for GNWT to develop an anti-poverty strategy; the need to increase actions which address homelessness and to streamline and coordinate GNWT programs in this area.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

**MS. BISARO:** A couple of other things: the need to streamline and coordinate GNWT programs in the area of homelessness; a concern for the quality of the high school education that our children are receiving.

The list goes on but my time does not. So to conclude, I look forward to discussing these issues in the course of our consideration of the 2010-2011 Main Estimates.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON PASSING OF ULUKHAKTOK ELDER JIMMY MEMOGANA

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ve taken portions out of the eulogy in honour of Jimmy Memogana written by Tom Smith and Roger Memogana.

Jimmy Memogana lived in Ulukhaktok, formerly known as Holman, NWT. In May 1914 his parents died in the year of his birth during the influenza pandemic which reached the Canadian Arctic and killed a large number of our northern aboriginal Canadians. Orphaned as an infant, he was fortunate to be adopted by Natkusiak, who had been a guide, together with Jimmy’s own biological father, Jimmy Memogana, on the first trips made in the Arctic by explorer Viljhalmur Stefansson in 1908 to 1912. As Jimmy told me, “Natkusiak took me in when my parents died of the Spanish Flu in 1919 and he put my father’s name on me.” With many years travelling with Natkusiak and hunting through a large area of the \western Arctic, Jimmy Memogana had learned the lessons from the very best. Eventually Natkusiak settled in Holman in the late ‘30s. Jimmy and his wife, Hayulak, who still lives there, raised 11 children and have 60 direct descendants.

Those who knew Jimmy all have many stories to tell about him, which are always full of humour. They will tell you that he could never sit still and was always travelling. He embodied the buoyant energy made of real knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm. In our overly comfortable, southern urban world, these are admirable and increasingly rare qualities.

Jimmy was a natural teacher. He taught by example, few words, and an ever present sense of humour. He loved his life as a hunter. He could not help being drawn out and taken by enthusiasm. He was a leader, an Inumarialuk. In Tom Smith’s words, “I can still see him barely visible, leading his way always on his dog sled or snowmobile into an ever-shifting ground drift of a howling winter gale, never looking back. Sure of his way, always travelling, consummate hunter.”

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement

---Unanimous consent granted.

**MR. JACOBSON:** I would always visit Jimmy and his wife during my constituency tours. I had the privilege of knowing such a great traditional leader in the community of Ulukhaktok, and the community will sadly miss a leader such as Jimmy. Quyanainni.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN THE MACKENZIE DELTA

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A nation is measured by how well it takes care of its most vulnerable in their society with regard to the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the homeless and, more importantly, the people that are striving to make a living, regardless of creed, ethnicity and, more importantly, where you live.

The reason I’d like to bring this up today in light of the budget address is that as a Territory we have a vibrant society of some 30 communities. Everyone is unique in a way that they carry themselves, but more important are fundamental programs and services that this government is responsible for are not being delivered. I’m speaking in regard to health care, education services where students still have to leave their home communities to get an education, and also more important are the fundamental basics of any society to ensure that the social fabric of a community is implemented.

“Social fabric” means that you have the instruments to carry out programs and services, systems that work to ensure people are healthy and vibrant, and that they’re able to achieve the results of having a healthy community. Without those mechanisms in place, you have a society that deploys to a point of injustice, unmanageable, and, more importantly, a safe place for people to live.

I’ve asked many questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services in this House about health care services for Tsiigehtchic. The information that she released to me yesterday is pathetic. When you have 20 days of health care services being provided to a community and 120 hours every year, there is something wrong with the system. I will raise this issue all through this session. If that means bringing a motion to the floor of this House and dealing with the matter through that means, then I will do so.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his budget address. He read it almost without skipping a beat and it was one long address.

The contents of the address are also good. Overall it is good. But as I listened to the various announcements about investments and priorities of this government, where it said the government will do something tangible, I felt encouraged by that. That was the kind of thing I like to see.

Still, in this budget there are too many -- and I highlighted them in yellow -- references to developing a strategic plan or a framework or a consultation or a symposium. All those kinds of things, I still think -- and I spoke to this yesterday to some extent as well -- we have too much money as a government when every time we turn around with an idea of how to address an issue, that we spend so much on the front end, so much on the soft costs, so to speak, as opposed to putting the resources directly into the very tangible solution.

There are very good, experienced, long-time Northerners sitting in this room, and we hear from our constituents who have very good ideas as well. I think we need to focus more of our monetary resources on putting things into real action as opposed to spending too much time talking about it. It’s almost like some of the frameworks and the strategies that we refer to, it’s almost like they are in themselves something to be celebrated and that that’s the finished thing. Here, we have a strategy. Like, we’re all excited about it. Forget about the strategy. Let’s talk about getting the product out to the people that we plan to serve here in the Northwest Territories.

But overall, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that in difficult times in the Northwest Territories I believe we have stayed a course that will stand us in good stead going forward. Of course, we would like to see many things that could enhance the well-being of our Territory, but overall I think that the budget as laid out here is very, very good, and I’d like to commend the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON PROTECTION OF CARIBOU POPULATIONS

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the vital issue of protecting our caribou populations. Mr. Speaker, a large amount of consistent and detailed evidence has shown alarming declines in the Bathurst herd caribou population. The remains of the herd are on their wintering grounds, the winter road is about to open and a crucial period in the life of the herd has begun. According to the evidence, continued declines at current rates could result in the collapse of the herd within four or five years. We now know the Beverly herd has suffered this fate. It can happen, and we must do everything in our power to prevent it.

In December the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources took the unprecedented step of declaring an emergency, a temporary ban on the hunting of Bathurst caribou on their main wintering grounds, while we await management guidance from the Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Board. The consequences of this decision are grave most of all for the traditional users of the caribou who depend on the caribou both for food and for cultural sustenance. The action has thus raised serious concerns about the most fundamental constitutional rights of aboriginal people, including the Yellowknives Dene First Nations, which must be resolved.

In speaking with many worried people, I have been asked whether I am for the ban or for continued hunting. Mr. Speaker, I am for the caribou. I believe that, based on the considerable evidence, there is a real danger of permanent, irreversible harm that could lead to the end of the Bathurst caribou herd and its critical role in the lives of generations of people. I believe our first and greatest responsibility is to ensure the Bathurst herd recovers to full strength again. Only this will serve everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the herd’s recovery will require effective, cooperative management based on respect for traditional knowledge and modern science. I will continue to work to bring the parties together and ask that our greatest efforts be applied to protecting this precious resource. The first question we must all ask is: what can I do today to protect the caribou for all time? We must not ignore other important, though more political, issues, but let’s ensure the urgent conservation action needed to protect caribou now is not delayed.

I am asking all those involved to work cooperatively in the best interests of the caribou and the key role that caribou play here in maintaining the long-term health of the land and of the people of the North. I will have questions for the Minister, especially on how the Yellowknives Dene First Nation has been involved in the process to date. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON DECLINING CMHC FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak on the issue of the CMHC declining fund for the 2,000 or 2,200-or-so public housing units across the Northwest Territories. This agreement was signed a few years ago and clearly lays out how and when this fund will be declining. This funding is dropping at a fairly quick pace, and from $33 million this funding will drop to zero. I believe the decline during the life of this government is about $5.7 million. This constitutes a total loss of about $12 million towards the Public Housing Program in that period.

The requirement for mortgage payments has also been removed, which means the actual O and M budget deficit to this government should be about 15 to 20 million dollars annually. However, this is a loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in total funding when you look at the whole agreement. With no extra funding coming from CMHC on these units, I would like to know what the NWT Housing Corporation is doing to offset this increasing budget deficit. Will the Housing Corporation wait until the money is gone and come back to the Assembly to ask for more money, or will they develop some proactive approaches and develop a comprehensive plan to compensate for this drop in federal funding?

There are many ways to resolve this serious issue. One solution would be to transfer the ownership of public housing units in non-market communities to tenants occupying these units for the tenants that can afford to operate these units. Another solution could see the NWT Housing Corporation sell public housing units to tenants that can afford to purchase the housing in market communities such as Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, provided that it has no impact on the current housing market. Benefits of creating homeownership through public housing can be significant for this government. Currently, each public housing unit consumes about $15,000 a year in operation and maintenance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today I will have questions for the Minister on this.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON CONSERVING CARIBOU MEASURES

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Mr. Speaker... [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to recall the story of Robin Hood, who lived in Nottingwood.

**AN HON. MEMBER:**  Nottingham. Nottingham.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Sorry; Nottingham -- thank you very much -- ruled by Prince John. This was a time when you could not hunt without then the consent of the Prince, or face penalties or even jail. This is what our aboriginal chiefs and our aboriginal people face with this temporary ban on hunting the Bathurst herd in the protected zone.

It occurred to me, Mr. Speaker, that what we are talking about is penalizing and even jailing our aboriginal people for doing what they have always done: hunt for food, subsistence living, a way of life; in short, the single biggest definition of aboriginal culture. Regretfully, this controversy has taken away from the focus on the conservation of this herd. However, I support our chiefs in all our regions, that treaty rights have been subjugated, taken away; a dangerous precedent, even if it is temporary.

Mr. Speaker, almost all legal challenges of treaty and harvesting rights have always been upheld. We do not have to go down this costly road. In fact, I think the better challenge is for our Minister of ENR to find an immediate solution to salvage for aboriginal people and communities a subsistence quota for this year. I do not support the lifting of the ban, but I support recognizing traditional harvesting rights. Like Mr. Bromley, I urge our Minister and our government to meet with affected First Nations and find a mutually agreed system wherein the needs of conservation and harvesting rights can be addressed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON CONSERVING CARIBOU MEASURES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleagues Mr. Bromley and Mr. Menicoche, I wish to raise the issue of the caribou.

As caribou is a significant matter and it’s reaching a fever pitch, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly needs to draw attention with the issue of this government’s authority over traditional hunting rights. There is talk about a pending legal challenge. Mr. Speaker, there is never a winner; only the lawyers, the media and the historians always come out ahead on that deal. The question of the day is: what efforts have been made together to find a meaningful solution? Only together in partnership with open communication and respect that will be the key to protecting the caribou and its future.

I find it is difficult to imagine that there is one person in the Northwest Territories that wants to see this on the endangered list or even on the extinction list. However, if matters could be made worse, we never seem to talk about or deal with the problem that a number of land claims seem to have trouble with this legislative authority. Regardless of the legal authority, the many groups in our land claims don’t recognize the territorial government as a legitimate government, so we will continue to have problems.

We must work together to recognize and respect each other. Mr. Speaker, there lies the problem but also equally there lies the solution. With best intentions, this government has taken a stance in what it believes is the only course for the salvation of the caribou, and that we have all become too well too aware of the emergency ban that has been enacted and that has caused great frustration. How do you now tell an independent people or even legitimate governments that we know best?

As I said earlier, in partnership and communication with respect, I believe will be the key to save the caribou.

If I can paint a picture, Mr. Speaker, this situation reminds me all too well of the colonial approach that the UK once took with Canada and, furthermore, in recent years not much difference in what Ottawa has been doing to the NWT. The message can only be lost by the oppressive rules of engagement that have been defined in the instructions.

Mr. Speaker, we have also heard of the phrase, “it may be awful, but it is good for you.” I can tell you a lot of people out there seem to have a bad taste in their mouth about how this situation has been evolving. Mr. Speaker, we need to find a solution. This government needs to support the Wekeezhii board to lead on this initiative, not the GNWT.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

**MR. HAWKINS:** This government needs to find a way to support the board in making a timely decision, because this is a critical issue for all. I am confident that a balanced solution can be found. I believe a strategy to address limited hunting to make sure caribou is on the tables of those who need it to eat, Mr. Speaker. I believe that there are options out there that could help develop a limited hunting process with tags to help manage the harvest. Mr. Speaker, I also know that we could find a fair and respectful way to do this together. Mr. Speaker, there are options out there. I think this government’s primary option should be to get that board meeting to find a solution with everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today about the Deh Cho Bridge Project. I listened very clearly to the Minister of Transportation’s statement yesterday in the House, and understandably he has, and continues to, put his positive spin and messaging around this project as he can; this on a project that has and continues to be mired with issues.

The Minister left out some key items from his statement yesterday that I believe the public is owed an explanation to. The project was sold to the public, to Members of this House and to the previous Cabinet, as a fixed price contract with a price tag of $165 million. How can it be that the contractor of record, Atcon, fails to negotiate a price on the second half of the bridge? The public and Members need an explanation on what happened to this supposed fixed price contract. How can the government continue to state that the design of the bridge superstructure, the second half of the project, is essentially complete, Mr. Speaker? It has been essentially complete for nearly three years. How can the government continue to say that this new design will be more efficient and cost less, in one breath, then not be able to complete the project with the contractor that had the so-called fixed price contract? How is it possible to shop the remainder of this project with a design that is essentially done? Will the price be essentially unknown, Mr. Speaker?

What people want to know, Mr. Speaker, is how much this bridge is going to ultimately cost. That was a pretty big omission from the Minister’s statement yesterday. I think as easy as it was for the Minister to speak about the benefits of the bridge, he also has to be up front with the public on the potential financial risks and impact to the costs of living that this project will have. This government and the one before it have not proven effectively that costs for everything that comes across that bridge will ultimately cost people more money, not just in the North Slave communities but also any communities serviced by air out of Yellowknife. The cost of living is already driving the people out of our communities. Where exactly is this proof that this will ultimately lower the cost of living?

Mr. Speaker, we need to know immediately what the financial risks are to this project now that the contractor of record has departed the scene.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

**MR. RAMSAY:** I agree with the Minister. Yes, we do need to see this project through to conclusion. We will do that, Mr. Speaker. However, the public and Members of this House need to have every assurance that this project is being managed appropriately. Mr. Speaker, judging by the actions thus far, it doesn’t appear that way, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON SPENDING PRIORITIES FOR THE SAHTU REGION

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A band called the Bare Naked Ladies wrote and sang a song called, If I Had a Million Dollars. I always liked the song, Mr. Speaker. So, today, for the third time, I want to share with this House my own version.

Mr. Speaker, if I had one billion dollars I would ask the people what best to do, I would fund them for the contributions and their view, I would keep the resource revenue in the North, too, and Ottawa would think that’s cruel. If I had a billion dollars I would speed up the Mackenzie Valley Highway so the Sahtu can greet and treat you to a hot caribou stew too. If I had a billion dollars I would contribute to the educational programs in the Sahtu schools, install trade shop facilities and other schools too. If I had a billion dollars I would build homes, affordable housing so we wouldn’t have to live 10 people in a house, because that would cause a health issue to you and that’s cruel.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars I would buy materials to build a treatment centre for the Sahtu and I would buy airline tickets for other regions to come help us too. Then I will clear up the CANOL Trail while I’m at it too, because that would be cool and that is what my people taught us to do.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars I would build an elders office in the Sahtu. Cabinet would help with one in Tu Nedhe too. If I had a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, I would fund a regional wellness centre so we can all get health care in the Sahtu and if we could learn to build it ourselves, wouldn’t that be swell? Isn’t that what we want to do? If I had a billion dollars I would get energy from the pipeline. No more diesel generators. Hydro and waste energy is the way to go. Now, that’s cool. If I had a billion dollars I would host Dene chiefs. They should meet in the Sahtu. I would invite all my friends and the Premier and the Cabinet too. If I had a billion dollars I wouldn’t forget the youth. Young people need training and support. They need them fast, because in the North unemployment is getting to be a critical mass.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars I would support the harvesters in their traditional lifestyle to hunt, and that isn’t really cruel. I am not speaking about the Sahtu. I would support all the other communities too. If I had a billion dollars I would give Colville a real terminal, because they don’t have one yet, and trappers, too, need to keep warm too.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars we would all be rich. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 5, reports of standing and special committees. Item 6, returns to oral questions. Item 7, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

# Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure and honour to be able to recognize my dearly beloved in the gallery, Jeri.

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

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour to recognize Chief Isadore Simon from Jean Marie, who is here in the gallery today and watching the proceedings and the budget today. Mahsi cho.

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to recognize Dr. Robert Krushel, who is with us today.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to recognize a constituent and a representative from the Union of Northern Workers, Barb Wyness, who is the public relations and research officer, up there in the gallery behind me. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to recognize Maxence, a reporter for the L’Aquilon, and his lovely daughter Elianta, who is an amazing fiddler.

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

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize a former resident of Fort McPherson who now lives here in Yellowknife, Annie Kendi. Welcome, Annie.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House, I hope you’re enjoying the proceedings.

Item 8, acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

# Acknowledgements

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 8-16(4): BRENDAN GREEN – 2010 OLYMPICS

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to acknowledge a Hay River constituent, a young man, the youngest in a family of six children, who put on skis for the first time when he was three years old and started in biathlon training when he was nine years old. At the age of 16 this young man set his scope and sights on an Olympic dream, training with great dedication and knocking off achievement after achievement. You have heard me speak of those achievements in this House.

Today, after these years of training and competing at home and around the world, joining the youngest ever Canadian team for biathlon, for the first time in 26 years that the NWT has sent an athlete to this ultimate level of competition, representing Hay River, the Northwest Territories and Canada, only officially announced today, Brendan Green is going to the 2010 Olympics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 9, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

# Oral Questions

## QUESTION 195-16(4): CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources today and it’s to follow up on my Member’s statement.

Mr. Speaker, I was trying to raise an issue and certainly paint a picture about working together on this caribou issue. As everyone knows, it’s significant and it affects a lot of our constituents, not just here in Yellowknife but throughout this whole Territory. Mr. Speaker, my question directly to the Minister of ENR is: what efforts can the GNWT do to encourage the renewable board that should be overseeing the decision, the guidance and the future of the caribou? What can they do to get them working on this issue rather than the GNWT implementing a broad ban? Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wekeezhii board was set up as a result of the self-government agreement with the Tlicho. They have their mandate, they have their process, they have set out the timelines and we are working with the board. They know the pressing issue at hand. We have been in correspondence for many, many months and they are doing everything that they can to get their process working. In the meantime, recognizing the emergency with the Bathurst herd, the government has come to their assistance as they get themselves up and running to put the ban in place to protect the herd while that work is being done. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you. I appreciate the answer from the Minister, but what can the GNWT do to make sure that they are meeting and discussing this issue? What’s holding them back specifically? They are the ones that need to be making this decision and they are the ones that need to be guiding the future of this problem. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you. The board has an authority that they are operating under and they are doing the work that’s necessary. They are getting up and running. There has been some slippage in the dates that they put forward, and in the meantime, as I’ve indicated, the thing that we’re concentrating on is not so much trying to involve ourselves in how they do their business. They know the urgency and they’re doing everything to meet the targets. Our priority has been to make the right decisions during this hunting season where we cannot afford another unregulated harvest, is to put the ban in place to give the Bathurst herd some relief. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS.** Thank you. The issue really continues to keep coming back to what can the GNWT do to support this board so they can get meeting and make their own decisions, because they are the true people who should be making the decisions as to the future of the caribou, not the GNWT and that’s why we’re getting such frustration from people out there. So what can the GNWT do to get them meeting? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you. The Wekeezhii process is one key piece, but when that work is done, the Tlicho Government and the territorial government will work with the Wekeezhii board. But we also have to work with the Akaitcho and the Yellowknives and the Northwest Territories Metis, because we need to have one strategy for dealing with the Bathurst herd because it overlaps into more than one jurisdiction. The board is doing the work that they know is necessary. They’re taking the steps to get themselves up and running, and our job, in the meantime, is to do the right thing and help the Bathurst herd. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Your final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not argue that the number one issue here is to protect to make sure that the livelihood of the caribou exists for people for many generations beyond, if not forever, but the fact is the board is the one that needs to be making the decision. Has the GNWT done anything to help support this board so they can meet in a timely way? Because this issue just didn’t fall in their lap in December or this month of January. This is an issue that’s been building for some time. So what has the GNWT done to support them? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The GNWT has supported the Tlicho process, right from its inception to its conclusion, in signing off with implementation, and we continue to work and have been in contact with officials with the information. We’ve submitted our reports, work is being done, the board is setting itself up to do the work necessary to listen to all the interveners and make their determination and recommendations back to the GNWT and the Tlicho Government. So we are doing all things we think we can do from every aspect of this particular complex problem. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 196-16(4): POTENTIAL CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services and I’d like to follow up on my Member’s statement and ask some questions with regards to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program potential changes.

As I mentioned in my statement, there’s been an obvious lack of information from the Minister or from the department regarding this very controversial issue, which we dealt with about a year ago. So at this point I’d like to ask the Minister when we can expect some information from her department in regard to the Proposals for Change and what sort of consultation is in the works, consultation that has to occur prior to any implementation. Thank you.

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

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last 24 hours I did send a communication to the Standing Committee on Social Programs to update the Members on where we are with the Supplementary Health Benefits Program. As the Members are aware, we heard loud and clear, when it was last introduced, that we need to take this back and look at it further and we have been doing that. We’ve had a working group set up of non-government organizations, including the seniors’ groups, I can’t remember all of the names, but they are stakeholder groups that have been meeting to work out the details. They are in the final stage of providing us with the detailed information and we will be bringing that forward to the standing committee over the next two or three weeks and to the Cabinet as well. Once we finalize those programs we will be going out to the public so that the public is made well aware of what is involved. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** I thank the Minister for that response. I do acknowledge that we received a letter recently from the Minister. It provided some insight into what’s been going on, but it had very little detail. It describes the actions which she just told us about, but I was particularly struck by the statement in the letter which says this public working group was presented with detailed program information. I wondered why that detailed program information was not also available to Members. If the Minister could answer that question? Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** That information will be made available to the Members. As we do, in all our dealings with the committee, this is a consensus government, we share information and we make decisions together. The program information the Member is referring to, our data is that we needed for the group to do the work. I think there should not be a misunderstanding about that. It’s about who in the North are eligible for supplementary health benefits, what are their needs, what are the costs, what are the numbers, what are people’s income levels, what are the groups and numbers of people that are in need of government services, how many people are getting third party insurance? All of that raw data that would help the public working group to make the best decisions and have input into the process, those are the kinds of information that we are referring to by that phrase. At the appropriate time, I would be more than happy to share with the standing committee members in our discussion on what information was reviewed/analyzed and what suggestions are being made.

I just want to make sure that the Members know and that the public knows that this government had heard very clearly that we didn’t do this right the first time and were asked to go back and work on it. I realize the silence might be alarming, but I think people should be assured that we have been doing the work and we know that we don’t want to bring out premature work. We need to make sure that the work is done and that we will seek input and participation from the committee and the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. BISARO:** I want to thank the Minister for the answer, but I think the Minister also knows that the Standing Committee on Social Programs has been intimately involved in this particular issue over the last year and remains involved and wants to be involved. I think it wouldn’t have been a disservice to the committee if... It was a disservice that we didn’t get the information, but I think the Minister should have given the information to committee who would have taken that information and studied it on their own.

I look forward to the response from the working group, but I would have rather had the information, the background and the data myself.

The Minister has referenced consultation, I would like to ask the Minister what kind of a timeline she’s referencing in terms of consultation when the public, other than the working group, are going to be involved in seeing either the data and/or the recommendations from the committee. Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Over the last two weeks or three weeks, we’ve received at least three letters from the Standing Committee on Social Programs to my department thanking us for the cooperation and collaboration that we are providing to the committee. So the Member knows anytime they would like information about anything we’re doing, we’re there. We are able to provide the info. The Member can have any data we are working with. We just wanted to have a reviewable, workable data done. I mean, that’s the work of the department and the department is doing that.

Also for the Members of the public and the House, I’d like to advise that working groups of the supplementary health benefits is the YWCA, NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities, Hay River Seniors, Centre for Northern Families, Yellowknife Seniors, NWT Seniors’ Society. So those are the groups that have been involved. So, Mr. Speaker, the Member knows that we will not be moving ahead without discussions with the Standing Committee on Social Programs and Members. We hope that we will have a package done by the beginning to middle of next month. Upon review and approval, we will have the spring months to have an information session with the public. Thank you.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would like to advise the Minister that we would have gladly asked for the data if we had known that it was available. I take her statement to mean that it’s a commitment to provide it to committee. So I look forward to receiving that info.

In terms of the consultation, she said something about three months. I didn’t quite understand exactly what that is referencing. If I could get a bit more of a firm or definite statement as to which months she’s referencing when this consultation with the public will start. Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** The expectation is that we will have a product for the committee and the Cabinet to review within the month of February. That will give us, if all goes well, March, April, May, June to do consultations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## QUESTION 197-16(4): DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have some questions today for the Minister of Transportation and it gets back to my Member’s statement on the Deh Cho Bridge. I just want to start out by saying that I respect and I appreciate the work that both the Minister and his departmental staff are putting in on this project, but I’ve got to ask some fundamental questions here today, Mr. Speaker.

Much has been made about the departure of Atcon from the Deh Cho Bridge Project. The project was sold, like I said in my Member’s statement, to the public, to Members of this House and to the former Cabinet as a fixed price contract. That is just not factual today, Mr. Speaker. I would like the Minister to explain to the House today how this so-called fixed price contract turned into such a gong show, Mr. Speaker, and now we are looking for a new contractor to finish the second half of that bridge. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the gong show the Member speaks of is only in some people’s eyes. I am very interested to see why he’s concerned about my being positive on this project would be a concern.

Mr. Speaker, this project was brought forward with a design in place with a caveat that further testing had to be done. That was done and approved. There needed to be some changes. The designer of the original bridge was no longer in place and a new team came into place and indicated that there could be some changes made that would result in savings and we proceeded on that basis. Things have gone well and we now have a design in place and we’ll be moving forward.

I’d like to point out to the Member, Mr. Speaker, that any project, any contracts we have in place is not set in stone and they can be opened up and many have been even though they are considered to be ironclad. In this case, we had a caveat that allowed us to do so. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** That begs the question why anybody would sign a concession agreement with a partner without a design. I am just wondering whose responsibility was that. Why was a concession agreement signed with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation without a design in place, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Maybe the Member didn’t hear what I said. I did indicate that we did have an approved design in place that required further testing. So we did have a design at the time. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** I’d like to ask the Minister, and I think the question that everybody out there has is what will this bridge ultimately cost to have constructed, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** We feel that the bridge will be constructed with the price that we had indicated earlier and we are trying to stay on budget. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what are the outstanding financial risks to the Government of the Northwest Territories and what is it going to cost the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation to get out of its contractual obligations with Atcon? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** The Member knows full well that we don’t have that information at this time. We would expect the cost, any kind of termination fees would include work that was done up to this date on this portion and this phase of the contract and some profit margins also. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 198-16(4): DECLINING CMHC FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I spoke about the CMHC declining fund for the 2,200-or-so public housing units we have across the Territories. Now I have questions for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if the NWT Housing Corporation has developed a strategy to address the CMHC declining fund? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Robert McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recognizing the fact that we are losing money every year through the CMHC declining funding, Housing has started the process of identifying ways that we could cut back in our O and M and that’s part of the strategy. We are working on a 20-year capital needs assessment and we’re looking at retrofitting a lot of the units so that they are, we can get a longer life span out of them and we’re also looking at going to a lot of multiplex-type designs, which are less costly to maintain. We recognize the fact that we are declining and it is a great concern to the Housing Corporation. So we are taking steps to address this and meanwhile continuing to lobby the federal government to try and keep the money flowing and seeing what we can do, working with our partners in Nunavut and the Yukon, in addressing this issue with the federal government. Thank you.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, those are good objectives. I see that the objectives are mostly pertaining to the current inventory. Can the Minister advise me if he has anything in place in the area pertaining to the transfer of any of the public housing units to its clientele? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we’re always looking at ways to sell some of the units to clientele. Over the years I think we’ve sold probably in the neighbourhood of 49. We have 63 that we’ve identified that could be for sale. However, we need to make sure that they have the means to maintain these units, because the last thing that we would like to see is transferring some of these units over to clients who are unable to maintain them and then they in turn would come back to the corporation for funding. That’s what we need to make sure we get away from and not set them up for failure. Thank you.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, I realize that it would take some money to continue to operate a house. It may be easier if there was no mortgage attached to it. Can the Minister tell me, just on a little bit of a different note, what resources have been allocated to achieve these objectives of addressing the CMHC declining fund? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Well, our budget has gone up each year, recognizing the fact, again, that the money is declining and, as I pointed out to the Member in response to the first question, we are taking steps to try and cut back on the O and M part of it by improving the quality of our units, so we’d have less O and M funding. As far as the resources go, we are seeing a small increase just about every year, but it’s not quite enough to deal with the money we will be losing. I mean, to date, I think we’ve been out $5.8 million, but by the time the money actually declines I think we’re going to be out $348 million in O and M funding. Thank you.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister outline for us any initiatives that involve the local housing organizations in the sense that have they engaged the local housing organizations in this initiative?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we’re always engaging with the local housing organizations and listening to what they have, because a lot of them know best what goes on in their community. I mean, they’ve identified some units that they can move and also improving the operation and maintenance of each unit, trying to cut back on the costs. So we are working quite closely with a lot of the LHOs and the district offices to identify ways where we can make some savings, again recognizing the fact that unless we get a change of heart from the federal government, we’re going to continue to have declining funding each and every year. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 199-16(4): CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member’s statement. I indicated my support for treaty rights to be recognized by our government in terms of hunting caribou in the banned zone and the Bathurst herd. I don’t think anybody wants to see a return to the levels of harvest that had happened, but there is a question of subsistence hunting. I would like to ask the Minister about that. Will he consider subsistence hunting? I’m not talking about lifting the entire ban in this hunting zone, but allowing subsistence harvesting to our treaty people in those areas. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The herd is in such significant decline that the information, all the science tells us that it cannot sustain any further harvest; that if we have any harvest, there’s a good chance that it will cease to exist as a herd within the next couple of years. We, as well, recognize treaty rights and rights to harvest, and we have come up with funds and resources and an opportunity to work with the Tlicho and the Yellowknives and the Akaitcho, that they can harvest outside. The Bluenose-East and the Ahiak can sustain some controlled harvest that will allow us to make sure that the affected communities have some access. We’ve also adjusted the bison tags to give more access there. But the herd, the reason it’s being protected is because it is our opinion and judgment, based on the extensive work done, it cannot sustain any harvest without jeopardizing its survival. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Yesterday I spoke about an opportunity for consultation at the meetings in Fort Simpson. There was missed opportunity. Has the Minister met with the impacted First Nations’ groups this week at all, or does he plan to meet with them at all to discuss the very, very important issue of treaty rights and subsistence harvesting for our aboriginal people? Because this ban, this law will put our aboriginal people in jail and that’s not what we’re looking for, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, the ban will protect the herd. There is opportunity to harvest outside the banned area that will allow the subsistence hunting, to allow communities to have access to caribou. I would point out that in the whole North Slave region there is the area where there is the ban, everywhere else there’s hunting only for aboriginal people. The focus is to protect and to keep the survival of the herd. We recognize and we can accommodate the issue of the hunting and access with the arrangements and resources that we have offered up. There have been, and continue to be, extensive meetings being held. There are meetings all this week going on in the Tlicho. We provided committee yesterday with a detailed briefing and a list of all the meetings that were held. I met as recently as last Friday with Grand Chief Bill Erasmus and the Yellowknives and a couple dozen of their members as well. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Does the Minister plan to meet with the Yellowknives or any of the impacted First Nations’ groups in the near future, today or tomorrow or the weekends coming, like, as soon as possible? Because this is a very controversial issue and impacts not only those First Nations but the precedent that it sets for all First Nations across our Territory. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated I met last Friday for two hours with Chief Bill Erasmus and Chief Tsetta and Chief Sangris and a roomful of their members. I’ve had discussions with the Member for Weledeh. He is meeting or has met with the chiefs and I’ve committed that we will… He’s asked if I will meet with the chiefs. I’ve indicated as soon as we can arrange the time that we will. We’re prepared to do that, myself and the deputy, to have any further discussions to look at how do we preserve the purpose of the ban, protect the herd and continue to work with the impacted communities so that they have access to some subsistence hunting. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Your final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In all cases of reduced populations, maybe be it fisheries, treaty rights are always upheld. In this case, I’d like to ask the Minister not to lift the ban but to allow treaty people to hunt at a subsistence level at a minimal cost to the herd, but at least continue their treaty right to hunt and fish on our land. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** We have committed and are working with the Tlicho and we are prepared to work with the Yellowknives to make sure that they have access to subsistence hunting. We have not said you can’t hunt caribou. We have not said that we are taking away that right to hunt. What we are saying in this very broad area is that there is a herd in the middle, the Bathurst herd, which its numbers have diminished so dramatically that they cannot stand harvesting or they will cease to exist. There are other opportunities. We are working with communities to say we can continue to have subsistence harvest in those areas while still doing what everybody wants, which is protect the future of the herd. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 200-16(4): CARIBOU MANAGEMENT MEASURES

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am convinced that the Minister has faced this decision, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, for a hunting ban of caribou on careful and thorough consideration of the information available on the caribou. However, my understanding is that there was only one meeting with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, a meeting on the 1st of December, in which the Yellowknives Dene expressed disagreement with the ban. I am also aware that, in contrast, there were repeated meetings with the Tlicho and, of course, the Wekeezhii Renewable Resource Board through the same time frame and earlier. Relying on the Wekeezhii Renewable Resource Board process and timetables does not honour the Yellowknives Dene rights to consultation and involvement and decision making.

Given that this is an area where, in the chief drawing in each territory, there is no co-management board and you would think there would, therefore, be a focus of consultations with that particular group of people, why was there not a focus on meaningful consultation with the Yellowknives Dene so they could have a partnership in the development of these restrictions? Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were, in October for example, open group meetings that the Yellowknives were invited to but did not attend. There were meetings that we did have at the regional leaders’ meetings. As well, we did have a discussion about the caribou and we have to separate two issues here. The issue -- and we recognize it and I acknowledged that in one of my previous replies -- is that the Wekeezhii process is critical but that is only part of the process to look at an overall management plan for the Bathurst herd, as the Member well knows. We have to consult fully with the Akaitcho, the Yellowknives, the Northwest Territories Metis Nation and other stakeholders as well as the aboriginal governments. In the case of this emergency interim measures, there was a very compressed time frame. We did a lot of work and then we shared the whole list of work that was done with the Members, trying to consult as much as possible about the need for an interim ban because of the slippage in the process set out by the Wekeezhii board. We believe that we could stand the test set out by Sparrow about our…have we hit the right criteria and have we done the right things to respond to his very specific short-term emergency measures. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Mr. Speaker, given that there is no land claim settlement or binding co-management process with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation Chief Drygeese region and that the Yellowknives Dene stated its opposition before the ban was announced, what authority does GNWT have to implement this ban? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The enabling authority would come under the Northwest Territories Act. Two sections come to mind, 16 and 18 with subsequent amendments to 18, as well as the Wildlife Act which flows under the Northwest Territories Act. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Mr. Speaker, when the GNWT assumed responsibility for the management of this herd, they inherited from aboriginal residents a healthy population of caribou. Yet, over the last 20 years we have seen this catastrophic decline and its management practices and efforts have failed. The Yellowknives Dene have indicated that if the situation requires, they would reduce their harvest to one caribou per person, say per hunter, per year. So they are ready and willing to engage and apply their authority to conserve caribou. Did the government try to bring them into the determination of hunting restrictions in an engaged, authoritative and responsible partner? Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, we worked with the Yellowknives to look at the issue of...because there wasn’t going to be the report, the Wekeezhii report, or any other plan for the harvest restrictions which we announced back in late September were going to needed because of the draconian drop in numbers, that we would need to be put those restrictions in place. We have worked with them. The issue of the ban, the focus has been the need for the ban and what mitigating measures and accommodating measures we can put in place to offset the lack of access to this specific area recognizing that there was still an ability to subsistence hunt to the east and to the west of the no-hunting zone. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that had there been meaningful engagement, the Yellowknives Dene have the authority and would have been a meaningful partner in implementing the action required. My final question is: what plans does the government have for coming out of this ban with a new and even revolutionary approach to ensuring future cooperation that is effective and prevents such new confrontations? Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** I would be interested in the Member’s definition of a revolutionary approach before I could answer fully that specific question, but I can indicate to the Member that we have already started the discussions and the planning to bring together the chairs of the co-management boards and representatives where there are no co-management boards to look at the overlap areas, to look at, as we pointed out yesterday in our presentation, the decline of herds all across the Northwest Territories and how do we come to an understanding similar to what’s being attempted with the Porcupine Caribou herd, some understanding between all the government parties and signatories as to the steps to be taken when numbers are in decline and what response does a decline require when a certain point is hit. For example, the Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan has a trigger of 45,000 animals and it is a similar size right now to what the Bathurst was in 2006. If it hits 45,000, the automatic trigger is there’s no hunting for anybody of any of the Porcupine herd. That has been negotiated and has been worked on now for many years. We have to come to those kinds of understanding among ourselves, because there’s a significant overlap of almost every herd. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 201-16(4): PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is being directed to the Premier because I think we’re going to have to have a political decision or political involvement especially from the Executive Council to resolve the outstanding issue in Tsiigehtchic of not having a health provider. I think we’re going on seven years now, yet this has been raised by previous Ministers, it’s been raised by Gwich’in assemblies, it’s been raised at the Beaufort Leaders’ Meeting, motions have been passed. I think, Mr. Speaker, there is a time and place to end the discussion and find a solution to the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I think it’s the fundamental basic rights with regard to services for people regardless of whether it’s justice programs, health care programs or housing. We have to ensure that we have basic services being provided. Could the Premier personally intervene for promising a nurse for Tsiigehtchic? I was promised, prior to this House, that there was one going to be there February 1st. I told the chief in Tsiigehtchic that. I told the community at the previous Beaufort Leaders’ Meeting. The Minister stated she’s still working on it. So I’d like to ask the Premier if he would personally intervene with his Cabinet colleagues to find a solution to this problem, so we can see a nurse in Tsiigehtchic February 1st.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the concern for the Member. It’s been raised, whether it is in this forum here in the Assembly or to provide services, necessary services in the community of Tsiigehtchic. Thank you.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you. I believe we spend some $300 million on health care in the Northwest Territories. We give those dollars to health authorities to manage on behalf of this government to provide programs and services for people. If they are not doing that, this government has to find a mechanism. If health care services are not being provided to those communities, that those dollars earmarked for those communities be clawed back by the Executive Council and directly administered through the Executive Council to those communities and bypass the health board, because they are not doing their job in regard to the residents of Tsiigehtchic.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you. There definitely is opportunity. The Member himself has raised earlier in his line of questions the meetings that are held with the Beaufort-Delta leaders and the Gwich’in leaders around the services. The Department of Health and Social Services is in attendance along with representatives of the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority and we would work with that leadership to see what can be done. The area board authority is one that this government has tried to address through an initiative of board reform. That met with significant resistance of members in the public. So we pulled that back. We know the area of health services authorities, for example, there needs to be a newly established relationship with the authorities across the Northwest Territories.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has come forward to the standing committee and the Assembly and I believe during her opportunity with the budget talking about the Foundation for Change and looking at how we will try to reinvigorate our relationship with boards across the Northwest Territories. If we feel there is and if the Minister feels there is enough that has occurred that we can move to remove a board and put in a representative of the department to run the operations in that region, that is something that can also be taken into consideration, but that decision is not taken lightly. Thank you.

**MR. KRUTKO:** I request the Premier to do an audit on the Inuvik health board dealing with the community of Tsiigehtchic from the information that was provided by the Minister in which in one year they made 20 visits and they were there for 120 hours. For me, that’s unacceptable. I’d like to know from the Premier if he can tell me exactly how many dollars are being expended on the health operations in the community of Tsiigehtchic out of that $300 million that we’ve spent on behalf of this government, how much is really being spent in communities and not operating a health board, which goes in a deficit every year, year after year after year and using dollars that should be expended in our communities for health care services and not being expended where it shouldn’t? Thank you.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you. I will speak to the Minister of Health and Social Services. With that request, of course that requires us to work with the authority in place as they would have that type of information when it comes to the dollars that are allocated, what was spent and how it was done, but I do know that the hours that the Member talked about was doctor visits in the community. There were, during the breakup seasons of the winter road and community visits by nurses, in the neighbourhood of almost 100 days of nurse time in the community. But I’ll get the appropriate information and see what we can do on that basis. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Your final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this does demand a political resolution. It has to be resolved by this Cabinet. I’d like to ask the Premier to maybe have this on his Cabinet agenda for tomorrow morning’s Cabinet meeting. Hopefully he can look deeper into this, because I believe this is not the only community that’s under this type of threat by way of not having services being provided. There are other communities throughout the Territories that find themselves in similar situations. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the Premier’s response with his Cabinet colleagues and hopefully find a resolution to this. Thank you.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you. One of the things we do on a daily basis while we’re in session is talk about the issues that have arisen from question period and look at what is required to either get information or deal with the issue. This, the request for the type of information the Member has asked, is not going to be dealt with in a matter of days. It’s going to take some time to get all of that information. As well, the Member has raised there needs to be a comparison done to communities of similar size remote communities as to how we’ve delivered that service. We know, Mr. Speaker, the issue of health care, justice, education, all of those services in our smaller communities are a matter of concern that is raised and that is why we’ve put together in working with Members on the Rural Remote Communities Initiative. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 202-16(4): PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to raise some concerns with our health board, as Mr. Krutko has just talked about one of his communities. Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of weeks, actually the last couple of days and even this morning I received a phone call from one of my constituents and they were having some serious concerns in regard to the operation of our health board in terms of the professionalism that the staff at our regional health board has towards some of our residents in the Sahtu. I wanted to ask the Minister in terms of a type of review or look at some of these types of concerns that our residents are raising now in regard to our own health board. Is there a type of mechanism to look at the performance evaluation audits to see where we can head off some of these critical issues that are affecting the health care in our region?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe most of our health authorities try to do their best to deliver their programs and services on a daily basis, but there are times when questions like this come up. The way our board structure is set up, the boards of all health and social services authorities get their funding from the government, but they’re quite independent in the way they deliver programs and services. As a part of our initiatives -- and the Minister of Finance mentioned it in his budget speech -- I have been working with the committee on the Foundation for Change and part of the Foundation for Change speaks to improved governance, financial management, accountability for programs and services so that we are getting the maximum benefits from our investments and that there is a shared understanding of actual costs and benefits to the system. So one of the large tasks we have undertaken is to define better our financial and accountability arrangement by way of agreement, and that was in Minister Miltenberger’s budget today. This is a new exercise. We want to make it clear to the authority exactly what is expected, and, of course, we are working with the authorities so that they agree to this arrangement, because we see from Member Yakeleya’s question as well as Member Krutko that when we spend $326 million this year, that we want to see accountability and the results on the ground that both the authorities and we understand. I know authorities are working hard, but it may not be exactly what we set out to do and under the current system we don’t have that monitoring that we would like to do. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. The Minister has made reference to the document she’ll be discussing. I’m looking forward to seeing the result of the Foundation for Change with the Minister in terms of going forward in terms of establishing... (recording difficulties)

**HON. SANDY LEE:** ...with the Member. We toured all of the communities in Sahtu. Leadership did speak to us about a working relationship and interaction with the local health centres as well as health board. I’ll do my part to make sure that our board and our health care delivery system is accountable to our people. At the same time, I did encourage the local leadership and Grand Chief Andrew that there is... At any time when the community leadership have concerns or questions about the services or lack of, or good or bad or the ugly, anything, I think health boards and health centres will benefit from that input and everybody should be encouraged to communicate to them. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say, on behalf of the Sahtu people, that the Minister of Health and Social Services has been the only Minister that has done a tour with me in the Sahtu of...

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Ahhh.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** ...so much that she has come twice to the Sahtu. I want to say that the people appreciate her to come and sit in and talk about these important issues. Mr. Speaker, we have some complaints, some serious complaints that are very serious to people in Deline, people in Fort Good Hope, people in Colville Lake. I want to ask the Minister when these complaints come forward, sometimes we have a backlash from the regional health boards in terms of staff members saying things that shouldn’t be said to the people in our communities. Would the Minister see that stuff like this doesn’t happen with our health board? People are afraid to come forward to launch or even to talk to me regarding health concerns, because sometimes they get feedback that isn’t very good from our health board.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Once again, I would like to say that in Sahtu region and every other region in the Territories, we do have very dedicated, qualified, skilful health and social services staff working hard to deliver programs and services. Mr. Speaker, I know sometimes things do go wrong. Sometimes people are not happy with the response they received with their medical treatment or medical emergency or counselling and one of the things that we are seeing that we need to improve on and that’s also part of Foundation for Change -- I’m afraid I’m going to have to mention this document a lot because it has lots of things to do with what we are working on -- one of the things we need to build more on is where do people go when they have complaints about medical health professionals that is independent, objective and not necessarily to the political force. That’s something we are working on as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to a solid policy where people can go and launch a complaint in their own language. Mr. Speaker, I’m speaking about this person in Fort Good Hope that went to the health centre. She was diagnosed about two weeks later with pneumonia. Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. We had a death in our community that should not happen. That is unacceptable. So, again, I look forward to a time when the Minister can outline a time where she can state in this House where policies on people with long-term complaints regarding health care can be tabled in the House.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I didn’t hear a question there. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

## QUESTION 203-16(4): EXPANSION OF THE TALTSON HYDRO PROJECT

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Finance Minister’s budget address today he talked about the expansion of the Taltson hydro dam and that’s something that has been on the radar for quite some time. It would be an economic boon to the area. It would certainly be environmentally good judgment to offset the use of diesel and the mines and perhaps other consumers as well that would be interested in tying into extra hydro power. Mr. Speaker, there are many benefits and many pluses to the expansion of the Taltson hydro dam.

The Minister indicated that the GNWT does not have the financial capacity to undertake a project of this size and refers to a price of $500 million. The Minister also indicates that the GNWT even with federal support for this project would still not have the capacity to undertake this project. He talks about inviting partners or a partner who would have the financial capability to participate with the GNWT. I would like to ask the Minister if he has anybody in mind. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am assuming most Members are aware when we were in Copenhagen the Premier and I had the opportunity to sit down and talk to Ms. Southern from ATCO about the Taltson expansion. Mr. Krutko and Mr. Abernethy, while they weren’t at the meetings, were clearly aware that we were having those discussions. So we’ve had some discussions with Ms. Southern on this issue. Thank you.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. That’s the first time I’ve actually formally heard those meetings taking place in Copenhagen. I had heard some rumours and so on. How does any discussions that have taken place or any agreements that may be arrived at, how does that tie in with the unsolicited ATCO proposal that has also been on the table of which we are awaiting the government’s review of that proposal? How is that related to the Taltson? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** I’ll indicate two things. First, these discussions are at the very preliminary stage and there is no link between these two. We are looking at trying to make sure the Taltson project is able to go ahead and if we don’t within the next six to eight months come up with a way to make that happen, the Taltson project, for all intents and purposes, at least for the life of this Assembly and probably for at least three years or more will be put on a shelf. So there is no link. The issue is trying to make sure that we can move ahead on the Taltson. Thank you.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN**: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the discussions with Nancy Southern from ATCO were in a positive vein. I would like to ask the Minister what would be the next steps in pursuing a partnership to enable the GNWT to develop the Taltson hydro potential. What would the next steps in that process be? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Given the very preliminary nature of our discussions, we are having some very basic discussions. The folks from ATCO are looking at all the public information that’s on the website to come up with a full understanding of the project. We are waiting to hear back from them in terms of, we were sharing some documents in terms of some basic points, principles that we could possibly look at if we were going to proceed with the discussions. Thank you.

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

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the very public quasi announcement by the Minister of Finance today that the GNWT is looking for a partner on the Taltson hydro expansion, does the government have a plan if this information that’s been put out here today... If this has the effect of interesting other parties, potential other parties in this, does the government have a plan to deal with that so that this is not kind of just, you know, flying by the seat of our pants on this, that we actually aren’t just waiting to react to things, that in fact we have a plan going forward? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** We have an arrangement with partners already, which is compromised of ourselves, the Northwest Territories Metis and Akaitcho. We also recognize and they’re working on the partnership, they are working on the generation part of the project. But we also recognize, as I pointed out in my statement, that even with some federal assistance, we are not going to be able to proceed with this project unless we get outside help. We need a partner. So we’ve had some initial discussions recognizing that fact, recognizing that we have about eight months to get ourselves sorted out and we are going to focus our most immediate attention on that that is right before us before we look further afield. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 204-16(4): DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by saying my reference earlier to the Deh Cho Bridge Project being a gong show is in no way meant to disparage the good work done by the Minister and his staff. I do appreciate that. It’s the project in general. I just wanted to state that for the record.

In my last question to the Minister I asked him what are the potential financial risks to the Government of the Northwest Territories via the Deh Cho Bridge Project. I would like the Minister to answer that question for me. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of unknowns in this project, as we speak. The Bridge Corporation is negotiating with a contractor about price until sometime later on this month. It will continue to be ongoing until we have an agreement in place.

Of course, there may be termination fees that more than likely will come forward from the contractor that the Bridge Corporation couldn’t make a positive agreement with that we will probably have to deal with. There are still some outstanding claims that we don’t have the numbers on. Mr. Speaker, our goal is to include all of the issues that I mentioned as part of our final price. We are trying to keep that within our budget. However, that is going to remain an unknown until we have resolved some of these issues. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister: how are the Government of the Northwest Territories and its department working to mitigate the potential financial risk to the Government of the Northwest Territories in this project? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we have taken more of a hands-on approach through our resources and have people involved with all the different activities that are taking place, all the different discussions and those negotiations. As we develop and move forward on settling and coming to a final price on this project, we incorporated some requirements that needed to be addressed, including rolling in the cost of some of the claims and including the termination fees as we move forward. We would like to have all the different loose ends tied up and be able to come forward with some confidence to the Members and say we have a price. We have a firm plan that we are going to have to conclude this project by November 2011. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a supplementary question. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister what the contingency plans are should a contractor not be found or a contract not be negotiated by March 1st for the remainder of the work of the Deh Cho Bridge Project. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we expect to have a contractor in place. There are a number of contractors that have come forward. There are some serious negotiations. We have some preliminary numbers that we are looking at for the Bridge Corporation and ourselves are looking at. We are quite confident that we are going to resolve that and have an agreement by some time later early in this new year. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, during these negotiations, is the GNWT at the table in a meaningful way on negotiating the second portion of this project? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in my response, we have inserted our staff and we are participating in all aspects of discussions on this project. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 10, written questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to go to item 7, recognition of visitors in the gallery, on the orders. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted.

# Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to recognize my sister Lorraine Menicoche-Moses in the gallery. Welcome, and you have seen how your younger brother works. Mahsi cho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 11, returns to written questions. Item 12, replies to opening address. Item 13, replies to the budget address, day one of seven. Item 14, petitions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

# Petitions

## PETITION 2-16(4): LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY IN FORT MCPHERSON

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of a long-term care facility for Fort McPherson. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 114 signatures of Fort McPherson residents. Mr Speaker, the petition is to request the establishment of a permanent long-term care facility for the hamlet of Fort McPherson.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 15, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 16, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Tabling of Documents**

## TABLED DOCUMENT 62-16(4): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MAIN ESTIMATES, 2010-2011

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2010-2011. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, notices of motion. Item 18, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 19, motions. Item 20, first reading of bills. Item 21, second reading of bills. Item 22, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 23, report of Committee of the Whole. Item 24, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

# Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Friday, January 29, 2010, 10:00 a.m.:

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

* Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010
* Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act
* Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act
* Tabled Document 62-16(4), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2010-2011

1. Report of Committee of the Whole
2. Third Reading of Bills
3. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, January 29th at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:46 p.m.