



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, March 2, 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): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 4-16(5):
CRIME PREVENTION AND
COMMUNITY JUSTICE

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the beginning of the NWT Crime Prevention Conference in Yellowknife, with participants from every community in the Territory. The theme of the conference is Together We're Better: Preventing Crime in the NWT.

Supported by a grant from Public Safety Canada, this conference is bringing together people from across the Territory, giving them an opportunity to learn from each other and work together to make our communities safer places. We all have an important role in this. We need to work together to make it clear that we will not accept criminal and unwanted behaviour.

Our families need to be safe. This takes strong partnerships between the community, the police and other agencies. Our justice committees have been hard at work developing innovative programs that work well for the people who need them. Our Community Justice Program is one of the most successful in the country. It strengthens the role of local people in prevention and enforcement, and it focuses on promoting personal and family responsibility. It works because it's community-based.

Jail must be the last resort. In the Northwest Territories, we work with our partners to support alternatives to the formal justice system. Justice committees deal with youth and adult cases using a restorative approach. They administer programs that help offenders address the harm they have caused and give back to their communities. They promote abuse-free, crime-free lifestyles and

activities that lead to healthier relationships and healthier communities overall.

Some of our committees are now also providing victim services. They support victims from the time of the offence for as long as they need help. Some committees are working closely with the local RCMP, probation services and youth agencies.

Mr. Speaker, starting today, representatives from all of our committees will sit down together and talk about what they're doing. We want to help them to spread the word about what works, so other committees can benefit from their experiences. We want to prevent crime in every part of the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to welcome the participants to Yellowknife. I hope Members are able to take up my invitation to join us at the Explorer Hotel in the Katimavik meeting rooms on the first day of the conference.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 5-16(5):
SALE OF THE RAE LAKES
GENERAL STORE LTD.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce the sale of the Rae Lakes General Store Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation, better known as BDIC, to the Tlicho Investment Corporation.

This sale is a win-win situation for all. It is a win for the residents of Gameti as the sale represents significant progress in the evolution of the store by providing employment, economic opportunity and self-sufficiency to the community and its residents. Like other remote communities facing challenges induced by geography, infrastructure and local capacity, the store provides essential products year round. The sale is a win for the Tlicho Investment Corporation as it signifies a strong commitment by the Tlicho Government in investing in its people and communities.

The Tlicho Investment Corporation, an investment arm of the Tlicho Government, has the financial resources, expertise and experience needed in

operating businesses. With the ownership of similar stores, the addition of the Rae Lakes General Store Ltd. creates an economy of scale in purchasing and thus allows the products to be affordable for Gameti residents.

Finally, the sale is a milestone for the BDIC in meeting its objective of encouraging economic development and employment opportunities in local communities. The event marks the first time a BDIC subsidiary has obtained self-sustainability. In addition to its business expertise and financial resources, the Tlicho Investment Corporation is committed to developing the human resource needs of the store and supporting the local economic base.

Over the years the BDIC and its predecessor, the Northwest Territories Development Corporation, have provided financial assistance and guidance to the Rae Lakes General Store, allowing it to grow and succeed. The Tlicho Investment Corporation, store management, and the BDIC saw an opportunity for the community to become self-reliant and they made it happen.

At this time I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the Rae Lakes General Store's board of directors and staff, the Tlicho Investment Corporation and the BDIC on their achievement.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 6-16(5):
NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH (MARCH)

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is National Nutrition Month. Although healthy eating is important all year, March is the month when healthy eating is emphasized and promoted across Canada.

A healthy eating survey was concluded at the end of February. In March, activities will include the promotion of healthy eating in schools through family nutrition fairs in communities. The department will also have nutrition tips posted daily on our website.

The national theme of Nutrition Month is "Celebrate Food...From Field to Table." This gives us the opportunity to promote the inclusion of healthy traditional northern foods as a way to maintain good nutrition.

We will also be partnering with other organizations in April to promote healthy eating and homegrown foods.

A Foundation for Change Action Plan has a goal of wellness for our communities, families and individuals. It supports individuals to make the best possible choices for themselves and their families.

Healthy eating is a key component to preventing chronic disease and obesity, which has become a major public health concern. In 2008, Stats Canada reported that 51 percent of Canadians were overweight or obese. Obesity leads to chronic disease and poor health. Diabetes is also a concern in the North and it is linked with poor nutrition and lack of healthy lifestyle.

We want to ensure that all Northerners have every opportunity to be physically fit and to choose healthy foods. Our role is to provide proper, sound evidence so people can make healthy choices like fruits and vegetables, some of which can be grown locally in greenhouses or community gardens. Prevention through good nutrition is the key to overall good health. This is essential for the healthy development of our children.

Making healthy choices also empowers individuals and families to have the personal responsibility for self-care and lessening the burden on our health system.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CORE HOUSING NEEDS IN THE
MACKENZIE DELTA CONSTITUENCY

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, housing is essential infrastructure in our communities to house our families, our friends and, more importantly, to sustain our communities. But, Mr. Speaker, from the latest report from the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, statistics on core needs shows that there is definitely a problem with the number of core units that are in core need, especially in my riding where 43 percent of the houses in Aklavik are in core need, 33 percent in Fort McPherson and 41 percent in Tsiigehtchic.

Mr. Speaker, this government provides programs and services to assist residents with housing programs to maintain, insure, upgrade their units, repair their homes to ensure that they are not in core need. Mr. Speaker, what this report shows compared to the last report, which was tabled in 2004, is that, if anything, the core needs have increased rather than decreased.

Mr. Speaker, with the aging infrastructure in our communities, especially in people's homes, they do have to attract more attention by way of houses in core need. But, Mr. Speaker, programs and services that we have, have to be user friendly. They are not to be bringing barriers where people aren't able to acquire these programs and make it so restrictive that people aren't able to be eligible

for a lot of these programs especially in small communities. Mr. Speaker, I think it's essential that we, as government, revamp our programs to make them more user friendly and also make them available to all residents of the Northwest Territories and especially the homeowners that we depend on to stay in the North.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about people and the purpose of having an influx of migration so that people can live in the North, but we can't forget the people that call the North their home, and one of the biggest investments they make in our communities is their household. I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important that this government does everything it can to keep these people in our home communities, keep them in their homes, ensure that they have adequate programs and services. So, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister of Housing exactly why is the report showing that we have such a high number of core need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REVENUES FROM SAHTU OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has owned one-third of the Norman Wells oilfield since 1921. Since 1998, the federal government has collected approximately \$1.069 billion in profits from Sahtu oil and \$174 million in royalties. Imperial Oil profits are twice as much, Mr. Speaker. The federal government also collects taxes on this revenue.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the Sahtu region has the second highest percentage of households in core need. People are leaving their homes or people are not getting homes because they can't find jobs or the cost of living is too high. I can't imagine what life would be like in my region if those billions of dollars were not being sucked away; or, as we put it, we got the raw deal.

Mr. Speaker, a 1985 document called the NWT Oil and Gas Royalty Regime was tabled in the Legislative Assembly when the Norman Wells oilfield started to be developed. That document stated: "if the GNWT may be soon receiving, collecting and even setting royalties..." I'd like to know the definition of "soon," Mr. Speaker. Twice, Mr. Speaker, 25 years later, Mr. Speaker, we have no royalty regime, no revenue-sharing agreements, while the gas flows to Zama, Alberta. Really, the pipeline flows into the pockets of oil tycoons and coffers in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, 25 years later this government is preparing a response to recommendations of a report on another major oil and gas development, a

development that makes the Norman Wells oilfield look tiny in comparison. Yes, we are negotiating impact agreements; yes, we have signed a socioeconomic agreement, but the benefits of the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline will be peanuts in comparison to the profits that are made by southern companies and the federal government.

The Minister has already said that the GNWT will not be negotiating an equity share. We are not making any visual progress on devolution. Mr. Speaker, once again the people of the Sahtu may be watching more profits and more opportunities go by. That's \$1.6 billion collected by the federal government since 1998 that could have been ours had the federal government been more assertive in negotiating a fair deal when the gas started to flow in 1998. If I had \$125 million I would be the federal government walking away from the profits made from the oil in the Sahtu in a single year.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak plainly and seek a straightforward conversation about the Minister of Health's program to develop a new Supplementary Health Benefits Program.

We left this issue over 12 months ago, because basic research had not been done to provide a basis for the government's decision and approach. MLAs and the public asked that initial research be done and then a meaningful consultation be started. We naively anticipated that research would take a few months, information would come out, and then MLAs and the public could have a back-and-forth interaction with the department, posing questions that would be researched and brought back for further input. What happened?

Over a year passed and suddenly the Minister is desperate to release some research and move to an immediate public consultation before any input from MLAs. This after many had begun to assume supp health had maybe fallen off the Order Paper.

When the Minister released the supp health research, with that she included a surprise announcement of two weeks of public meetings in late March and early April centred on Easter weekend when people will be travelling and focused on family activities rather than going to meetings. At best this reflects a sorrowful lack of understanding about public dialogue.

The Minister is launching these consultations when there is still a checklist of elementary research that needs to be done. I will speak to that in my oral questions briefly. My major point on consultation is

that it can only be made meaningful through two-way dialogue. Our best resources for a full and complete review are the smart, experienced members of the public, our seniors and clients with specified medical conditions who are appealing for a meaningful role in this work.

Let's not repeat yet again the mistakes of the past. Let's have a meaningful public interaction properly conducted. This would include a presentation and initial response to materials this spring, followed by refined discussions based on new research and insights in the fall, with implementation perhaps April 1, 2011.

After the Deh Cho Bridge, no single issue has excited as much debate as the supplementary health benefits proposals. The Minister should recognize this, act on the valid questions raised, reach out to the resource of public knowledge, and commit to a meaningful period of public engagement.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHLAND TRAILER PARK WATER AND SEWER REPLACEMENT PROJECT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have community residents in my riding who are in a dire situation and seriously in need of assistance. A group of about 258 families, 800-plus residents, a number higher than the total residents in many NWT communities, live in an area which is essentially an accident waiting to happen; a potentially unsafe, unhealthy environment. I speak of the property owned by the Yellowknife Condominium Corporation No. 8, better known as Northland Trailer Park.

The sewer infrastructure that supplies these 258 homes is 40 years old and, by Canadian standards, should have been replaced 15 years ago. The replacement of these pipes must happen this year. Pipe failures have been occurring on a regular basis for at least 10 years and are now occurring more and more frequently. Just two weeks ago a section of sewer line which supplies 16 homes failed. They are now getting by with a temporary line until the land thaws in a few months and repairs can be made.

In 1990, when the condo was formed, NWT condominium legislation was out of date, weak, and ineffectual. The act did not protect condo owners, did not require either the seller or the buyer to have a reserve fund for large infrastructure replacements, and so none was established. It led to the situation that Condo Corp No. 8 is now in.

Many will say that the City of Yellowknife should take on this financial responsibility, but these pipes are not owned by the city. They are privately owned by the condo corporation. Condo owners can accept some financial responsibility, but the total replacement cost -- \$15 million to \$18 million -- is too cost prohibitive and totally unmanageable for these 258 homeowners. Who among us could afford an extra \$500 per month for 15 years to pay for sewer pipes? Not me, and I imagine not many of you either. That's what is facing these particular residents.

This area of Yellowknife, which is about 2 percent of our NWT population, really does need help. This really is an emergency situation for which the GNWT so far refuses to accept any responsibility. If it were any other NWT community in such dire straits, would our government continue to ignore the need?

Recently, as we discussed the Municipal and Community Affairs department budget, I asked if all NWT communities received water and sewer services funding. I quote the answer from Minister Robert C. McLeod in Hansard of February 15: "All communities but Yellowknife." I replied to him that it didn't seem very fair.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. BISARO: The GNWT can correct this unfairness and assist Northland at the same time. We can redistribute the water and sewer funding to include the City of Yellowknife for the life of the replacement project, three to five years. That funding can be used to offset the \$18 million project costs.

Northland owners are not looking for a free ride, just some funding help. Without that help these 258 families will in all likelihood walk away from their homes and at least half of them will leave the North because they have no place to live.

Low-cost housing is necessary in Yellowknife and is badly needed. I believe it's incumbent on this government to provide the help necessary.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AFFORDABLE POWER RATES FOR NAHENDEH RESIDENTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have always advocated for affordable power rates for our residents and businesses because energy costs have such an impact on the standard of living of families and the success of businesses. I know that the rates of community residents of Nahanni

Butte, Jean Marie River and Wrigley are among the highest in the NWT. These rates hit hard.

This winter residents have told me about monthly rates as high as \$600 for a family of four. That is a large part of a family's disposable income and makes it hard for a family to make ends meet. Yesterday I spoke about a Fort Simpson business in operation for more than two decades that was forced to close down because the owners could not afford to pay the power bill.

Myself and my constituents have always advocated for a one-rate zone. Although this may not be possible at this time, it is still my vision for the future of the NWT.

The Legislative Assembly faces an important challenge as it deliberates over how to restructure our power rates fairly throughout the NWT. We have gathered information from community and stakeholder consultations and I look forward to working with all my colleagues to see how we can improve the situation throughout the North and in Nahendeh.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDERS FACILITY FOR ULUKHAKTOK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Nunakput our elders have worked hard, have lived all their lives, and they've been quick to adapt their preliminary lifestyles into modern lifestyles during their time. They had to take care and protect us. Our elders truly lived amazing lives.

In every community in the Northwest Territories our elders deserve a place where they can go for entertainment, visiting, or just for healthy services. My office has received correspondence from the Minister responsible for Seniors in responding to a funding request for the facility in Ulukhaktok and I'd like to thank the Minister for it. However, the rationale indicated says that the needs of the community of Ulukhaktok does justify the expenditure commitment.

During my travels across the Territory I see other communities that are smaller and not so isolated that have received funding for seniors facilities of some sort. I asked the Minister why the discrepancy. Several years ago the community of Ulukhaktok initiated a petition to get this government committed to building a badly needed seniors facility. Today, 2010, only a year left in this government and there's still nothing. What happened to promises made to the communities during the early years of this government?

Caring for our elders' health and well-being must be a pillar of this government. The community of Ulukhaktok elders deserve this. We really have to get this done for the hamlet so we can have our

elders taking care of them ourselves. I also expressed a growing concern with the trend of government with lack of services to communities and commitments in the future enhancement projects.

Mr. Speaker, even with this enormous difference, this government continues to use formulas such the per capita market conditions when evaluating the need. This is wrong. Ulukhaktok needs an elders facility just as much as Yellowknife, Inuvik and Hay River. As I mentioned in previous Member's statements during my various leadership positions, I will continue to try to improve the life of my elders.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. JACOBSON: I will continue to try to improve the lives of my elders.

Once again, I challenge this government to seriously review the needs of our elders to place necessary resources and implement real plans for real changes for our real problems. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak today about diamonds. Mr. Speaker, my involvement in this file dates back to the beginning of 1998 when, as a newly-elected city councillor, I was appointed to the task force on the development of a secondary diamond industry here in the city of Yellowknife. This task force, in conjunction with the territorial government, was successful at getting a secondary industry established here in Yellowknife.

Over the years, Mr. Speaker, I've watched this industry suffer. Mr. Speaker, factories are closing down, the government is losing millions of dollars, has lost millions of dollars, and this, to me, could have been avoided. I hold the Government of the Northwest Territories responsible for letting the industry regress. The last government seemed intent on letting it die, dismantling our diamond division, ignoring a possible sale of the Sirius plant costing us \$10 million and, Mr. Speaker, this government, of which we have less than 18 months remaining, continues to neglect the secondary industry.

The policy surrounding the secondary industry has been in existence since 1999. Why is it taking so long to have this policy updated? What is our vision and our direction for our secondary industry? We have people still interested in cutting and polishing diamonds here in the Northwest Territories; they've

invested hundreds of thousands of dollars and are waiting and waiting some more to understand what the government's policy is going to be and rules of engagement are going to be for the secondary industry here in the Northwest Territories. These investors can't wait around forever, Mr. Speaker. Opportunities do exist in other jurisdictions. My fear is they will leave if we do not get our act together.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading an article recently about Botswana, the world's largest producer of diamonds. Mr. Speaker, Botswana has mined diamonds for decades. They understand, as a government, that one day the mining will stop, that they must diversify their economy. Why is it that if Botswana can figure this out, why can't our government understand this?

We need to grow our secondary industry. I still believe we should have a bourse here and not in Toronto. In Botswana they have established the Diamond Trading Company Botswana so that diamonds are sorted, mixed and traded in Botswana. Why doesn't the Government of the Northwest Territories pursue this type of initiative?

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. RAMSAY: In my years of following this saga, one thing I've grown to understand fully is that if you have rough diamonds, you have a captive audience. Seeing as our producing mines have committed 10 percent of their production to local cut and polish production, why don't we create a Diamond Trading Company Northwest Territories and take control once and for all of our own destiny when it comes to the diamond industry?

Mr. Speaker, we can do so much more. I struggle to understand why we remain, as a government, so complacent, unwilling to unleash the great potential that we have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to express my grave concerns about the actions of the Health Minister with her decision to release information to the public in the context of public consultation about the changes to supplementary health benefits.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents say it looks like it's already a done deal. I have reviewed the material on the Health and Social Services website,

and I've had feedback from my constituents. If anyone has read the documents, you would know there seems to be many assumptions and leading information that relates to the direction of the supplementary health benefits and which way it will be going. Some of the pretty obvious statements are the department will implement an income test program; that the implementation will happen September 2010; that many Northerners will be able to access their supplementary health benefits from third-party providers. Mr. Speaker, not to mention the sad fact that Regular Members only had information on what would be happening just the day before this release started.

As we all know, the Minister will hold town meetings and talk to regional centres throughout the NWT in March and April with her new vision of the rollout of the program, which is coming in September. But, Mr. Speaker, is this consultation just for consultation sake? Is this a process just to shoehorn our seniors into a direction that the department has already made clear that they're going in? Why do we need an implementation date as opposed to just a consultation framework process, and then let that process drive the implementation date? Does the Minister believe that the appearance of this consultation will drive true feedback or just simply apathy from its public?

I urge the Minister to be open to new ideas through this process. I also encourage the Minister not to hack away at the few benefits that we provide our northern seniors. I insist to the Minister to find a way to stop driving up the cost of living here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I had one constituent tell me the other day, it's starting to look like our Health Minister is taking a page out of the Alberta health model, the third way. Mr. Speaker, in closing I'm going to quote a line from Hamlet. It says something is rotten in Denmark. Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly think something is wrong and certainly rotten with our supplementary health consultation process and it's only just begun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CORE HOUSING NEEDS IN THE TU NEDHE CONSTITUENCY

MR. BEAULIEU: [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak on housing repairs in Tu Nedhe. First, I want to thank the Minister and the NWT Housing Corporation for increasing the budget from just under \$800,000 in 2007 to over \$8.5 million in 2010-11 for repairing and renovating homes.

Mr. Speaker, it is now in place and it's now time for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to

get into the communities to go see the homeowners that need repairs. A good strategy on preventing private homes from falling into complete disrepair and getting to the stage where the houses are no longer economical to repair is needed. Mr. Speaker, once a unit falls beyond economical repair, it has to be replaced. In Tu Nedhe most of the privately owned homes can still be saved.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT Housing Corporation must begin to focus on certain core need issues in order to decrease the core need numbers across the NWT. The NWT Housing Corporation now has a golden opportunity to plan, organize and deliver repair programs for senior homeowners that will actively reduce core need for this group.

Mr. Speaker, there are about 150 homeownership units in Tu Nedhe. About 60 to 70 of those are senior households, and perhaps as high as 50 of them need repairs immediately. Mr. Speaker, even at an average cost of about \$40,000 for each of the units, it's around \$2 million over the next couple of years where core need in Tu Nedhe can be reduced by 15 to 20 percent.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MR. BEAULIEU: Plus, Mr. Speaker, while waiting for the repairs, our oldest residents, each of the oldest residents in both Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e passed away before receiving the assistance they were requesting.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister on their plan to address core need issues in the area of adequacy for seniors' households at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TLICHO WORKSHOP ON CULTURE AND LANGUAGES PRESERVATION

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, today in Gameti there's a gathering of elders from the four Tlicho communities to share their ideas, wisdom, experience and planning for future generations. Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 80 elders selected to talk about the culture preservation, the language preservation for the Tlicho region and with respect to the wildlife as well. They talk about the respect of the wildlife as well.

Mr. Speaker, these are the professors of this great land. We must hear them out and they teach us about the wisdom, the stories, the respect of each other and pass on the stories to the future. I look forward to the outcome of their report. There is also a youth conference happening the following

weekend. Even though I'm not there, I will be supporting them in their endeavours.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize two very wise and certainly well-travelled Northerners. We have Mr. Ed Jeske and Mr. Mike Krutko, both constituents of Yellowknife Centre.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize -- he's actually my constituent -- Mike Krutko and Ed Jeske that were up in the audience. As well, I'd also like to recognize Mr. Josh Campbell who works for our MP's office, Mr. Dennis Bevington. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Ms. Joanne Deneron, a constituent from Fort Liard. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Joanne Deneron, a very determined entrepreneur and businesswoman from Fort Liard. She serves as the director of our Business Development and Investment Corporation and its subsidiary the Acho Dene Native Crafts and also she's the president of the Deh Cho Regional Helicopters Limited. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we are recognizing ghostly visitors today, I'd like to recognize Amanda Peterson, a constituent of Weledeh and her mother Margaret Peterson, well-known and respected North Slave outfitters. In particular, I would like to recognize Kaitlyn Menard and Emily Smith, a couple of Pages, for their long service in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: I would like to recognize a long-term resident of Yellowknife and a friend that I went to school with, Laurie McLean. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The

honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 13-16(5): REPORT ON CORE HOUSING NEEDS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Housing Corporation regarding the latest core needs report. The 2009 report compared to the 2004 report, it seems like we haven't seen any improvements in that area. We put forward new programs and services. At one point we used to have liaison officers in our communities to assist on program delivery. Are we going to review our programs that we do deliver in light of the dismal numbers we see in the report that was just tabled? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a few factors in determining numbers for the need survey; suitability, adequacy and affordability are three of them. We are planning on undertaking a review of our programs starting in this fiscal year. We are hoping to have the results, and we can share that with the Members, and hopefully that will take steps to address some of the core needs in the communities. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I, for one, feel that we do have to do a better job in regards to how we look at the income thresholds, because it seems to be one of the barriers. Also, with regard to the requirements under the programs where you are disallowed if you've had previous programs with the Housing Corporation... I think a lot of people realize that most houses in the communities were put on the ground through the federal housing or aboriginal housing programs through the federal government. Because of that, you're being disallowed. Is that something that will also be looked at in this review?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Member is correct; that is going to be one of the things that we plan on reviewing, as well as the core need income threshold that was raised recently. There are still a lot of questions as to some of the gaps in the program, and I've instructed officials over at the Housing Corporation to see if we can come up with some ideas to address some of those gaps, so the people that deserve to get into the program are not hindered by their core need income threshold. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: I also believe another area we have to look at is with regard to the delivery of those programs and services. I don't see why we

can't have program officers in communities where we have over 100 units. Are you going to also look at the possibility of revamping the delivery system that we use to deliver programs and services wherever possible and put program officers in communities that can show there is a need by having enough houses on the ground? Will that also be looked at? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The liaison program that was in the community was a valuable service to the district operations and it is something we would be willing to look at again. Unfortunately, these positions were eliminated through budget reduction exercises a few years ago, but we have heard the concerns from Members in communities, so this is something we would be willing to look at again. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with regard to the whole program and service area, we also have to realize that we do have an aging infrastructure. The older these houses get, the more it's going to cost to repair. My colleague Mr. Beaulieu mentioned that we have to look at the area of "if we don't do anything now, it's going to cost us more in the future." So wherever possible, we should try to do what we can to keep residents in their own homes and offer them repair programs to keep their houses over a certain level. I just want to ask the Minister if he could make an effort to try to increase more applications for communities and, if anything, put more money into this program to get those people out of core need.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The last fiscal year and this coming 2010-2011 fiscal year there is more money going into repairs than we've seen in a long time. We are working and trying to get more people eligible for repairs, whether they've had assistance before or not. You can even carry up to \$5,000 in arrears and still qualify for the Home Repair Program. We are taking steps to try and get as many people into the programs as possible. We have to be careful that we don't just start handing out keys. There are a lot of people out there who have met all the commitments that they've signed for. We have to be careful that this is one that is fair to all people out there.

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

QUESTION 14-16(5): ELDERS FACILITY FOR ULUKHAKTOK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement was on the elders facility in Ulukhaktok. Will this government commit to improving the life of our elders and develop an elders facility in Ulukhaktok? Like the Minister said

before me, fairly, being fair to all across the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government recognizes that this is a very important issue that we need to work on. We understand demographics tells us there is going to be an increasing need for facilities and support systems for our elders across the Territories. We are engaged in long-term care planning studies where we will have a prototype of long-term care facilities so we can lessen the time required to put these facilities in place. We are also doing a needs assessment for long-term care facilities all across the Territories so that we have a comprehensive plan as to the need so we can work it into the capital planning process.

MR. JACOBSON: Again, I'm tired of the studies. I'm tired of the needs assessments that this government takes upon itself to do. This has to get done. The elders in Ulukhaktok are... We don't want our elders to go to Inuvik. We don't want our elders to go to Aklavik. We don't want them to come to Yellowknife. Caring for our elders' health and well-being must be a pillar of this government. Will this government place standard living conditions of seniors as their highest priority?

HON. SANDY LEE: I have committed to looking at the situation in Ulukhaktok and Paulatuk. We will follow up on that and look at it in light of the overall assisted living programs for seniors that we need to develop as a whole. The Member has to understand, and I think everybody here understands, that we want to keep our elders in their communities and as close as possible, wherever possible. We need to have a plan in place to do that.

MR. JACOBSON: We've put a \$15 million dementia centre in Yellowknife. It wasn't even on the books. I could be corrected if need be, but I know that if the \$15 million we want to, like, she's saying.... The Minister is telling me she wants to put a package together for all the communities. Well, I have a package that says we could do a sixplex in the community and work with the Housing Minister and the Health and Social Services Minister to get this done. Will this government commit the necessary resources fairly to all northern communities and not just the major centres so elders have equal access to quality services that they deserve?

HON. SANDY LEE: I could commit to the Member that I will work with the Housing Corporation to see what we can do in Ulukhaktok. I think the Member is talking about a different facility in Ulukhaktok than the dementia centre. The dementia centre is not a regular long-term care facility; it's for the residents

of the entire Territories and there are different levels of facilities that our elders need. I can commit to working with the Minister of Housing to see what we can do in Ulukhaktok.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just talking about how quickly the money appeared when they needed it in regard to that. The sixplex design, is the Minister committed to a sixplex design with the Minister of Housing? Could we make this project a reality in the community of Ulukhaktok by May?

HON. SANDY LEE: Just for the record, the dementia centre from the planning to opening this year took 10 years. The feasibility study was done in 2003. Like I said before, I am willing to look at Ulukhaktok, and the Member is well aware of the capital plan process that we have to follow. I will make a commitment to look at Ulukhaktok and see what the needs are and where we could work with other agencies to see. I'm not even sure, I need to be clear what the Member is talking about, and that it is an assisted living facility, which is done through the Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services. Then we have the other end of the spectrum, which is a level IV and level V very intense care facility.

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

QUESTION 15-16(5):
NORTHLAND TRAILER PARK WATER AND
SEWER REPLACEMENT PROJECT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Premier and I want to follow up on my Member's statement. I'm asking the Premier these questions because the situation at Northland cuts across many departments. It's a potential huge housing issue, it's a safety issue that Health and Social Services is involved in, it's a MACA issue because it's a community, it's ITI, it's Justice, it's income security.

There's a moral responsibility on the part of this government through the Condominium Act, which was NWT legislation in 1990 when this happened. I want to ask the Premier why this government refuses to acknowledge the need of these residents and why this government refuses to provide some assistance to my residents.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northland scenario or issue has been looked at for quite a number of years by a number of Assemblies. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has tried to work with the city at the time, and I believe there is a commitment to sit

down with them again and explore alternative funding sources for this scenario. The Northland Trailer Park is a part of Yellowknife, and Yellowknife does get block funding for O and M to help them deal with the issues here in the city.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Premier. I would have to disagree with his description that it's a scenario. It's, unfortunately, not at all a figment of anybody's imagination. It's real. There is a very likely huge collapse of sewer infrastructure in the very near future.

I mentioned in my statement that Yellowknife is the only NWT community that does not receive water and sewer funding through the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. I'd like to know from the Premier whether or not there would be any consideration to changing that formula for a period of years to allow some of that funding to flow through the city and, therefore, through to the residents.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The formula situation that's been set up for communities has been designed for the level of support and the ability for a municipality to be able to raise revenue for its own repairs. But the City of Yellowknife does get O and M funding as well as capital funding, as well as they're eligible for some of federal initiatives that are out there that could help assist and offset this type of work.

MS. BISARO: I won't thank the Premier because I didn't like that answer at all. I guess I would have to say to the Premier that the capital funding that goes to the city, the gas tax money that goes to the city, that's like asking the city to give me, for my personal home, some of the gas tax funding which the city gets. This is private property. This is a group of homeowners who happen to be on a private piece of land. So it's very unlikely that the residents of this city are going to approve gas tax money going to an individual homeowner.

I really feel that the funding that the Premier is referencing is incorrect. I do appreciate his commitment to sit down and look at that funding. I feel that this Assembly designates an executive to manage the government finances and to manage emergence and emergency situations, so I'd like to ask the Premier what kind of funding exists in this government to deal with emergency funding issues that arise. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: There are a number of emergency funds that are out there; again, depending on the department, the initiative or the emergency itself. For a community, Municipal and Community Affairs, again, holds that area and the commitment, as I was stating, is a commitment on behalf of Municipal and Community Affairs to sit down with the City of Yellowknife to look at alternative funding areas that might be looked at.

As to the area of the Condominium Act, if this was to be in any community in the Northwest Territories, they would be faced with the same situation and having to have a reserve fund established.

As I stated, I am aware the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is prepared to sit down with the City of Yellowknife and explore alternative solutions. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have to say to the Premier that I have previously asked the question of whether or not there are funds available from the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and was advised that there's not. So I'm very happy to hear that there is some and that they can be discussed and I take his commitment with thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. I didn't hear a question there. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 16-16(5):
PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY
HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge the Minister of Health is not seeking to reduce the cost of supplementary health benefits, but costs are clearly rising. So I assume, at a minimum, she's strongly motivated to control future costs while providing the best benefits possible. I think that is what she was saying yesterday.

However, pharmaceuticals are clearly the single biggest driver of increasing costs. My question, Mr. Speaker: will the Minister commit to bringing back detailed options for reducing drug costs, including information on the proposed western province's drug buying plan our Premier discussed at the last Western Premiers' Meeting? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the drug cost is a key part of the landscape of health care spending going forward. In the Globe and Mail on Saturday, there was a two page spread about health care issues and drug costs being one of the biggest items. I think we are much more advanced in the North in terms of this issue than most other jurisdictions.

To answer the Member's question, the department is right now working on a formal strategy. It is highly complex. It has lots of stakeholders, but we have undertaken to do that work. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I assume the results of that will be brought forward in a timely fashion to the House or at least to Members.

On the question of affordability, I don't see any analysis of the impact of different means thresholds or consideration of how our high cost of living, which is crucial for the great majority of low-income people who use these benefits, as being considered. Will the Minister commit to doing these detailed analyses and bring them forward as part of our consultation? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: We are asking that very question to our general public. In the material that we put into the website -- and that will go out to every household -- we do ask people about at what income level, if we were to consider co-payments, that we should begin to do that, instead of coming out and saying X, Y, Z and asking people whether they say yes or no. We are asking the people. We are explaining to the people what this program is, how it differs from the rest of Canada, who's using it, and we are asking whether or not income thresholds should be used for a criteria for accessing information, whereas right now it's whether you have a condition or your age is the determining factor. So we are opening that up to the public to tell us. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for those comments from the Minister. I assume, then, she will be doing a second and third round of consultation taking that back with the implications of different selected thresholds.

On what basis does the Minister take a year -- that's 12 months, Mr. Speaker -- to start producing the basic research into what should have been provided in the original effort 18 months ago, and then expect the public consultation to be done in six weeks? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: As the Member knows, these changes were done and announced in 2007, as a result of what I know because I was here for about seven years' work. Those were announced in 2007. The motion was passed in 2008...no, 2009, last year, to go back and do the work. We have done that. We have done a lot of intense research on who this program is serving right now. We feel we have an excellent set of information to go out to the public to engage public discussion on. I think that we should be applauded, actually, for going out to the public with the information we have and asking the public to give us input.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to be engaged in paralysis by analysis and have every t crossed, every i dotted, and have an answer to those who would like nothing changed. I think, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we look at this and engage in public debate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, what a scathing comment to our public that is. If there is one possible kernel I could pick out of that it is that the Minister has finally produced initial baseline research that can get intelligent discussion in the public, but it's initial.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister recognize the need, duty and opportunity for meaningful public engagement in the Supplementary Health Benefits Program by extending consultation through the fall with an implementation target in 2011? Mahsi.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, the Members across often advise us that we should be open and transparent in what we do. As far as I'm concerned, I blew the door open. We are open. We want to hear from the people. We are not going to predetermine. The Member often tells us about the need for an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this one, we should be concerned that there are a group of people right now who don't get benefits of supplementary health, even though they cannot afford it. I think the Member and everybody in the House owes it to us to make sure that we look at this, and we make sure that this program is fair and equitable. We're going to go to the public and we are getting lots of interest from people. We're going to have a very thorough, comprehensive, intelligent, two-way dialogue, and we're going to improve this program for generations to come. We're not going to wait for 10 more years to make this fair and equitable. We're going to get it done. We're not going to consult to consult. We're not going to analyze to death. We're going to ask the people, and people are going to answer. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 17-16(5): SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions today for the Minister of ITI and it gets back to my Member's statement where I was speaking about the government's involvement in the secondary industry. Mr. Speaker, what started out with some very good intentions on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories in a secondary industry established here in the Northwest Territories over the last number of years has been nothing but a train wreck.

I'd like to begin by asking the Minister of ITI what is taking so long to get a new policy established so that people here in the Northwest Territories involved in the secondary industry know what the

rules of engagement are going to be going forward. Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mining industry, and particularly diamonds are the most important part of the economy of the Northwest Territories. So I think the Member has his facts wrong or he didn't check the facts, but the Northwest Territories was the first jurisdiction that provided for an allocation of rough diamonds from the diamond mines in order to provide for a secondary diamond industry. Plus, secondly, with the downturn in the economy, the largest market for diamond purchases is in the United States, and purchases dropped off by 75 percent. To suggest that we could operate outside of that environment is a bit of a stretch.

Secondly, we have been directed to revive the secondary diamond industry on a business basis only so that there will be no government funds involved. We are working on a policy. The Member knows that it's very important to get the policy right. We have to make sure we got all the t's crossed and i's dotted, because it's very important to get the process right, and we're fully involving the committees. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I've talked about this before. I mean, we need to pursue opportunities with the vigor and aggression that I think... You know, if we do not do this, other jurisdictions now across this country are going to pursue those opportunities when they present themselves. As I said earlier, we have investors here who are waiting for this new policy to be developed and to be out there. So, again, I'd like to ask the Minister, when does the Minister believe that we will have a workable policy in front of the committee so that we can get this out there to the public. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We have undertaken consultation with the industry stakeholders and we have requested that they respond to us by the end of February. We now have all of the diamond mines responses. We're developing a draft government response to proposed changes and we will be back to committee. Our expectation is probably April/May. If everybody concurs, then we'll look at implementation shortly after. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: In my Member's statement I also talked about Botswana, the world's leading producer of diamonds, and the fact that they understand and appreciate that mining is not going to be forever in Botswana. The Government of the Northwest Territories, I think, could take a page out of Botswana's book and develop something like the Diamond Trading Company Northwest Territories. In Botswana it's called Diamond Trading Company Botswana, where they mix, sort and trade

diamonds in Botswana. I'd like to ask the Minister if that's part of the new policy framework that the department's looking at. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I should point out also that in Botswana they shut all their mines down for a period of about two or three months during the downturn in the economy. But I can assure the Member that his suggestion, we are looking, it's part of our policy, but I don't want to pre-assume what the recommendations will be or the responses that we would receive through our consultation process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like I said, as well, one thing I've learned over the years is that access to rough and having control of the rough trade means you have a captive audience. I'd like to ask the Minister, I think we should be pursuing with vigor and with aggression the possibility of the Government of the Northwest Territories, under some secretariat or scheme or however we can work that out, we take control of the 10 percent allocation of rough and we control that rough, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister if he could, again, pursue that with some aggression. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Certainly it's very important to make sure that all of the rough allocation is taken up and utilized here in the Northwest Territories, and cut and polished here in the Northwest Territories. We are examining every option and it's certainly something that we've got some very strong recommendations on. I look forward to when I can share the conclusions of our consultations with the Member and his committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 18-16(5): CORE HOUSING NEEDS IN TU NEDHE

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in the House I talked about the need for the NWT Housing Corporation to do repairs on seniors housing in Tu Nedhe. I have questions for the Minister of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, last year when I asked the Minister if there was a strategy to address communities with the high core need, his response was as soon as the need survey is done, we can look at something. The survey is complete now. I would like to ask the Minister what the plans are for addressing communities with the highest core need across the Territories. 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, the community needs survey will go a long way in determining the allocation for repairs. We are planning on directing a lot of money to the communities that are in highest need so we can address the core need issue. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Now that the needs survey has been completed, I am going to ask questions on the survey. The Minister and the staff may not have had a full opportunity to review it, but I'll still ask a question. I would like the Minister to tell me what plans are undertaken to address core need issues for seniors' households. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As I was saying before, the results from the core needs survey will determine how we allocate a lot of the money and if that includes allocating more money to seniors, then that's the direction that we'd be willing to take. We do have a lot of programs in place for seniors and there is a fairly good uptake on it, but we are always looking at ways to improve our product. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Can the Minister tell me with the information gathered in the needs survey, if he's able to determine the difference between core needs of seniors, singles, families and those different groups within the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The report doesn't necessarily break it down into seniors and homeownership and that, but in the research that was done, I'm sure that I would be able to get some numbers and share those with the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to directing his staff to deliver the maximum amount of repairs that can be issued with a promissory note where there is no need to encumber the land? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There used to be a program in place where if you were on untenured land, you were eligible for up to \$25,000. We changed that. You are eligible to up to \$40,000 now. As Members are well aware, part of the criteria for accessing any of these programs is to have title to the land. So we are continuing to try to take steps to work with those that don't have proper tenure to the land and there are a lot of other issues that we continuing to deal with. One of the first issues that we are always deal with when we do get calls, the first question we ask them is did you apply. Five times out of ten, the answer is no. We encourage folks out there to apply to their district office and not try to circumvent the whole process

by going directly to the MLAs or to the Minister. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 19-16(5):
AFFORDABLE POWER RATES
FOR NAHENDEH RESIDENTS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement and I believe it's directed to the Minister responsible for the Energy Coordinating Committee on the review of the power rates. Much work has been done to date and I would like to ask the Minister to explain to me, to my constituents, the basis of the work that was done to date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for the Energy Coordinating Committee, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has invested a lot of time and effort into looking at the high cost of power in the Northwest Territories, as well as the distribution and generation of power and also looking at alternative energy.

Starting with alternative energy, we've committed to spending \$60 million over a period of three years to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. We are well into that process.

With regard to the electricity review, we appointed a panel of members that were experts in their field and they have undertaken a process of community hearings, meetings and so on, to look at the whole process that we use for setting electrical rates, for monitoring and control, for generating and transmitting of power. They submitted their report and have identified about 76 recommendations for the government to consider.

In addition to that, there was a review of the NWT Power Corporation. As well, there was a proposal with regard to ownership of the Power Corporation. The review of the NWT Power Corporation was submitted and the other proposal is being looked at by a committee of deputies, but it's waiting until we, as a government, make some decisions on the electrical rate review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I know that the Minister could have gone on and on about trying to fulfil the work we've done in the last year on the electricity review. I guess the most important thing for me in my constituency, and many small communities, Mr. Speaker, is the assurance that all this work is leading to reducing the rates, thereby the cost of living in our smaller communities. How much of this work that was done, Mr. Speaker, confirms that it is possible to do it in the short term and for the benefit of all as well in the long term? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I believe working with all Members of this Legislative Assembly, I am very optimistic that we can find ways to make changes that would result in benefits for the majority of the communities and no one community will be unduly impacted. As the review team identified in the report, the system is broken and we have to fix it and I really believe that we have to make changes if we are to go forward on a sustainable basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: As I had said the last few days, it's our small businesses that own buildings that are really impacted by the high power rates. If we are looking at changes to the system, can the Minister explain how the impacts will be for the commercial rates, Mr. Speaker?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Our objective is to reduce the power rates for commercial businesses so they can also, in turn, pass on these rates to help reduce the cost of living in communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'd like to thank the Minister for his answer, Mr. Speaker, as well as passing on the savings to the customers. Are the planned rates commercial or residential? Are we still going to be looking at some type of territorial power support for the smaller communities?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The electricity review is a public document and recommended that we look at a three-rate system for power. The TPSP would apply to thermal communities. That was the recommendation. My expectation, subject to working with the committee or all Members of the Legislative Assembly, is that the TPSP would still apply to residential.

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

QUESTION 20-16(5):
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
SUPPLEMENTARY
HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The manifesto is crystal clear. The Health Minister's ambition to trim health benefits is obvious. Raising the cost of living for our constituents is obvious. Creating consultation that appears more like shoehorning the public into a direction by their design is certainly clear.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services explain to me how this does not look like a predetermined process that has a predetermined, scripted outcome?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member stated that he read the document on the website, but I don't believe he understood what he read.

---Interjection

HON. SANDY LEE: We're not dictating anything. We're asking questions like number 2: Would assistance with co-payment costs based on income make a difference to your preference? Yes or no? If no, why not? What are your concerns? Which income brackets do you think should pay a co-payment? Under \$30,000, \$40,000 to \$49,999, \$50,000 to \$69,999, all the way up to \$150,000 and over?

We have at least 10 questions. We are most open. We are most willing. We're most engaging. We're just presenting the public with the basic facts about what the Supp Health Program is as opposed to the core Canadian health care. It's a program that in the rest of the country that are income tested and that very few people get. I say once again, we are going to have the most generous Supp Health Program anywhere still. Right now we have a group of people who don't have access and we are engaging the public as to how to improve this program.

MR. HAWKINS: I guess I'll have to spell it out a little slower so that the Minister picks it up this time. A predetermined process does not start out with an automatic implementation date. It has a closing, a consultation date, and allows the consultation discussion to drive the implementation date. The last point on this issue is when you tell people what income level it should start at, it tells me that the department has already decided that income testing is going to be a factor. It doesn't say should it be, period, no questions asked.

What has this mysterious group that exists out there, what has this Minister done in terms of health regulation, ministerial directive, Cabinet directive, to pass any direction to provide immediate services to this mystery group we keep hearing about? Because that could be done. What work has been done on that issue?

HON. SANDY LEE: Number 3 tells that answer. So I would encourage the Member and everybody else to look at this questionnaire that we posted on the website. The Member is suggesting, and others are suggesting, that we have a predetermined course of action and that we have a date in place and that we're shoehorning the public into a decision, which is absolutely not true.

Number 3: Knowing what we know now about the costs and needs of the various existing uninsured health benefits programs, the Department of Health

and Social Services is considering rolling the three programs this paper has discussed into a single program that is available to all Northerners not eligible for another program. Eligibility will be determined by your income, instead of age or specific condition. Do you agree?

I cannot think of another example of a more open, better designed, better evidenced, more of a two-way dialogue than this consultation process. I ask the Members to give it a chance. Give our public the benefit of the doubt that they have the intelligence and the knowledge and the interest that they will come out, even if it is the Easter weekend. Or if they don't have time, they will respond to us on the website. I have faith in the people. I ask the Members to have faith in our public as well.

MR. HAWKINS: The ones with the shoehorn of course don't feel shoehorned. Try being on the side of the shoehorn, not the ones with it. The reality is the Minister is blaming Members of the House -- this side of the House, we have to be very clear -- for not supporting that group of people who don't have benefits. This Minister immediately could pass a ministerial directive that says this number of people need to be covered and this is how much it costs. How much money would it be to provide coverage to this mysterious group of people, as well as how many people? They can't seem to answer that. Can the Minister answer that officially in this House?

HON. SANDY LEE: I blame no one. I am just asking to let us have that dialogue. This is a very important conversation that we need to have. We need people to understand what supp health programs are, who they are provided to, what they cover, what the other jurisdictions do, and how do we go forward in terms of sustainability and protecting the integrity of this program. I believe at the end of the day that we will have the information that we need from the public.

In terms of, say, how much will this cost, I have said a thousand times in this House that health care services are demand driven. We pay what people need. Once the policies are set, we pay for whoever gets the service. For anybody to say how much it will cost, if anybody knew that answer, I think they would be a lot richer than I am at the moment.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yet again the side of this House that has the shoehorn seems to be proceeding with blinders. They have no idea how much this will cost to cover this group that is mysteriously not covered. It doesn't sound like they even have a clue how many people need to be covered. Will this Minister commit, before any decision is made, that we will identify the costs associated with this and with the number of people

who need this assistance? Because we could do it immediately, we could provide support if the Minister could provide that cost, which she refuses to.

HON. SANDY LEE: The other side of that is the money is voted in this House. We could, as a House, decide that we would provide supplementary health benefits to anybody; we pay for dental, we pay for drugs, we pay for homecare, we pay for anything, just because we want to. Then the Member will just need to pass the budget on that.

That's not how we do our business here. Supp health benefits programs are very generous in this jurisdiction. We will continue to keep it that way. We have a group of people who are excluded from it and it is very important for us to have a very informed, evidence-based discussion with the public about what it is and how do we protect it and how do we make the access fair and equitable. We're going to do that by the end of this consultation process.

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

QUESTION 21-16(5):
REVENUES FROM SAHTU OIL
AND GAS DEVELOPMENTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 1921 to 2010 it's about 89 years since we've had oilfields in the Northwest Territories. In 1998, the oilfields started to develop and earn some profit and revenue from the Norman Wells oilfield through the pipeline that's going to Zama. I want to ask the Minister of ITI what has been done to ensure that some of those revenues being generated from the development of the pipeline through the Sahtu region, that these revenues will reach the people in the North and the people in the Sahtu.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Norman Wells oilfield revenues have been a longstanding issue and irritant for this government. I guess it started when the land claims were negotiated for both the Gwich'in and Sahtu, which had provisions for the sharing of royalty revenues. As the Member knows, the Norman Wells oilfield revenues were deemed to be, or understood to be, royalties, but we took the federal government to court to get them to formally agree that those were royalties. The federal government went to court and lost and in order to pay the outstanding royalties to the Gwich'in and the Sahtu, the federal government said they could only get the money if they signed a cease and desist order whereby they would no longer recognize Norman Wells royalties as revenue. So

they are saying it's equity and we've been stuck ever since.

MR. YAKELEYA: I want to ask this Minister why this government has not pursued an equity position with the Mackenzie Gas Project.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We haven't pursued it because we don't have the money. To put it bluntly, the royalties keep accruing to the federal government. We've been pursuing, collecting it through the devolution and resource revenue sharing negotiations.

MR. YAKELEYA: Okay, well, that opens up a whole bunch of questions, but I will stay on this one here. Is the Government of the Northwest Territories working to negotiate some type of agreement with Ottawa in relation to the Mackenzie Gas Project in terms of receiving some money through equity or royalties or some regime?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are supporting the Aboriginal Pipeline Group, who have negotiated a one-third interest in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. That involves, as far as I understand it, aboriginal governments of all the land claimant groups.

MR. YAKELEYA: In terms of the whole issue of the oilfields and the pipeline, I want to ask the Minister if his Cabinet has ever looked at the issue of dealing with the ownership of the oilfields. I know the federal government has one-third ownership of the oilfields as part of the terms of the GNWT asking if they can have a percentage of that share of the oilfields.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: My understanding is that has been on the negotiating table from day one, with regard to devolution and resource revenue sharing. The federal government has different views on how the Norman Wells revenues or equity position should be dealt with, but it's something that will have to be negotiated as part of devolution and resource revenue sharing.

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

QUESTION 22-16(5):
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
SUPPLEMENTARY
HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been waiting on the supplementary health benefits issue because I'm sitting here listening to the debate and dialogue. It is very easy to sit on this side of the House and ask for the world. It's kind of a little bit irresponsible, though, because we know that it is not sustainable to give seniors over a certain age unlimited, unfettered, non-means-tested access to supplementary health benefits. We know that. We know it cannot be done. So where is the

creativity in the Department of Health and Social Services to look at things?

If we want to address the working poor, as we coin the phrase, those who do not work for the government, those who are not covered by other types of plans, when we look at that group, as Mr. Hawkins refers to them, the mysterious group, it's not mysterious. I know who those people are. I've been standing up talking about them in this House for the last 15 years. Why could we not look at an insurance program that would be affordable? We could even cost share the premium to access something through an insurance program so that those folks could access supplementary health benefits in that way.

When it comes to seniors, rather than saying when you get to a certain age or a certain income bracket there's nothing, why couldn't we come up with something creative, something graduated where we say if you are in this income bracket, you are fully covered; if you are in this income bracket, we will cost share with you; and when you're in this income bracket, darn it, you've got enough money you can pay for your own stuff unless it's catastrophic and completely unaffordable. Where is the creativity in a plan that addresses this issue? Because we know, I mean, there's nothing worse than ingratitude, and, Mr. Speaker, the people of the Northwest Territories should be very grateful for the services provided by this government through the Department of Health. But where is the ability of this department to look at some creative solutions? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to advise the Member that all that creativity the Member has spoken to is right here in this document. Mr. Speaker, we have facts here that show that there is no difference in income earning power through the ages. Whether you are whatever age, we have people who are making high income and people who are making low income. Right now, people who are making low income but not low enough to be eligible for indigent, are going without basic dental coverage for their children. But we're not saying, okay, here's a plan, take it or leave it, yes or no. We are having a dialogue. We are providing people information about who is using it, what do they use it for, what are their income levels.

Secondly, the insurance programs factor. Mr. Speaker, we have a situation right now where some people with insurance coverage are encouraged to drop it because there is a built-in incentive to drop. One idea we are asking the people to talk about is should we encourage people to get third-party coverage. Obviously, the government will be the

last resort for anybody who either can't get insurance or who is rejected from insurance because of a pre-existing condition. Those are the conversations that we are wanting to have and all that information is in this public discussion paper. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, is there any other jurisdiction in Canada where the general population pays absolutely no health insurance premiums? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: There is no other jurisdiction in Canada where there is not some kind of income testing. In fact, in most jurisdictions they do asset testing. This one, we are saying income as a possibility of determining access, and no matter what your age, your ability to pay should factor in.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, one thing that the Member for Hay River South mentioned earlier is that our previous plan that came out was designed in such a way that if you didn't make an income threshold, you are dropped off. We're not suggesting this. This is an idea. We're saying should there be gradual responsibility for people who can afford it, people who are making high income could start paying in at certain levels so that people in lower incomes can benefit, because they are not, right now, included. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, for people who are in a higher income bracket, but still, people even in a higher income bracket could not be prepared for something like the type of cost associated with certain medications, and always the technology, the medical sciences advancing and things that are available. Mr. Speaker, is this government doing anything to make those people aware of private insurance plans outside of this government? What is this government doing to suggest to people who can afford it that perhaps they should be looking at private insurance plans to cover those kinds of costs that are unanticipated? That is the intention and purpose of insurance. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: That's absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people have been asking about why we don't we have catastrophic drug benefits. We don't have national catastrophic drug coverage in Canada; the national government is not interested in doing that. We know of residents in other provinces who are actually having to sell their houses to pay for cancer drugs. This program speaks to providing coverage for catastrophic drug coverage so that no matter how high your income is, in the Northwest Territories you are not going to be saddled with having to decide whether you should sell your house to pay for your cancer drug. That's not going to happen. We're just asking that we look at the accessibility.

Secondly, I need to correct the facts. I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, obviously Nunavut has a very similar

program to us in supplementary health, but in most jurisdictions they have either a premium or income testing or much less supplementary health benefits than what we have here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister will probably feel that she's already answered this question, but let me say again, for the benefit of the public, the government is trying to create a program that makes sense, that is sustainable going ahead in the future, that this government can afford, and the Minister is committed to meaningful consultation with the stakeholders involved in this and will do everything in her power to make those affected have access to input into this new system that will come into place. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Absolutely. Positively, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to having this discussion over the next two or three months. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The time for question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 2-16(5): NWT COMMUNITY FUTURES PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled NWT Community Futures Program Annual Report to March 31, 2009. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 3-16(5): STATUS REPORT: ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2008-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Status Report to December 2009, Environment and Natural Resources Framework for Action 2008-2012. Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 4-16(5):
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON
THE JOINT REVIEW PANEL FOR THE
MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLED DOCUMENT 5-16(5):
OFFICE OF THE NWT LANGUAGES
COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Pursuant to Section 23 of the Official Languages Act, I wish to table the Office of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner Annual Report 2008-2009.

Item 15, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 3-16(5):
REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 4-16(5),
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF
THE JOINT REVIEW PANEL FOR THE
MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT TO COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 4, 2010, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Tabled Document 4-16(5), Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future, Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project, Executive Summary, December 2009, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION 4-16(5):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE
TO MAY 11, 2010

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 4, 2010, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that, notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on March 4, 2010, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, May 11, 2010; and further, that any time prior to May 11, 2010, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the

adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 3, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
 - Motion 1-16(5), Elimination of Handling Fees for the Handling of Milk Containers Under the NWT Beverage Container Program
 - Motion 2-16(5), Adult Diagnoses of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Veterinary Profession Act
 - Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Dental Auxiliaries Act
 - Bill 3, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act

- Bill 5, Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupations Certification Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

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

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 3, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

