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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, October 28, 2010****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:45 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues, Welcome back to the Chamber, I'd like to welcome our guests in the gallery today. In particular, colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to the presence of a former Member of this House, a former Minister, a former Speaker, a former Commissioner...

---Laughter

...and just when we thought he'd done it all, he has now been given the distinction of an Honourary Canadian Naval Captain. Welcome, Mr. Tony Whitford.

---Applause

Orders of the day, Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 70-16(5):
DEVOLUTION AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE
NET FISCAL BENEFIT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a key element of the draft devolution agreement-in-principle: the net fiscal benefit that would accrue to Northwest Territories governments and residents once a final agreement has been reached and implemented.

Once devolution is achieved, 100 percent of the resource royalties that are currently paid to the federal government will stay in the Northwest Territories. However, our government's transfer payments from Canada under formula financing will be reduced, but not dollar for dollar. The difference represents the net fiscal benefit. The draft devolution agreement-in-principle provides for a net fiscal benefit of 50 percent of resource revenues up to a cap.

This means that for every dollar of resource revenues received by the GNWT, 50 cents would be deducted from our formula financing grant. The cap would come into effect if the net fiscal benefit is

greater than 5 percent of the gross expenditure base set out in our formula financing arrangements, which stands in as an estimate of the GNWT's spending needs.

The cap would amount to \$61 million now, but would increase annually as the gross expenditure base grows. For example, if total royalties amount to \$100 million, the net fiscal benefit would be 50 percent of that, or \$50 million. If royalties are \$200 million, the net fiscal benefit would be equal to the cap. Based on the royalties actually collected by Canada from the NWT over the last 10 years, we would have reached the cap only twice. In all other years, had we finalized a devolution agreement on the terms we have currently negotiated, the NWT would have received its full 50 percent share of resource revenues in addition to regular transfer payments from the federal government.

The arrangements contemplated in the AIP are completely consistent with what the provinces would receive under the Federal-Provincial Equalization Program. Under equalization, 50 percent of the province's resource revenues are excluded from the equalization calculation and the net fiscal benefit is subject to a cap.

Therefore, no province receiving equalization receives better treatment for their resources than is contemplated in the draft devolution AIP. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, over the years, have negotiated special time limited arrangements with Canada for revenues from the offshore. The draft devolution agreement applies to the NWT's onshore resources, which, if they were in a province, would be subject to the equalization cap. Treatment of revenues from the offshore will be negotiated during future discussions with Canada.

The Yukon achieved devolution from Canada in 2003. Their net fiscal benefit provisions are different from those in our draft AIP, but not better. We have compared the results using the Yukon formula to the provisions of our draft AIP, under the number of NWT revenue scenarios, and the arrangements in the AIP always come out ahead.

Some provinces, like Alberta, keep 100 percent of their resource revenues, but this is because Alberta's revenues are high enough that the province is not entitled to equalization payments and, therefore, there is nothing for the federal

government to claw back. If, sometime in the future, the royalties received by the GNWT are high enough that we don't qualify for formula financing, we will also get to keep 100 percent of resource revenues.

In the meantime, every year that passes without a devolution agreement means that we forego another year's net fiscal benefit. Over the last five years, the NWT has lost \$208.6 million in potential net fiscal benefit.

Finally, since we cannot know how the world might change in the future, the net fiscal benefit provisions will not be written in stone. The AIP contemplates periodic reviews of the net fiscal benefit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 71-16(5):
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE APPEAL COMMITTEES

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has successfully established the social assistance appeal committees to serve all Northwest Territories communities. The committees hear appeals for income assistance and child care user subsidy programs. Getting these local appeal committees now ensures that Northerners have access to a fair and impartial appeals process within their home communities.

To date we have appointed 87 committee members to hear appeals. There are still spaces available for more committee members in some communities. I encourage the public and my fellow Members to support residents in applying and participating on the social assistance appeal committees.

This was not a small task. In three short months, staff were able to solicit nominations to appoint and train committee members. This involved the development of a train the trainer appeal committee manual and to travel to communities to deliver the training sessions. I also want to thank the departments of Human Resources and Justice for their assistance with processing the appointments. This ensures that department clients receive local and quick access to a fair and equitable appeals process.

I encourage Members to reassure their constituents that the community appeals process is available to review their claims in their home communities.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 72-16(5):
SUPPORT TO TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a modern world filled with laptop computers, cell phones and iPods, traditional life skills such as trapping and boat building that have served our people so well in the past are in danger of being lost. But the Government of the Northwest Territories is taking action to ensure this doesn't happen and that is why I want to take a few moments to talk about the success of our Take a Kid Trapping Program.

The program began in 2002, and from the beginning, it's been built on one simple premise: learning by doing.

The program is a cooperative effort between the departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Municipal and Community Affairs, and Environment and Natural Resources.

It is often delivered through aboriginal organizations in schools, and our elders are an integral part of the program. They teach our young people the skills and knowledge that was passed down to them. In turn, these young people gain something you can't put a price on. They gain a greater sense of pride in who they are and they learn how traditional life skills can be a useful part of their lives.

The program has clearly struck a chord with our people. Since 2002, almost 6,000 school-aged youth have participated in a variety of Take a Kid Trapping projects. Demands for these types of activities grow every year. In fact, we have now developed a sister program, the Take a Kid Harvesting Program, to help us meet the demand.

An example of some of the successful traditional life skills projects that took place in 2009-2010 include: a traditional moosehide boat project in Tulita and a birch syrup collection project held in the North and South Slave regions.

The work we are doing is also being recognized at the national level. In June, the Fur Institute of Canada announced the recipient of its Jim Bourque Award: Industry, Tourism and Investment's very own Guy Erasmus. This is the most prestigious national award given in the Canadian trapping industry, and Mr. Erasmus was specifically recognized for his work in the design, development and implementation of the Take a Kid Trapping Program.

---Applause

I'm pleased Mr. Erasmus was able to join us in the visitors gallery today. Guy, you've done a great job with this program and so has everyone else who has been involved with it.

On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I want to thank you for the excellent service you have provided the Canadian trapping

industry and the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the Take a Kid Trapping Program is an example of steps this government is taking in building our future, one of the five strategic initiatives of the 16th Legislative Assembly. Our work in this area is leading to a greater sense of pride among our young people in their culture and their heritage. It is assisting us in achieving our goals of developing healthy, educated people and sustainable, vibrant communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MAXIMUM COMMUNITY RENTAL RATES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue that I'd like to speak on today in regard to the area of housing is the area of maximum rent rates in every community in the Northwest Territories. What we're finding is that in most communities, their rates are different from one community to the other.

I'll illustrate a situation I have in my riding in regard to the community of Tsiigehtchic. To rent a five-bedroom unit in Tsiigehtchic would cost you \$3,700, which is the maximum rate. Yet, half an hour down the road in Fort McPherson, the same five-bedroom unit is rented for \$2,500, a difference of \$1,300 between two communities, yet they're only half an hour apart.

Mr. Speaker, there are other situations through the Northwest Territories such as Paulatuk where you pay the maximum rate of \$4,600 compared to, say, a rate in Hay River or even Yellowknife, which is around \$1,700 or \$1,800 for a five-bedroom unit.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that we looked at this situation similar to how we're dealing with the Northwest Territories power rates, where the power rates were previously based on a community-by-community rate, which was called a community postal rate, but again, through the discussions with Members in this House and the residents of the Northwest Territories, we decided to take that issue head on and consider community rates by way of diesel communities, hydro communities and, again, that is going to benefit everyone.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we do the similar arrangement when it comes to rental of housing units in the Northwest Territories, and if that means we have to do it gradually, I suggest that we look at regional-based rates for housing units in the specific regions, either the Beaufort-Delta region, the Sahtu, North Slave, South Slave,

and eventually work our way to a territorial rate throughout the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we have some 2,200 units in the Northwest Territories that are operated by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and the local housing authorities, but again, we receive a subsidy for those units from CMHC to the tune of \$28 million to operate those 2,200 units. So again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important enough that we seriously take a look at this issue. I will be asking the Minister questions on this later. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACCUMULATED PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL ARREARS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to describe the tragic consequences created by our housing policies by providing the experience in just one family's life.

Last Thursday a woman at my Dettah constituency meeting explained her situation this way: A mother of five children, aged two to ten, she and her spouse lived in public housing. Based on their combined modest incomes, rent was pegged at \$1,200 per month, or 30 percent of gross earnings, equivalent to about 40 percent of take-home pay. Groceries are \$1,200 a month for five kids and two adults. Add \$1,200 for rent on a household take-home income of \$3,200 and that leaves a family of seven with \$800 a month for all the other necessities of life. These are the working poor and, not surprisingly, they couldn't make it on this income.

When the Housing Corporation switched rent collection to what everyone in Dettah calls "the welfare office," my constituent went every month to Yellowknife to personally deliver her documents. You can't fax them in. She quit going when she got sick of "being treated like dirt." That's when arrears began mounting. She now owes \$50,000. She has filed her husband's last four years' pay stubs with Housing and has been waiting since June to have the arrears rolled back. In the meantime, she and her spouse are both paying down arrears, taking \$200 a month more out of their \$800 disposable income. Based on her current deduction, she will clear her arrears in about 25 years.

So how did my constituent get by and provide for the kids? I will tell you. Despite her young children, she started working and moved out of her own home and is now living with a friend so that household income for the rental unit would drop, making her spouse eligible for a greater rent subsidy. The net result, Mr. Speaker, we forced a mother of five children to move out on her young family. We tore a family apart, made them jump

through the only hoops available to keep a roof over their kids' heads and food on the table.

This is beyond tragic. It is inhumane. I could go down the streets in my riding and find an equally desperate story at almost every public housing doorstep.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: This isn't about theory or process or policy reform; this is about misery and a broken home this government caused with poorly considered, ultimately destructive operational changes.

I will be asking the Minister questions on how any of us can hold our heads up and what we plan to do about this. I will ask the House to consider a motion later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF HOUSING PROGRAMS

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following my colleagues, I, too, will be talking about housing.

Over the last year I have had an opportunity to get into a number of the communities. In pretty much every community we go to, one of the issues that comes up over and over again is housing, whether it is about affordability, accessibility or suitability.

There has been a lot of talk about arrears and vacant units and rent costs, as well as lack of flexibility within the Housing Corporation itself when it is delivering programs. To the Minister's credit, I have heard some movement from the Minister. He is committed to getting rid of the vacancies, which I applaud. He is committed to working with the LHOs to find out whose arrears are real and whose arrears may not be real based on the move to Education and back. I applaud the Minister for that.

But one area I haven't seen a lot of movement on, and I think there is certainly room for movement, is flexibility. I will give you an example of what I'm talking about.

Earlier this month I attended the Prospects North conference. While I was there, I was talking to an economic development officer from one of the smaller communities. He indicated to me that a mining company had been in touch with him. He was looking for 13 labourers to come and work for a three-week period. This mining company was going to pay quite well. The EDO officer went out into the community to find people and there were enough

people to fill those 13 temporary jobs, but he couldn't find anybody who was willing to take the jobs even though the money was good, because every one of them was concerned that if they took the job, the rent would immediately go up and they would be working for nothing or very little. Five dollars, \$10 or even \$100 to go and do three weeks of hard labour when you can stay home and watch TV and not be any better, or worse off, lacks common sense.

Our programs have led people to make these types of decisions, which is unfortunate. We need to be working with people to get them back out into the workforce, where appropriate and where possible.

Later today I will be talking more during the motions about flexibility that this government, this Housing Corporation, needs to put in place to ensure that we are providing incentives to people to go back to work, and we are encouraging people to go back to work even if that means we have to not do immediate collections once people start working or tier a payment system back into place. There is room for flexibility here. We need to find it and we need to work with our clients to help them get back into the workforce and get off public housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR HOUSING PROGRAMS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The importance of this day is that we as Regular MLAs will let government know once again of how important housing issues are to our people.

Last week I spoke in the House about how residents are having difficulty being approved for NWT Housing Corporation programming. Many of my constituents are frustrated, because they cannot get assistance due to the eligibility criteria. To be eligible, a person or family cannot make too much money or too little.

This window of core need income threshold guidelines, I feel, is very small. The same problem exists for homeowners who want to apply for the CARE program, the repair program for assistance.

Mr. Speaker, our government made a firm commitment to addressing the housing needs of NWT residents. Studies show that families do better when they are living in suitable housing. That, in turn, strengthens the quality of life in our communities.

I urge the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation to review the guidelines and procedures of the eligibility. We are turning away people who can afford mortgages and turning away

the hardworking families who just fall short of the eligibility. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleagues today in talking about housing.

Having been a Member of this House for the past several years, I must say I've been witness to some very bad and costly decisions that governments have made over the years. One of the most ridiculous and bizarre moves came when the last government decided to transfer responsibility for social policy and the \$34 million to administer it from the Housing Corporation to ECE. The fact is, Regular Members in the last government told the government not to do it, but it didn't matter because, Mr. Speaker, a funny thing seems to happen when Ministers travel south to F/P/T meetings. They come back with some ideas that their provincial counterparts are trying, and they think, wow, I'm going to try this out on the people back home.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, oftentimes these ideas may work in southern Canada, but applied back here in our reality they are a complete flop. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, this decision was a disaster and its shockwaves are still causing untold damage to many of our residents.

As if the decision wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, ECE had to hire 12 more people to deliver a program that was already being delivered by the housing authorities, and incurred an additional \$1.2 million in operational expense as a result. Yes, it is still hard to believe any government, in their right mind, would have made that call.

Finally, this government has done the right thing and put responsibility for social housing back where it belongs. But, Mr. Speaker, this government has taken its time when it comes to reversing the damage the transfer has caused. The money was not immediately transferred back and I have yet to see an HR plan for dealing with the 12 positions that ECE had to hire to administer the program. This decision has cost this government millions and millions of dollars when it did not have to.

Mr. Speaker, this is consensus government. The last Regular Member's Caucus told government not to proceed. Motions were passed and ignored.

Mr. Speaker, lessons need to be learned, responsibility has to be taken and in the case of the transfer of the Social Housing Policy, I sure hope Cabinet was taking some good notes. Mr. Speaker, they'll have to listen to the wishes of the Regular Members because we speak for the people of the

Northwest Territories and those who we represent. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DIVERSITY OF CHALLENGES FACING
HOUSING CORPORATION STAFF AND CLIENTS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, we've chosen today, as a group of resident Members, to talk about housing, the delivery of housing in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, it is a daunting and big challenge to balance the interests of the people who need housing, with our policies, with trying to reward people who are diligent and who are trying their hardest, and those who sometimes are a frustration to the system, and perhaps even may I go as far as to say may abuse the good heartedness and the good policies of this government. It is trying to find that balance of rewarding the people who need housing with housing units and who are responsible and, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, having enough flexibility and enough balance in the system that we are good stewards of these resources as a government.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this a challenging task for the Minister and the folks at the Housing Corporation, but also when you get down to the local housing organizations. I know that people are doing their best, but these are challenging situations. Every tenant is an individual and their situation is individual. It's very difficult to make across-the-board policies, because sometimes things happen. I've stood in this House many times and given examples of people who have moved away, who've come back to town, who have to now wait for the six-month waiting period to get into social housing. There are many, many instances where I believe we need to give someone, whether that is one person or our managers, the discretionary latitude to make judgment calls based on the circumstances before them. It is not all neat and tidy. As diverse as our clients are in housing, so are our communities.

I see the need in small communities where the Housing Corporation is the only landlord in town -- that is one scenario -- to market communities where people do have options and they require housing. But the policies in these two very diverse sets of circumstances in communities are also, in my opinion, not significantly enough taken into consideration with the creation of policy and how we deliver housing in the Northwest Territories.

These are challenging situations. I don't pretend to have all the answers. I would like to thank the Housing Corporation for the work that they do and

also the LHOs for the good work they do on the front line on our behalf.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO THE
DELIVERY OF HOUSING PROGRAMS

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

I'd like to start by quoting some people across the NWT:

"Houses are built and sit empty, the system doesn't work..."

"Housing is beyond frustration for small communities."

"You are losing money just letting houses sit empty."

"There seems to be a serious flaw in the approach, if it means housing, communities develop their own policies...that may be the best thing to do."

"Maybe direct funding for First Nations from the federal government is the way to go."

Those were quotes from the Dene National Assembly this summer in Fort Good Hope. As you can see, the First Nations are not happy with the way things are run by the NWT Housing Corporation.

There was a lot of talk about communities developing their own programs, and programs that would work in their communities, and programs that would address housing issues at the community level. The communities do not understand why a senior on a fixed income well below \$20,000 per year lives in a unit that's deteriorating every year and the NWT Housing Corporation advises them there is no money, yet they see \$300,000 homes the Housing Corporation has built sitting empty for years.

The NWT Housing Corporation must change its mindset and actually develop programs that will help people. The Housing Corporation must not be about spending money to build as many houses as possible. It should be about spending money to help people. The Housing Corporation must not develop policies and programs that do not work and stick with those policies and programs no matter what.

As you can see, the Housing Corporation can paint a house and change the windows even if the roof has blown off the house, because the program says to paint the house and change the window. In other words, the NWT Housing Corporation has removed common sense from their delivery and only follows a set of policies that do not work.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE
HOUSING IN YELLOWKNIFE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I also want to talk about housing in Yellowknife.

According to the 2009 Housing Needs Survey, there are 6,742 households in Yellowknife. While the city is often overlooked in discussions about housing in the NWT, I note that this is where most of the households are located in the North.

It is true Yellowknife housing is different from the housing issues in other NWT communities. The survey identified that 14 percent of Yellowknife households have affordability issues. That means there are 928 households struggling to come up with that 30 percent or more to help cover the costs of things like mortgage or rent, electricity, water, heating, and even property taxes. You can see that clearly Yellowknife has an affordability issue.

In Yellowknife there are 289 public housing units. I see in the proposed capital plan that housing is proposing to replace one multi-family unit and they're looking at retrofitting 25 family units. These actions don't seem to be targeting the affordability issue at all.

Some may wonder why should we care about affordability as an issue compared to other things such as suitability and, certainly, adequacy. However, we know that the lack of affordability in Yellowknife means that when someone was thinking about moving to the NWT -- it's either for a job or to unite with family -- they can certainly be overwhelmed by the housing challenges and consider changing their plans. We all know that the cost of living is very difficult.

The same is true in small and regional communities. If a family from one regional centre with employment, perhaps maybe even at a mine, thinks about moving to Yellowknife and that becomes impossible because of the high cost, they can easily relocate to Edmonton or Grande Prairie because they can find affordable housing. Affordable housing, I say again.

Finally, I could go on at length about the accessibility to barrier-free housing here in Yellowknife and in the North for our seniors and disabled community. I am very concerned about the suitability and adequacy as to what we're doing for the people of the North, because I think we are denying them a true, fair living of a much deserved quality of life. This challenge affects every one of us in this Assembly and in the North.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ECONOMIC RENT CALCULATIONS
FOR NUNAKPUT COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of this House hear no end of problems with public housing. Every community in my riding hears the same story. What really gets me, though, is when this government discourages people from working. For example, if you live in public housing in Sachs Harbour and you get a job, you're going to pay what they call economic rent. I don't know what economic rent is all about, because hardly anybody can afford it. We're talking about \$3,000 a month plus electricity and water for a three-bedroom house in Sachs Harbour, which could add up to \$4,000 a month for a four-bedroom unit. That reward, where you're lucky enough to get your job, you'll pay as much as public housing would pay for a \$750,000 home in Yellowknife. That's a shame.

I don't know how this NWT Housing Corporation comes up with so-called economic rent for Sachs Harbour and the communities, but fairness and affordability don't seem to have anything to do with it. People get a new job and this kind of rent does not pay. They literally cannot afford to work.

The big problem that results is sky-high rent in public housing more than people who are in arrears with the government, basically putting people in debt with the NWT Housing Corporation as soon as they go to work. We have to do something about this. We're always preaching about creating jobs in our small communities. If the people want to keep working, we must have a reasonable rent scale.

At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF HOUSING
CORPORATION ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard already today from other Members how much housing in the NWT is in difficulty. There are lots of problems: inconsistent application of guidelines, policies which are fine in theory but do not work in reality, people living rent free who have the means to pay, people quitting good jobs so their income stays down and their rent stays at a workable level, people have accumulated huge arrears because their rent assessments are incorrect or unadjusted, people denied public housing when vacant homes exist in the community, people unable to access adequate housing when their apprehended children are ready to be returned to them. The list is endless.

In numerous meetings with NWT Housing Corporation Ministers and staff over my time here --

three short years, but sometimes it feels like three very long years -- I and other Regular Members have consistently asked for flexibility in the Housing Corporation's approach to the application of their programs and policies. I know that on more than one occasion I have asked the Minister to do an all-inclusive review of the corporation's activities and policies.

In the 2008 Auditor General's Report on the NWT Housing Corporation, Ms. Fraser was quite critical of the corporation. The NWT Housing Corporation presented a response to the Auditor General's findings and I was hopeful that some comprehensive evaluation and review of the corporation's policies and practices would come to fruition. There has not been any move in that direction and it is desperately needed, even more so since the responsibility for rent assessments was transferred back to the Housing Corporation from Education, Culture and Employment.

I did a search of Hansard and it turned up two commitments made by the Minister for the Housing Corporation made in this House, one from February 11th of this year to review programs, and later a second from May 20th to review rent scales. Both are necessary but they're only part of what is required.

The Minister and the president of the NWT Housing Corporation must acknowledge that a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the programs, policies and procedures is overdue. They need to test the suitability of each of those for our residents. They must determine if they are still relative and appropriate at this stage of the evolution of our Territory. I believe many are not working as they should and if something's not working, changes must be made until it does work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize in the gallery some LHO managers, some tenant relations officers, some assistant managers. I had the opportunity to meet with them yesterday. I'll tell you one thing, they're not shy about sharing their views. That was much appreciated and it helps me do my job a lot better.

Joining us in the gallery today are: from Ulukhaktok, Sadie Joss; Elaine Blake, manager in Tsiigehtchic; Jim White from the Yellowknife Housing Authority; Stephan Folker from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation; Agatha Laboucan from Lutselk'e Housing

Authority; Veryl Gruben from the Tuktoyaktuk Housing Association; Elizabeth Ann McKay from the Fort Resolution Housing Authority; Melanie Louie from the Hamlet of Fort Liard Social Housing; Kim Olsen, manager of the Fort Smith Housing Authority; Donna McLean is a manager of the Hay River Housing Authority; Roland Rogers is the manager of the Aklavik Housing Association; Keith Dowling is the manager of the Paulatuk Housing Association; Ms. Rosemary Vandell is the manager of the Fort Providence Housing Association; Betty Firth is the manager of the Fort McPherson Housing Association; Eleanor Mitchell-Firth, also here from Fort McPherson Housing Association; Rose Dryneck here from Behchoko. We also have with us Angela Grandjambe, manager of Fort Good Hope Housing; and Phebie Kenny, manager of the Deline Housing Association. I would like to welcome you all to the gallery and I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: I'd like to recognize Agatha Laboucan and Elizabeth Ann McKay from the local housing organizations in Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I would like to recognize the second-year Aurora College social work students coming in for a tour. Recognizing them and welcoming them to the gallery, to the Assembly. Amanda Anthony from Yellowknife; Stefany Bulmer from Yellowknife; Billi-Rai Driscoll from Yellowknife; Fay Erasmus from Behchoko; Stephanie Hiedl from Yellowknife, and Inuvik, I believe; Christine King from Yellowknife; Bianca Kotchea from Fort Liard; Melissa McDonald from Inuvik; Savanna McKay-Larocque from Hay River; Julia Naedzo from Behchoko; Jaleesa Paulette from Fort Smith; Elizabeth Purchase from Yellowknife; Pamela Weeks-Beaton from Yellowknife and formerly Behchoko; and Bruce Stewart, instructor of social work at Aurora College. I would also like to recognize one of my constituents, Rose Dryneck from Behchoko.

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

MS. BISARO: It's my pleasure today to recognize Mr. Jim White, who is representing the Yellowknife Housing Authority. We all have housing in our Yellowknife ridings, so I know he works on our behalf. I'd like to thank him for that.

Following up on your welcome of Mr. Whitford, I'd like to say it's good to see you here again.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see all the visitors here in the gallery. The Housing Minister indicated I had a constituent here and I was trying to figure out who was Ms. Mary, but I finally figured out it was Rose Vandell from Fort Providence. I'd like to welcome her here. I also want to welcome a former colleague, Tony Whitford, who's now not a one-man army but a one-man navy...

---Laughter

...and for sure he's a force to be reckoned with. I'd like to welcome him here today. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome today Ms. Sadie Joss from Ulukhaktok, and Keith Dowling, the housing manager from Ulukhaktok. It's not very often I have family in the House, too, so it's good to see my housing manager from Tuk and also my cousin too. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Savanna McKay-Larocque. I am happy to see she's in the Social Work Program, following in the footsteps of two of her aunts who have been long-time social workers, Terry McPherson and Anne Gill in Hay River. It's good to see Savanna here today. I also recognize Donna McLean, who is currently the manager of the Hay River Housing Authority but has worked for the Housing Authority for so long I actually can't remember a time when she didn't work for them. She is a very long-time employee of the Housing Authority. She was in charge before she was even the manager.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to welcome Captain Tony Whitford to the House and hope his home renovations are going well. I would also like to recognize Mr. Bruce Stewart, the instructor for the social programs staff - he's a constituent of Weledeh -- and also all of his students and the LHO representatives from everywhere. Mahsi.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize two Fort Liard residents in the gallery here today. First is Ms. Melanie Louie. Welcome to the gallery. I also recognize that she's with the Fort Liard District Education Authority. As well, best wishes this year

to Bianca Kotchea in the Social Work Program, who's in the gallery today. Mahsi cho.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to welcome all the visitors in the gallery today. It's always nice to have an audience with us. As well, I'd like to recognize a Page from the riding of Kam Lake that we have with us during this sitting of the House: Ms. Sarah Sibbeston. She's the granddaughter of former Member Nick Sibbeston and a current senator. Welcome, Sarah. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was getting ready for the House today, I was walking down and I saw a man dressed in black and at first I thought was that Johnny Cash, but it turned out to be our wonderful Mr. Whitford. Noticing that he was in black, I was wondering if the Clerks Table was afraid he was going to take them up on the Honourary Clerk of the Table role, but he's dressed finely in his captain's uniform.

Mr. Speaker, lastly, I'd like to recognize the Mildred Hall Pages who have been serving us quite well here for the last few days. Thank you for their work and I appreciate them here.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize the housing managers and the people who work for our housing authorities in our communities: Elaine Blake, the housing manager from Tsiigehtchic. Welcome, Elaine. Roland Rogers, the manager from Aklavik. Welcome, Roland. Betty Firth, the manager from Fort McPherson, who's been there for many moons. Eleanor Firth, who's also with the authority. I'd like to welcome you and welcome all of you who I've basically had an opportunity to work with in the past. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to see a good audience in here.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 280-16(5): REGIONAL AND TERRITORIAL RENTAL RATES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to my Member's statement, I touched on the area of maximum unit rents that are charged across the Northwest Territories. It's a similar issue we addressed in regard to our power rates in the Northwest Territories, in which our rates are different in every community and we have some 28 different power rates in the Northwest Territories and we're now trying to remedy that situation and looking at three rate zones. I think that's something that we should also consider when it comes to rental rates in our communities, especially if we could look at regional rates for the different regions from the Beaufort-Delta to the Sahtu to the North Slave, South Slave. I think we have to realize that there is definitely...(inaudible)...especially when individuals that we're really talking about are the people paying the maximum rent, are the professions that usually come to our communities, need to be accommodated through social housing, and those are the people that definitely can see the difference.

I used the illustration of Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, which is only half an hour apart, but in regard to the maximum rate in Tsiigehtchic, where basically they're paying \$3,700 and in Fort McPherson where it's \$2,500. So there's a \$1,200 difference in the maximum rate just between those two communities which are half an hour apart.

I'd like to ask the Minister is that something that his department can seriously consider in the line of the deferential differences when we talk about bringing down the cost of living in our communities, but more importantly, accommodating those people in our communities who are paying the highest rent and, more importantly, accommodating the region as a whole. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With some of the rates that are charged in the communities, obviously, a community that has more units has more units to spread out the cost of operating in that community and the smaller communities with less units, they have less units to spread out the costs. That's why a lot of the costs are higher in those communities. However, at the NWT Housing Corporation we are considering looking at the idea of regional rents to spread it out throughout the regions. It is something that we are looking at. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister for that, because I think that is how we're going to have to approach it. We have to do it region by region and try to look at the number of units in the different regions and look at an overall recovery cost across the board.

Like I say, we have some 2,200 units throughout the Northwest Territories and if we can break that down by region and try to have a rate that's accommodating, I think, at the end of the goal, I'd like to ask, working forward, that we do have a territorial rate at some point going forward. I'd like to ask the Minister if that's something that we can look forward to. Start off with the regional rates and eventually the goal is to have a territorial rate. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, obviously, we'd have to look at the regional rates first and see how they work out. There will be, in some areas, where the rents in some of the communities will be higher to balance off the rental rate. I would suggest we look at the regional model first and see how that works and if there's an appetite further down the road to look at a territorial-wide model, then that may be something for Housing in the future to consider. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, again, I think that we also have to look at how we distribute the overall O and M dollars that are distributed to the different local authorities, but more importantly, look at the revenues that we do receive by way of the federal CMHC funding. Again, that's another area that we have to look at. If we're going to do this, we also have to look at the allocation of funds to the different LHOs so they are able to operate, but more importantly, look at the overall maintenance costs, the savings that we could basically consolidate...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a question, Mr. Krutko?

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, can he also look at the overall operational costs that are being provided to the different LHOs and, if possible, bring them in line so that we are able to get a better return on our investment by those dollars? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it is part of our plan to look at the overall delivery of housing across the Northwest Territories and see how we could improve our product, see how we can best support our LHOs with the declining funding. They are facing some challenges in their communities. Also with the rental arrears, that's also another challenge that they are facing. It is something that looking at the overall picture and doing an overall review are issues that we have to look at. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I believe we do have to look at this territorial issue. We do have the highest rate, which is Paulatuk, which is \$4,600 for a five-bedroom unit, and the lowest rate is Fort Smith at \$1,600 for a five-bedroom unit. I believe we do have to look at this as a territorial issue, similar to the approach we are taking with power rates. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I don't know if I heard a question there, but I will allow the Minister to respond. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did commit that we will, first of all, look at the overall regionalization of rent and further on down the road, if we feel the need arises, then we will look at a territorial-wide system. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 281-16(5):
ACCUMULATED PUBLIC HOUSING
RENTAL ARREARS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Minister of the NWT Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's transfer of the responsibility for public housing rent collections from ECE back to the Housing Corporation. While a modest beginning, the Minister must now act to clean up the wreckage left behind by that failed and destructive policy.

There are now tens of thousands of dollars of debt for most of each family that is now in rental arrears, yet that debt is an illusion resulting from an income documentation process that was unrealistic, unworkable and, in many cases, humiliating. What aggressive action is the Minister taking to roll back that grossly inflated debt? Mahsi.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was some concern that, during the transfer over to ECE, there was a lot of arrears accumulated because people had to go to different places, and in some of the smaller communities they had to fax off their income. This is a discussion that I had with the LHO managers yesterday. There is always an opportunity for tenants to come back to the LHO as they are all starting to come back now, because the LHOs are doing their assessment and verify their income for that particular time.

If they verify their income, then adjustments will be made. So we will see a lot of the arrears come down, but then the onus is on the tenants to verify their income and Housing will do what they can to

make the adjustments and take some of the arrears off their books. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I understand the theory. The Minister has given us the theory but, as I said -- and perhaps the Minister didn't hear in my statement earlier today -- I have constituents that have taken all of their pay stubs months ago into the Housing Corporation at least four months ago. They are sitting there waiting. They are paying \$200 per month in rental arrears deductions, taken from the \$800 left each month of disposable income. That is after rent and food for a family of seven. My constituent needs relief, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are talking about here. Can the Minister tell me if he has a rental arrears SWAT team in place now who will actually go after these unreal debts and ease this misery that this failed policy has caused? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we don't have a SWAT team in place. The Member said that this has been going on for four months now. Today is actually the first that I have heard of it. If I had some communication with the Member, I may have been able to follow up on it and make sure that the tenants in his riding don't have to wait so long for an answer.

I make a commitment to the Member. If we can discuss this afterwards, I will forward the information on to the proper people and see if we can have this dealt with as quickly as possible. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the Minister. Mr. Speaker, I am profiling one example here. I am looking for a systemic response. I am sure the Minister understands that I appreciate his offer to help this family.

The situation of rental arrears is obviously urgent and stressful for both individuals and for the local housing offices. Each housing office's total rental arrears have exploded, again because of this situation. The Housing Corporation reacts by reducing LHOs' subsequent funding according to the amount of uncollected rents. As a result, one housing association has come close to declaring bankruptcy and handing public policy responsibility back to the department. Is the Minister ready to take over housing delivery from bankrupt associations all over the NWT? What is he doing now to prevent this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we will have no bankrupt authorities across the Northwest Territories. Ones that have faced some challenges because of the funding and the way it was flowing, we are working with them to try and get the situation resolved.

We have a stabilization fund that we are hoping to work with some of the authorities on to get them up

and operating. We are quite confident that, with the transfer back to the LHO and a more, as far as the funding goes, if a more stable source of funding to the LHOs I think we are going to see huge improvements, but we don't anticipate any authorities across the Northwest Territories going bankrupt. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. A short, final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to ask about the 30 percent of gross income being unrealistic and crushing, but I think I will hold off on that and just ask the Minister in respect to these rental arrears.

It is stressful. It is urgent. What sort of time frame are we talking about for these people that are living under these crushing debts of tens of thousands of dollars with very modest incomes? They need relief. When will it happen? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, speaking territorial-wide, obviously we have heard of the situation with the one constituent which four months is an awful long time to wait or hear an answer on providing all the information that we have asked them to provide. Looking at it territorial-wide, obviously it is going to be a challenge.

With all the folks coming back to the LHOs now, getting their assessments done, there is a lot more of that face to face. They will have an opportunity to bring in some verification of income. That will be taken care of. The adjustments will be made. We will do our part as the Housing Corporation and LHOs. We will do our part in sharing that.

A lot of the arrears are written down, but we are asking tenants to do their part in verifying income. I think, with them coming into the LHOs, we are going to see a lot of the arrears.

We all realize that there was a \$4 million increase in the amount of public housing arrears during the transition period. We are hoping to get the numbers stabilized and actually have a true arrears number. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 282-16(5):
NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY IN THE
ADMINISTRATION OF HOUSING POLICY

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation as well.

I talked in my Member's statement about flexibility of programs. The lack of flexibility is, I think, a problem across the government as a whole, not just the Housing Corporation. But there are certainly

certain areas within the Housing Corporation where the programming lacks flexibility.

I highlighted in my Member's statement one example where the programs are set up in such a way that it doesn't encourage tenants to go back to work or take advantage of short-term employment opportunities or even, in some cases, longer term employment opportunities, because they feel that they get penalized almost immediately. As soon as they start collecting money, the rents pop up to maximum rents, or lowered, depending on the amount of money they are bringing in. Regardless, often it is better for them to not work and maintain a stable life than to work and have to get hit with so much financial expense immediately.

Has the Housing Corporation done any research into the program, especially this particular program, about rent collections to ensure that they have some flexibility that will allow them to assess each situation on its own merit and work with the clients that have arrears, that don't have arrears, so that they can maximize work opportunities and not fall behind but get ahead for a change? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an argument that we've heard a lot of across the Northwest Territories and all my visits to the communities saying that the rent is a disincentive to work. We hear stories where folks have been paying \$32 a month, they get a seasonal job, their rents increase for the time they're working and that is a policy that the LHOs are following. I've had some discussions with senior officials, but we have to understand, though, that for the amount of time they're not working and they're paying \$32 a month, we're subsidizing them a huge amount and during the time that their working is their opportunity to pay back some of the subsidy that they've received. Because once they lose their seasonal job, they'll be down to \$32 a month again, and again Housing will be subsidizing them. So it is an argument that we've heard a lot of across the Northwest Territories and one that we recognize is a bit of a challenge. Obviously, hearing it so many times, it's one that we have to look at quite seriously. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: I hear the Minister and I understand what the Minister is saying, but at the same time individuals who aren't receiving subsidies, their salaries may change over the year, there may be peak months, there may be depressed months, bills may change, but when I have a month where I happen to make some extra money, I get to put that money where I want. I get to put it towards debts if I choose or I get to buy myself a new guitar if I choose. Whereas these

individuals -- and I'm not talking necessarily seasonal, I'm talking really short-term employment opportunities -- when these individuals have an opportunity to get a little bit of money, they can't get ahead because we take it from them and put it towards their rent right away. I fully understand, fully understand the importance of collecting from people, but it's important that we give these people an opportunity as well.

So can I get the Minister to commit to researching this situation, to investigating this situation and come to us with alternatives? It may not be the same for everybody. It needs to be flexible. So will the Minister do that for us? Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Great question.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As part of the rent scale review, I mean, this is one of the things that we were hoping to have a look at, is exactly what the Member and a bunch of other Members, and not just Members, it's actually people across the Northwest Territories. So it's a message that we've heard and it's one that obviously we're going to have to have a look at and see if this is something that we should consider doing. Thank you.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will keep it short. When might we, as Members, and when might the public start to see this research start and when might we see some sort of recommendations coming out of this review? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As we speak we're doing a review of the rent scale right now and this is a discussion I've had with senior management over at the Housing Corporation. As for an exact time frame of this particular one, I know we're hoping to have the rent scale review completed and implemented by April 1st. But as far as the actual questions the Member is asking, I'm not sure of an exact time frame. I will confirm that and I will pass it on to committee. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 283-16(5):
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR
HOUSING PROGRAMS

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask my question to the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

AN HON. MEMBER: No way.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I spoke earlier about the eligibility and it's a concern as I travel around to my communities within my riding. A lot of people are saying that they've applied, they've got their rejection letter saying that they're not eligible. So it

raises the concern to me, Mr. Speaker, just how many people are eligible for NWT Housing programs. We've got a community core need income threshold level. So I'd like to ask the Minister just what range of a client are we looking for. How much can they make? Well, he can pick one of the communities in my riding. How much can they make and what's the lower limit they can make too, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's our intent to try and get as many people into homeownership as possible. That's why I've asked the corporation to come up with a few different options as to how we can fit more people in the program. The core need income threshold is one of the arguments that we've heard quite a bit. It varies from the different communities as to the number of bedrooms in that particular community, the maximum construction costs. I have a list of all the core need income thresholds for all the communities across the Northwest Territories. I can commit to the Member that I can have copies printed off and distributed to the Regular Members. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: In some of our communities in the Northwest Territories we did get some new houses, but the number of affordability problems continues to increase and this trend raises questions about eligibility for housing programs. So just once again, perhaps if I ask a different question a different way, Mr. Speaker, if I can. The current intake was completed October 14th. Does the Minister have enough statistics to compare the number of clients that applied this year as compared to the last three years? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The applications that we've received, as Members know, the deadline was October 15th. The applications that we've received for PATH, that's the actual homeownership, we've got 110 assessments that we're doing right now. As far as applications for the HELP units, we have 183 territorial-wide that we're doing the assessments on right now. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I was just trying to get a comparison to the intake for this year and how many people are actually eligible as opposed to the intake we took from last year or, say, the year before. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The numbers that I gave were the applications that we received for the coming fiscal year, the '11-12 fiscal year. Those assessments are still underway. We've only had about a week and a half since the close of the applications. So as far as the actual numbers that were approved, we don't have that number yet. Once the assessments are done, then we'll have

the number of applicants that have been approved. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the eligibility guidelines, should you have a community that doesn't have enough applicants or else a lot of applicants are being rejected because of those guidelines, is the Minister willing to consider reassessing or relaxing his guidelines so that people in the upper limit, people that are over this net can be eligible for programming and some flexibility for the lower incomes as well? I believe that the people who can afford it should be in those units. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I agree with the Member 100 percent, that people that can afford and are able to look after those units should be in there. That's why I've given direction to the NWT Housing Corporation to have a look at the number of clients that may be over this net. If we started going too low, the lowest net, then I'm just afraid we may be setting some people up for failure and we may get some quick claim units because once they're in there and realize what a cost it is to pay for your own fuel and power and other utilities, then they realize that there was a lot more to it than they thought. But I have asked the corporation to look at the number and I'm quite confident that we'll get a few more people that we can get into a lot of these vacant units and into homeownership in the NWT. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 284-16(5):
TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of the Housing Corporation. Getting back to my Member's statement, obviously the decision of the last government to transfer responsibility for social housing was a decision of the last government, Mr. Speaker. For however long I think about this, I'll never ever comprehend or understand why that decision was made in the first place, but I want to get back to something else I spoke about in my statement. That is responsibility.

This government was elected in 2007 and it took them over two years to reverse that decision. One of the first meetings that Regular Members had with this government early on in the life of this government was to address the transfer of that Social Housing Policy from Housing to ECE. When that \$30 million was taken from the Housing Corporation by ECE it seemed to happen just like that, in the blink of an eye. I'm wondering why it is

taking so long to get the money back to the Housing Corporation from ECE.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Interjection

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'm getting tired.

---Interjection

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Anybody want to fill in for me, go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, as far as transferring the money back to the NWT Housing Corporation, Members will see that I think during this session as part of the supp process, as far as the reason it took so long, there were some details we had to work out with ECE. The actual block of money for the administration of the public housing rental subsidy is going back to the Housing Corporation and it will be done by the end of this Assembly.

MR. RAMSAY: I just wondered if the Minister could explain why one government could just walk in and take the money, even though, Members, I recall there are a few Members on the other side of the House that were here at the time, we initially denied the request to take that money. However, it was done anyway and it just happened just like that. I'd like to ask the Minister how it is that one government could easily take that money and transfer it and with this government it's taking its time to get the money back to the Housing Corporation. If it could happen quickly then, why can't it happen as quickly now?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: That process was during the 15th. I can't speak for the amount of time it took for it to go over then.

Being a Regular Member in the 15th Assembly, there were a lot of motions coming forward to transfer the responsibility of assessments back to the LHOs. One of the first things that we did as the 16th Assembly was try to get the responsibilities back to the LHOs, because we heard the two motions that we heard from the people across the Northwest Territories. We heard from LHOs that thought it should be back with the LHOs.

The transfer of the money back to the Housing Corporation is an item that's before the House. I can assure the Member that it will be something that will be completed by the end of this session.

MR. RAMSAY: Ultimately the government did make the right decision and listened to the Regular Members of this House and listened to the public across the Northwest Territories who suggested that it was the wrong decision. I'm glad that they did eventually listen.

I'd like to ask the Minister, I know that he's privy to the discussions on the 11 or 12 positions that were needed at ECE to administer the program. Even though it doesn't fall under the mandate of the Housing Corporation, I know he's been involved in discussions with his counterpart in ECE on those positions and what the status is of the HR plan dealing with those positions at ECE.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: That was part of the discussions with ECE, was the positions. When it was transferred over, I believe the Housing Corporation gave up five or six positions, if I'm not mistaken, as part of the transfer back. I believe we're getting the five or six positions back with the Housing Corporation.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister when Regular Members might be able to see a comprehensive human resource plan related to the provision of the Social Housing Policy.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The details of the money transfer are going to be in the supp documents that we are discussing. As far as a comprehensive human resource plan, we are more than willing to sit with the Regular Members, as we have on a couple of occasions, and give them briefings on what the Housing Corporation is doing. I can commit to the Member that we can have the human resource plan as part of any future briefings that committee may wish.

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

QUESTION 285-16(5):

TRANSFER OF HOUSING PROGRAM DELIVERY TO COMMUNITY GOVERNMENTS

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I spoke of some failed programs that have cost the Housing Corporation or this government millions of dollars, with no actual reduction as far as core needs go because the units are not being used. I have questions for the Minister of Housing. Would the Minister consider transferring homeownership responsibilities to the communities, along with the appropriate resources?

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. That's always something that we're willing to listen to. If communities have a desire to take over the provision of delivering public housing, then that's something, obviously, we'd have to listen to. We've had one community that has tried it and realized that it's a bigger challenge than they realized and it was transferred back to the Housing

Corporation. We're always open to listening to discussions as to the delivery of housing in the communities.

MR. BEAULIEU: The Minister said he would look into the transfer of responsibility for homeownership. If that can't be done across the board, would the Minister look at it as a backup, a contribution agreement signed with either the local housing organizations or the aboriginal governments of the community to deliver homeownership programs in the communities?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The original question I thought the Member was referring to the transfer of the public housing delivery by, as I understood him, the Member means all things housing into the community, homeownership included. Obviously, again, as I said in my first response, it's something that we would consider doing. If communities feel that they're far enough along that they can effectively deliver housing programs in the community, then it's obviously something that as a corporation we would have to obviously listen to.

MR. BEAULIEU: As we've seen and heard in the House today, the peer programs that the Housing Corporation is delivering right now don't seem to have a positive impact on the communities. Would the Minister be prepared to look at revamping all homeownership programs and separate programs between market and non-market communities?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: One thing we hear across the Northwest Territories and probably one of the biggest employers and sources of funding that goes into each community is through housing, whether it be building new units or working for the local housing authorities. I have to disagree. I think there is a bit of a positive impact on the communities. I have seen communities where the LHOs have done all their own modernization and improvement instead of bringing contractors in. They keep people employed for the summer, six months, then they can qualify for other benefits. There is some positive impact. There are challenges that housing faces. I can assure the Member as part of the whole Housing Choices evaluation, which we're going to undertake soon, that we're going to look at all areas in the delivery of homeownership across the Northwest Territories. If there are improvements that need to be made, then obviously we will make them.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In all fairness, the Minister is correct; there are positive impacts to the delivery of housing at the community level in as far as employment for the community and a good business for some of the local contractors and so on. I don't want the Minister to get me wrong. I was purely talking about the

impacts on the homeowners, not so much what happens with employment in the community.

If the Housing Corporation makes a decision to develop new programs, to revamp programs, would the Minister do this in consultation with the communities?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Obviously it would be unwise for us as a corporation to not listen to what people of the Northwest Territories have to say as far as provision of housing goes. It would be unwise of us not to listen to what Regular Members have to say as far as the provision and delivery of housing programs across the Territories. The short answer is yes, we would talk to as many people across the Territories and keep updating the Regular Members on those consultations as they happen.

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

QUESTION 286-16(5):

YELLOWKNIFE HOUSING CHALLENGES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My oral questions will be directed to the Minister of the Housing Corporation, which I'm sure he's completely surprised. I will be following up on my Member's statement as I talked about the affordability issue and adequacy issue in my Member's statement.

Can the Minister explain what actions are being taken about the affordability challenge in Yellowknife?

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The delivery of public housing in Yellowknife is one that goes hand in hand with the delivery of public housing across the Northwest Territories. As far as the affordability in Yellowknife, they have a very vibrant housing market here and there's an ability that's not available in a lot of the smaller communities to access some of the market housing in Yellowknife.

MR. HAWKINS: Clearly a one-size policy doesn't fit anybody across the North. That approach certainly hasn't addressed the adequacy issue. As I said in my Member's statement, 928 people in Yellowknife alone, that's 928 families alone are paying over 30 percent of their gross income on fixed expenses. I still haven't heard how the Minister is addressing the affordability challenges in Yellowknife.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'm not sure if the Member is referencing 930 that are paying 30 percent in market housing or public housing. I don't believe we have that many public housing units in Yellowknife. Are we talking homeownership?

Private homes financed through the bank? If the Member would clarify his question, I'd be prepared to give him an answer.

MR. HAWKINS: For clarification, I was referring to the Housing Needs Survey.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Housing Needs Survey encompasses all aspects of housing in each community. Obviously, Yellowknife has an advantage over some of the other communities where the corporation is able to get into rent supp agreements with a lot of private landlords. Obviously, if there is a public housing shortage in Yellowknife, it is one that as a corporation we'll have to address and see about getting public housing units into the capital. As well as looking across the Northwest Territories trying to get public housing into a lot of the other communities, because if you look at it percentage-wise, their needs are probably a lot higher than Yellowknife. Numbers-wise, Yellowknife is going to have the higher number.

MR. HAWKINS: I thank the Minister and I will agree that the statistics speak for themselves. It's a matter of how you put them in order. With 928 households through the housing survey still in need -- and he may want to suggest they have other options -- but with almost a zero percent vacancy rate in Yellowknife, options are few and far between. If the Minister is interested in advice -- and he's gone through several Members today and it sounds like he's taking advice today -- I would highlight the fact that one multi-family unit being built in Yellowknife does not address the affordability and suitability issue.

Has the Minister considered or entertained the concept of rent supps which would directly go to households in need? As I pointed out, we have over 900 people who are paying over 30 percent of their gross income on fixed expenses. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check on the numbers. As far as I know, in the past few years Yellowknife has been fortunate to get a few more public housing units. As far as rent supps go, us subsidizing people to stay in private accommodation, when I speak of the rent supps, I'm talking about the ones that are rented to the LHOs and they administer them. As far as the rent supps go, I mean, 932, if we were to assist a portion of those, I mean, this would be a huge investment on the part of the NWT Housing Corporation. It's something that we'd have to look at very carefully, because we don't want to take away from the rest of the Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With capital money we're investing in this capital budget, I think the money could go a lot further on a short-

term investment immediately helping some of those 928 families in need. May I remind the Minister that we have approximately 289 units in public housing and the fact is that even if we bring in through a retrofit process of 25 retrofits this capital budget, it's just a shell game, because you're working on fixing 25 but you have to take 25 off the market. So you really haven't changed the adequacy and affordability issue.

Mr. Speaker, that said, would the Minister commit to this House that he will re-evaluate those capital dollars so that money can be redirected to rent supps on a short-term basis, as I said earlier, that will immediately help people? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we've got 293 public housing units in Yellowknife, we've got 105 homeownership units and we have about 360 third-party projects. So to me that shows that the Housing Corporation is making a significant investment in the capital. And just to clarify, if we're fixing up 25 units, we don't have to take 25 units out of stock. It's just the Public Housing Replacement Program. If we're replacing public housing units, then we have to look at ways of taking some units off the backend because of declining funding. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 287-16(5):
ECONOMIC RENT CALCULATIONS
FOR NUNAKPUT COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How does the Housing Corporation decide, Mr. Speaker, on what the economic rent should be in each of our communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Perhaps I can get one of our more experienced managers to explain that from up there. Maximum rent is looking at the cost to operate the unit in the community and you're looking at the water and the power and all other utilities. So it's actually the cost of operating that unit in the community. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, when the Housing Corporation does its Housing Needs Survey, affordability is always a big problem across the Northwest Territories. Even here in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, I assume the Minister agrees that \$3,000 a month for a three-bedroom unit is not affordable, unless you're making a lot more money than most people in our small communities. So how is affordability taken into account in the economic rent? How is it set for this house in Sachs Harbour?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Well, it would be set in Sachs Harbour as it would be set in all other communities. Obviously, the cost of operating a unit in Sachs Harbour is going to be a lot more than it is for a community in the South Slave. That's where they would set the rate.

I have to add that there are very few tenants across the Northwest Territories that actually pay the maximum rent. I think we may have 12 or 13 people across the Northwest Territories. The last time I heard it was 19, but it may have gone down since then. Those are the people that we're trying to graduate out of public housing and into homeownership. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know, the problems that have caused the rental arrears growing across the Territory, what happens to families who find themselves way behind on paying their rent and the situation of the Housing Corporation, a big problem in arrears with the Housing Corporation and being evicted. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the process of being evicted is a very long process. It's not one where the LHO gets to work and decides they're going to evict somebody today. They're given many opportunities to try, especially with the arrears, they're given many opportunities to try and deal with the arrears. Sometimes all the LHOs ask is that you come in and work out a repayment plan and then you get to keep the unit. A lot of tenants have gone to the boards, appealed to the boards and they've been given a kind of last chance, last chance. It's an awfully long process before they get to the actual eviction. They give out termination notices. Sometimes those are just designed to get the tenants' attention and make them realize that they need to start dealing with some of the problems, especially the arrears problems that they're facing. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister adjust the economic rent system so that the rental public housing is affordable so people can go find some work? Mr. Speaker, I also heard the Minister earlier today speaking about the Beaufort-Delta and the economic rent scale in regard to the pilot project. If the Beaufort-Delta housing would be able to get on a pilot project for rental, the calculations for the economic rent, to drop that rent scale down, is it possible to do a pilot project like the Beaufort-Delta, in my communities that I represent? Is it possible? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member is referring to the regional rates that I was referring to earlier. This is something that we are just in the process of considering right now. It's something that we have to explore a little further. I mean, we've heard the argument on the difference

in the rental from one small community to one that's 20 minutes away. As far as using the Beaufort-Delta as a pilot project, once we decide if this is one that's worth pursuing, then maybe we have to look at something like that, because the rental rates in the Beaufort-Delta are a lot more inconsistent and a lot higher than they are in the southern part of the Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 288-16(5):

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF HOUSING CORPORATION ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not surprisingly, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, and you can let the Minister know that he's almost done.

I mentioned in my Member's statement the Auditor General's report, and in particular, item number 59 from that report is a recommendation that states that the corporation should finalize its strategic plan as soon as possible. It goes on to say that part of the plan should be: "incorporate all the various elements of housing into a comprehensive northern Housing Strategy." The management's response did not indicate that a strategy was forthcoming, so I have a few questions for the Minister.

I would like to know if the NWT Housing Corporation is acting on the Auditor General's recommendation and, if so, what is the status of the strategy for the NWT Housing Corporation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This would fit into the overall Shelter Policy we're developing right now and this would look at all aspects of delivery of housing across the Northwest Territories. The plan is to develop a policy in the next fiscal year. We see this as a bit of a way forward document to deal with a lot of the issues regarding housing in the Northwest Territories.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. The Minister mentions the Shelter Policy that's being developed. I also mentioned in my statement that there were two commitments from the Minister in the last eight months or so. One was to look at rent scales and one was to look at programs. I don't hear in the answer today, and I didn't hear in the answers from previous Hansard, that the Housing Corporation is going to look at everything with the Housing Corporation, policies, procedures, guidelines, everything that affects how housing is given out, how it is managed and administered. Could I get

from the Minister, apart from the Shelter Policy, is there any intent on the part of the Housing Corporation to do a comprehensive northern housing policy review? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we see the Shelter Policy as doing an overall territorial housing review on all the different aspects of housing. As I mentioned a couple of times, we are actually doing a rent scale review. We are doing an evaluation of the whole Housing Choices program and those are just a couple of components. We see the Shelter Policy as an overall review on a go-forward basis on the delivery of anything housing in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, we have heard many comments from Members, as we have gone through our statements and questions today, about things that are not working relative to the way the Housing Corporation operates and the relationships between the corporation and the people that are in housing, things like very large arrears, things like housing suitability in terms of number of bedrooms where you don't have three bedrooms when you get your kids back. It doesn't sound to me like a Shelter Policy is going to encompass the actual on-the-ground management of some of these guidelines. Could I get a better explanation from the Minister of what exactly the Shelter Policy entails? Does it go to those kinds of details to which I am referring? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Shelter Policy is going to be a component of the overall social policy framework. It will outline our housing responses to specific community-inclined groups. It is going to encompass anything to do with housing. This is what we see as a bit of an operating manual for the future of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, and how we can best respond to all the concerns that are raised by Members and by the public, and a few of the issues that the Member raised specifically will be ones, obviously, that will be part of the whole overall policy. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I certainly look forward to seeing that Shelter Policy. If it is going to include the detail to which the Minister is referring, then it will be a valuable document and it will hopefully remove many of the roadblocks that our residents are encountering in regards to their housing.

I would like to ask the Minister if he can tell me when that Shelter Policy in all its detail will be available. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we are just in the process of developing the framework for it now. It is a comprehensive piece of work and it is

going to take a lot of research. My best guess would be that may be something that is ready for the beginning of the 17th Assembly. There is a lot of work.

We obviously have heard a lot of issues concerning housing today, and not just today but every day in all of the communities we go to. We have to be sure. We have heard from Members on what they thought of the different policies, how certain things didn't work and we want to make sure that we get a policy in place that answers and deals with all of the questions that the Members have raised. We want to make sure that this is one that is going to be done absolutely right before we even release it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 102-16(5):
ANNUAL REPORT ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
2009-2010

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Annual Report on Official Languages, 2009-2010. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 103-15(6):
GNWT CONTRACTS OVER \$5,000 REPORT,
YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2010

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Government of the Northwest Territories Contracts Over \$5,000 Report, Year Ending March 31, 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 15, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 21-16(5):
FLEXIBLE TRANSITION PERIOD
FOR RENT ADJUSTMENTS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, November 1, 2010, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great

Slave, that the Legislative Assembly recommends that the NWT Housing Corporation change its programs guidelines in order to provide responsive and meaningful flexibility;

And further, that the proposed changes to guidelines should allow for the transition period, such as a gradual increase of the rent, for these tenants;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories shall provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

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

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with Motion 19-16(5), Reduction of NWT Housing Corporation Maximum Rental Rate, which I gave notice of on Wednesday, October 27, 2010. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Motions

MOTION 19-16(5):
REDUCTION OF NWT HOUSING CORPORATION
MAXIMUM RENTAL RATE,
CARRIED

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS adequate and affordable housing is the most important concern of many Northerners;

AND WHEREAS without adequate, affordable and accessible housing, individuals and families lack the basis for healthy living, successful educational participation, security of employment and participation as full members in the economies, health and development of our communities;

AND WHEREAS the NWT Housing Corporation's program guidelines set a rent scale which can result in a rental rate of 30 percent of assessed gross income and which normally results in rent comprising more than 40 percent of low net incomes;

AND WHEREAS other provinces and territories use different guidelines, such as 25 percent of assessed gross income;

AND WHEREAS the use of the 30 percent of assessed gross income guidelines for determination of rental rates can result in the levying of excessive and debilitating rents, especially upon low income earners;

AND WHEREAS difficulties in the reporting and assessment of rent can result in immediate rental increases and accumulation of arrears;

AND WHEREAS public housing tenants with rental arrears are ineligible to apply for homeownership assistance programs, which further prevents their transition from public to owned housing;

AND WHEREAS the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation is undertaking a review of the Public Housing Program and other programs and policies of the NWT Housing Corporation;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that this Legislative Assembly recommends that the NWT Housing Corporation reduce the rent scale so the maximum rental rate is 25 percent of assessed gross income.

Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is on the floor. Before I open the motion to debate, the Chair is going to call a short break, then we will come back and debate it.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are unquestionably many issues to grapple with in the area of public housing, as the Minister well understands, at least by the end of today. I'm sure he knew about this before and I admit that these are often complex issues and difficult to move forward on. I've given great consideration, paid very close attention to the issues brought forward to me by my constituents and others. I've settled with my colleague in bringing forward this motion on a reduction of 30 to 25 percent of the rent as a maximum.

I think perhaps the best way to portray this is simply to go over an example looking at the numbers. So I'd like to start by saying the combined gross monthly income of two minimum wage employees is about \$3,120 per month. Rent on that income at 30 percent is \$940. The net income after deductions is \$2,500. So once their rent is paid they have about \$1,550 to live on for the whole month. In the case I mentioned, there were seven in the family. That's about \$220 a month to meet the needs of each person. A pretty modest amount.

Now consider the same situation at a rent scale of 25 percent. Rent on their gross income would be \$780 rather than \$940, leaving them an extra \$160 a month to live on. One hundred sixty dollars may not seem like a lot to the average NWT family, which our statistics show is making about \$100,000, but the people in public housing are not average. They live across a huge gap in income that is getting wider and wider each year.

Milk in Yellowknife costs about \$2.50 a litre. That extra \$160 is the equivalent of 50 more litres of milk a month. In our smaller communities where milk is five or more dollars a litre, it can make the difference between milk every couple of days and enough to meet each day's needs. It might make the difference between presents or no presents at Christmas.

When we think about it, a reduction to 25 percent is little enough. This government sets the minimum wage scale, which is going up to about \$10 an hour, but the minimum wage does not reflect the government's belief that it's enough to live on. The government recognizes that public housing must be provided so people can have shelter when the minimum wage can't buy it for them. That's an example of our interlocking system of programs and policies to help those most in need. Government's recognition of the need to coordinate program policies to meet real conditions is the reason for adjusting the rent scale from 30 to 25 percent. Thirty percent simply isn't sufficient to ease that hardship.

When people struggle to improve their conditions and get work, rather than relying on completely subsidized housing, we need to help them through with our policies. Moving the rent scale from 30 to 25 percent is a good step in tuning up that help, and on that basis I moved and will support this motion.

Again, Mr. Speaker, while many housing issues will require a range of responsibilities and the opportunity for flexibility in interpreting which is the most appropriate response, this is an example of an across-the-board, straightforward policy change that can help every public housing client in this situation. On that basis, again, I look forward to any other comments from my colleagues on both sides of the House and I will be prepared to give some closing remarks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the seconder of the motion, I, too, will be supporting the motion.

Again, I think it's something that we have to be aware of. Jurisdiction to the west in regard to the Yukon, they do use the 25 percent income threshold and I think it's something that we should be seriously considering to have a similar type of economic arrangement where we have a large urban centre, but also we have a lot of remote communities.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important to realize that what we're finding, through statistics and also through poverty studies, that there are communities where we have some 45 percent of incomes under

\$30,000 of the households in our communities. I think that looking at the amount of income people do derive in a lot of our communities, in most cases that income has to get you through the whole year. Also, with seasonal employment we do have where most people's earnings take place usually during the summer construction season, somewhere between three and four months. Again, whatever income you derive during that period of time has to get you through the remaining seven or eight months, depending on how long you're able to be employed.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's critical that we do everything we can to support our individual communities. More importantly, we talk about a diverse economy and taking advantage of our economies, but we have to be able to give people the means to sustain themselves and take advantage of those economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will support the motion to reduce the amount that is being charged at the maximum at 30 percent of the gross income for public housing, because I recognize that with about 30 percent going to taxes and the extra cost of employment and our desire to keep people employed. Of course, people who are not afraid to be employed because their rents would be too high. It's an opportunity to bring that down a little bit at the upper end and I think that this is one part of the program that this side of the House is asking the government to tweak and bring 30 percent, previously addresses a flat 25 percent and now they graduated up to 30 percent. They should have probably graduated up to 25 percent and I think that's what the MLAs from this side of the House are asking for.

At the upper end for public housing clients, I'm talking about people that are making four to five thousand dollars a month, that's only an income of \$48,000 to \$60,000 a year and that is high for the communities. It may be low income for here, but at that rate, 5 percent of \$5,000 allows the family to retain about \$250 a month; \$200 to \$250 a month in incomes that range from \$50,000 to \$60,000. So especially the seasonal employees, guys that come in and they work in the summer, it would be good to give them that break because for the rest of the year they're essentially on EI; although their rents are lowered then, they would not be impacted by this policy. This policy does impact people at the upper end that still are not making substantial amounts of money. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to support the motion, because if this motion and if this new policy were implemented, it would necessarily result in there being less money for the local housing authorities to work with because it would in fact reduce people's rents.

I think the responsible thing for us to do is to look at housing system-wide and say is there anything that could offset this loss of rent. So we would be trying to affect a positive change for a certain group of people that would see their rents reduced.

I do support that, Mr. Speaker, but I think, at the same time, we need to look at the sustainability of our policy right now for seniors over 60 living in public housing to pay zero rent. It's a difficult subject to broach. It was brought in in the 13th Assembly, but as our population ages, as more people are gaining access and even some people who are currently in public housing are surpassing that age of 60 years, we have to ask ourselves if that is sustainable going forward for our government. For the seniors that I have spoken to, I believe that seniors are concerned, too, about whether this is sustainable and whether this can continue on indefinitely. I think they would rather get ahead of the game and pay some modest amount; even if it was a small amount of money. Nothing that would put them in any kind of difficulty financially, but if they could contribute in some small way.

I would like to see these things looked at in tandem. I realize this is not what the motion says, but I think for us to suggest that the housing authorities and the Housing Corporation should take a loss in rent by implementing this new policy, I think we also need to look at where we could make that difference up. That may be an area that could stand some review and some analysis.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting this motion.

I spoke in my Member's statement about the need for an evaluation of policies and procedures and programs within the Housing Corporation. If I understood the Member correctly, he stated that it will be another year before we get the completion of a Shelter Policy which should be all-encompassing.

I don't believe that we need to wait a year before this particular policy change can take effect. I believe it was mentioned by my colleague Mr. Bromley that this is a change that is relatively easily done. I don't believe that it needs to wait a year, nor should it wait a year in order for it to be done at the same time that the Shelter Policy is put in place. It's my experience that comprehensive and involved evaluations tend to take a lot longer than we

expect, so when we think it's going to be ready for the beginning of the 17th Assembly, it's probably quite likely that it's going to be at least half as much again of that time frame.

The impact of this policy as it is currently written using the 30 percent figure can be really debilitating on families. It's something that needs to be evaluated. I believe this is a policy which does not encourage people to work. It doesn't encourage people to find a job and to keep a job and to stay working. I don't feel that it is a policy that enables people. Those are the kind of policies that we need to have in terms of our housing. All of our policies need to be looked at in that light. Are they doing what we want them to do? Are they encouraging people to be productive and lead productive lives?

Just in general, I am supportive of this motion.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be speaking in favour of the motion as well.

If you look at the money and the amount of housing units that the Government of the Northwest Territories has put on the ground in our communities over the last five years, you would expect that there would be a decrease in the core need in our communities. There isn't. Also, I've travelled to a number of small communities and the number one issue facing residents in the small communities is housing.

I want to support my colleagues on putting this motion forward. I believe that people should be given an opportunity to take advantage of opportunities for employment when they come up. We shouldn't expect people to just stay home and not go to work just because they're worried about paying exorbitant rent when they do go to work.

I do support the motion and I support every effort that this government can make to make housing more affordable for folks around the Territory.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In short, I will be supporting this motion as it goes forward.

The lack of quality housing is a challenge in the North and when we make it completely unaffordable, the ground is never stable for a family. If you talk to all the housing experts out there, they'll say that a good, solid home...An unaffordable home is one of the primary problems where problems at home start. They can't afford to be there and all of a sudden it creates a ripple effect into other issues. It's just an endless spiral.

I'm not convinced that if we move from 30 percent to 25 percent on the assessment that it's going to kill this government. If anything, this may stabilize

some of the arrears and help the adequacy and affordability of that type of housing. If anything, we'll be giving people more of a leg up in the process of life as opposed to pushing them down.

In short, again, I will be supporting this motion and I think the government should do a serious analysis on not just how much money it may cost us, but how much money it could cost us in the long run for not providing able, adequate housing at an affordable price to our constituents and people of the North because of the ripple effects it creates through social problems.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise, too, to support the motion as well.

I think when I travel to my communities and talk to constituents, they always raise the issues of affordable housing. I think it was best said by a constituent I had run into at Northern Stores in Fort Simpson; they said, don't call it low-rental housing if it's not.

I think one of the ways we can address this is by actually looking at this proposal in this motion. When the Minister does his review of the rental scales, I think this a viable option to address those concerns and make those homes affordable. There are other mitigating circumstances when it comes to rent scales. There are other factors that are involved. Just making this one small change I think will help our people in the communities and help the families in our communities make housing affordable.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in full support of the motion that my colleagues are bringing forward with regard to having families in the communities I represent with the high cost of living and fixed income. The luxury we don't have is private rental properties in the communities. We rely on the housing authority more than ever with the people that we represent. From 30 percent to 25 percent is a start. I look forward to the motion.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate all the comments the Members made on the motion that's before us. Recognizing that there is a concern, this obviously is something that we will be considering during our review of the rent scale.

One thing we have to realize, though, is that lowering it may be a disincentive to some of the higher income earners moving out of public housing

and into homeownership. Using the gross at 30 percent, it affects a lot of the lower income earners more than the higher income earners, because the higher income earners have opportunities to put their money into sheltered areas where it's not calculated.

As we heard from Mrs. Groenewegen, this obviously is going to affect the LHOs' operations. They're going to be getting less money, obviously. We have to be looking at other ways to try and recoup some of the lost investment.

There has been some discussion on seniors. It's always a discussion that as Members we shy away from. The hard reality is to start making adjustments, you're going to have to recoup some of the funds from somewhere else.

So that being said, I have committed that this is going to be part of our rent scale review. Because this is advice to Cabinet, we will be abstaining from voting on the motion. Obviously I am committed, as Minister of Housing, into responding to the motion that Members have put forward and we'll look at it very carefully when we're doing our review of the rent scale. Members will be afforded other opportunities to make comments on this as we proceed into the review.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I'll go to the mover of the motion for closing comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues in the House for your comments. I've been listening closely and I appreciate the degree of support and criticisms that I've heard.

There is, indeed, a critical need to support our communities, particularly given our high and rising cost of living, particularly in the base of low unemployment for many of our public housing tenants. It is an enabling policy in a very direct way. It provides an opportunity to help people get into homeownership and to keep away from arrears, to support their families in the full participation in our society that we all desire.

The Minister is concerned that in fact it will not encourage the high income earners from participating in the full rent. I'd say the evidence is much stronger that we have many more low income earners who would appreciate and benefit from the significant pluses that this simple policy change can engender.

Mrs. Groenewegen mentioned the possibility available right now to replace this very modest loss of income with a 5 percent reduction through the example of the seniors she provided. That is a direct response to the Minister's concern about that modest bit of lost income.

I think, in summary, this is not a complete answer but is a very important step and one that has been

taken by other jurisdictions, including our neighbour to the west and possibly to the east.

I think the main message we want to put forward in the House today is, don't wait. We've waited a long time for this public housing rent subsidy review. It looks like we're going to wait longer. The message is: Don't wait. Start now. This is a simple, enabling, and viable policy change. Let's get it done.

I look forward to the support of the House. I would request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is requesting a recorded vote. Mr. Clerk. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Krutko.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Lafferty; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: in favour, 10; against, zero; abstaining, seven.

---Carried

The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MOTION 21-16(5): FLEXIBLE TRANSITION PERIOD FOR RENT ADJUSTMENTS, CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: My motion today is flexible transition period to rent adjustments.

WHEREAS adequate and affordable housing is the most important concern of many Northerners;

AND WHEREAS one of our collective goals is to develop homeownership and financial management skills of tenants without resorting to evictions and other drastic collections actions;

AND WHEREAS housing subsidy programs should be structured so that employment opportunities, even short-term opportunities, remain an attractive option for tenants;

AND WHEREAS the program guidelines currently require immediate increase in rent for tenants who earn increased income;

AND WHEREAS it is completely unrealistic to expect tenants to pay these very high rent amounts without sufficient notice;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that the Legislative Assembly recommends that the NWT Housing Corporation change its program guidelines in order to provide responsive and meaningful flexibility;

AND FURTHER, that the proposed changes to the guidelines should allow for a transition period, such as a gradual increase of rent, for these tenants;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories shall provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the motion that we're bringing forward for the transition period, the cost of living in the small communities is so high that people are having to make choices again for either buying food for their family or paying bills. And there are such high power rates in the communities, it's unrealistic to try to pay everything at once.

People have to work. We have to get the people employment and not penalize them. The low employment rates, again, we have to help the people in our communities, not only in our communities but in the Territory. They want to work and not be penalized from the government and the Housing Corporation. Stabilization of a family, like my colleague Mr. Bromley said earlier today, stabilization of a family is key and everybody's home is their castle. Only in Yellowknife it's castles. In the communities...(inaudible)...Mr. Speaker. Parents go to work and that means kids are going to school. Higher revenues for LHOs move monies in for maintenance on units in the smaller communities and less tenant damage...(inaudible)... I'd like to hear what my other colleagues have to say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the motion. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion follows with my Member's statement and questions I asked earlier today.

Mr. Speaker, the mission of the NWT Housing Corporation is to provide access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing. Through this mission, the intent is that through the provision of housing programs and services, the corporation

contributes to the health and education of our people and to the development of sustainable, vibrant and safe communities. This is a great intent and a great mission. The problem is with very rigid programs and very rigid policies, I'm not sure that we can actually meet the intent of what the Housing Corporation is trying to accomplish.

They're doing a lot of great work. There are people buying homes through the programs that we offer. There are people in public housing through the programs we offer, but we're having difficulties transitioning some of these people out and as a result of some of the rigid programming that we have, people are making choices that may not be in the best interests of their long-term goals, which is to get out of public housing. The example I gave earlier today where an individual was offered an opportunity to work for a three-week period but declined it because that money they would earn in that three-week period would pretty much all be lost to the rent which would increase immediately, it seems kind of counterproductive to what it is we're trying to accomplish.

There are other examples. Many of our programs only have one intake. I think there are opportunities for increasing the number of intakes in certain programs we have like PATH. It's a good program. People are accessing it, but because we only have one intake, are we doing as much as we can?

That's what we're talking about: flexibility. Every situation is going to be unique. Every situation needs to be thought of on its individual basis. I'm not saying, and I don't believe any of us are saying, that people shouldn't pay rent. If they've got money to pay rent, they should. But as they go from employment to non-employment back to employment, we need to create a system that will allow them to use some of that money to get rid of some of their arrears, and get rid of some of their debts, and maybe buy some extra clothes for their kids. But because our program is rigid and it snaps into effect immediately, anytime they get a little ahead, we pull back. We need to create some flexibility.

Now, I know this isn't easy, Mr. Speaker. I know there are challenges. I know there's a big challenge. For instance, if we've got individuals who are entering the world of full-time employment, how long do we want to keep giving them increased subsidies? I mean, they're now working, they're contributing. They may be able to pay rent, but how long do we want to keep them on? I've had conversations with a lot of my colleagues and there have been a lot of suggestions thrown around: maybe a tiered approach. Maybe as people take full-time employment, we work with them to find out what their earning capacity is going to be over a period of time and we ratchet it up over a period of time, allowing them to increase how much they pay

every month to the point where they're paying the full allocation. The other thing that we could consider is as people start working full time, we could ratchet them into a homeownership program rather than just keeping them on rent. There are lots of things we can do and every one of them needs an open mind and every one of them needs us to think outside the box.

I worry that in government sometimes what happens is because rules have been broken, the next thing we do when a rule has been broken is we rewrite the policy and make it a little bit stricter. Then the next time we rewrite the policy and we make it a little bit stricter, to the point where nobody has to think. Just plug in a situation into the computer and the computer says now we do this. There's no flexibility, no common sense, no humanity. Let's have some humanity. Let's have some common sense. Let's have some flexibility. Let's look at individuals and their situations on an individual basis. Let's have policies that allow us to do that. That's all we're asking by way of this motion. Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll speak in favour of this motion as well.

Again, this suggestion is something that may result in reduced revenues for the housing authorities through the rents that they collect; however, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is a lot of merit to this transitioning idea. I mean, some people could say, well, if you have a three-month transition period, then people will work for three months and then they'll quit their job. I mean, we can take this to any extreme you want. You know, the fact of the matter is that if people get a good job or a reasonable job that they like, they're not going to quit it in three months so that their rent will go down. I mean, I would hate to think that they would have to do that.

Mr. Speaker, in the real rental world, not the Housing Corporation's version of things, if you want to increase someone's rent, for whatever reason, you have to give them 90 days notice. Why is that? That is because if their rent is going to go up, it gives them that 90 days to rearrange their financial budgeting and affairs. It may give them a chance to consider if they want to continue to live there. They may decide to shop around for some other place to live. There's a purpose why, in the private market, you can't increase people's rent without giving them that 90 days transition. The reason why we get around that in the Housing Corporation and the housing authorities is because we say that the rent does stay the same, it's the subsidy that changes. It's the amount of subsidy that changes based on their income. That's how we get around that. But I think there's some good rationale to that whole 90-

day thing. I don't think we should be too quick to dismiss that idea.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague Mr. Abernethy mentioned is that if people do get into a situation where their incomes have gone up to the point that their housing, at the rent scale that we have, becomes unaffordable, they are perfect candidates for counselling for homeownership and we should have that flagged somehow. How do we flag them? Mr. Speaker, I believe that there should be a relationship between the housing authorities, as the landlords, and their tenants. They should know what's going on in their lives. We have tenant relation officers. I think there should be counselling. There should be give and take of communication and information: if people's families are downsizing because they've got kids leaving home; if they're embarking on new employment opportunities; if they're expecting children or they're taking in foster children. Whatever. Whatever their circumstances are in their life. I think that in a really kind of humanitarian, humane kind of a way we could have tenant relations officers in our communities who know what's going on with their housing clients and that they could counsel them in these situations.

I do think that the idea of the adjustment phase, the transition phase, it's a very common theory. Like I said, in the private sector it's a very common theory. It's even a common theory in our work here as legislators. If we ran an election and didn't get elected again, we have a 90-day transition. If you're in Cabinet and you're going to switch to a Regular Member's housing allowance, you get 90 days. There is a cushion. There is a transition. It's a common theory. It's a common practice and I think it could apply very well in this instance, and I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to support this motion. I will be voting in favour of it. It's something that constituents have been raising with me for the past seven years, Mr. Speaker, because they always say every time I make extra money, I have to give it over to the housing the following month when I don't have that extra money. So this is the type of thing we're talking about. It's not only for the seasonal workers, Mr. Speaker, it's also for the ones with a steady job that for whatever reason run into bonus income from overtime, or even VTAs if they're lucky enough to get it, but the following month their rent goes up.

I support the honourable Jane Groenewegen's view that legally in the market world, there is a 90-day buffer. In fact, it raised enough interest in me that perhaps I'll even ask our committee to seek a legal opinion on that matter, because no one should be

forced to pay increased rents without due diligence and formidable notice, Mr. Speaker.

Getting back to the motion, it's about fairness and it's about people having bonus income, wanting to pay their other bills, Mr. Speaker, even their arrears in the system they're in. Like, if they're getting bonus income and we're charging them higher rent the next month, how are they even going to have a chance to address the current arrears with their money being already spoken for, so to speak?

So I like the motion and really think that our government has to take this one seriously and I don't think that we should see 12 months hence, Mr. Speaker, because what we're talking about is actually an election year and I think that's something that we should address soon and address in the beginning of the next fiscal year in 2011, early 2011, by April 1st. I think that's how soon that we should act on it, and I believe that the Housing Corporation and all governments have got to really stand behind the firm commitment about standing behind their people and wanting to give them affordable and accessible housing, Mr. Speaker.

With that, once again, I'll be supporting the motion and I thank you very much. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also will be voting in favour of this motion and I have heard Members mention this idea many times in committee and the House, or in any number of meetings. I feel, like the maximum rental rate policy, this particular policy is also debilitating and it also is a policy which does not enable our residents. We want our residents to be confident, we want them to lead productive lives. We want them to contribute to our communities, but this policy doesn't help them do that. Our residents can't do that if the effect of housing guidelines such as this one is to keep our people unemployed or crush them with rent shock or debt if they do get a job.

This motion speaks to the need for flexibility. I agree, housing policies seem to be rigidly implemented, and that was referenced by another one of my colleagues. There's no opportunity for discretion at a local level, in my view. There's no opportunity to apply common sense. One of the things that could be done is to average income over a period of time, over a year perhaps, over six months, but that certainly would take away from somebody getting a job for three months, their rent goes way up and then they lose their job and the back and forth and the seesawing that occurs right now. So I would hope that the Housing Corp would consider that.

There may be some loss of revenue by changing this policy, but I think over the long term if you take a longer view than just a couple of months, people will stay employed. Employed people pay higher rents than people who are unemployed and I think in the long term we will find that we probably increase our revenues from rent.

I urge the Housing Corporation to seriously consider this recommendation and I look forward to seeing the amended guidelines in the upcoming Shelter Policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion.

I think that this is, again, the ordinary Members going in the right direction. This has been an issue. I never really thought in depth about this three-month notice thing in the private market and the reason for that, and the explanation that Mrs. Groenewegen gave us makes a lot of sense, that even if the Housing Corporation has covered the policy by putting in the maximum rent and then changing only the subsidy portion of it, is essentially a way of getting around a policy that may be very important to the renters.

So I think that this time period, the transition period that is requested in this motion, is a tremendous opportunity for the Housing Corporation and the local housing organizations to do some counselling with the tenant if they're going to continue to be renters, then the counsel will be done by the LHO and they'd be going in that direction and preparing the renter to remain as a renter, but have an opportunity to make some adjustments in their finances as a result of newfound employment. On the other side, if the Housing Corporation essentially sees this as a good long-term opportunity in employment for the tenant in public housing, that the Housing Corporation immediately pulls the file and starts working on homeownership counselling. I think if those aspects of the job that the Housing Corporation and LHOs were to work on, then I think this motion will go a long ways to assisting the tenants in public housing. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion.

Mr. Speaker, this policy is not new to the Housing Corporation. There was a previous transitional policy in place, especially for individuals who found themselves unemployed for some time and to make the transition from unemployment to employment, and more importantly, meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to realize that through a gradual increase process, regardless if it's 15 percent a month going forward until you finally work your way up to maximum rents, I think we also have to be cognizant of the seasonal economies we have in the Northwest Territories. Looking at the incomes that we do have, and like I stated, Mr. Speaker, from the statistics that we receive from our statistics department, in some of our communities, the communities I represent, in Aklavik there's 45 percent of the households under the income of \$30,000. I think realizing the incomes that people derive and you start mixing that with the actual costs associated with maximum rents, in those communities once you get a job and you start paying the maximum rents, you're paying in excess of, I'll use Aklavik again, \$2,600 maximum rent in that community for a five-bedroom unit. That doesn't leave you with much when your total income is \$30,000 a year. I think we have to be realistic about that.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will be supporting the motion. This policy already existed at the Housing Corporation and all they have to do is reinstate it, make some amendments to it. So, again, we're not starting from scratch, this policy already existed in the Housing Corporation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A flexible transition period really makes sense and I'll tell you why. It's my experience very few people would rather choose the option of not working, staying at home and waiting for something better to come along than when the possibility of a job will inspire them to get out there and help put their life together and keep it in order.

Mr. Speaker, working creates independence, but our housing policy does not. Mr. Speaker, we want people on their feet and running; not running from the Housing Corporation, we want them running in support of their families and on their own.

Mr. Speaker, this creates motivation for people who want to work. Even short-term work is better than no work at all. Unfortunately, who are we fooling? The housing officers know the exact extent of this problem. They know that if their tenants go out and work that they'll be slapped with huge increases within a few days and, as colleagues here have said, those increases come when there's no money left because of that short-term work. So who are we fooling? We're fooling ourselves by leaving the policy in its existing state. We're encouraging people not to work, we're encouraging people to stay home, we're encouraging people to be dependent on the system. So, Mr. Speaker, what kind of government are we if we encourage people to not be themselves, not to find ways to better

themselves, not to find ways to get out there and create independence for themselves as well as their families?

Mr. Speaker, a flexible transition period does everything we want them to do. We talk about creating independent people. That's what this does. Mr. Speaker, it's kind of like the old saying of going zero to 60. The rent policy says, well, you pay very little, if none; you work today, you go up a whole lot when you're not prepared for it. The rent transition means we are going to stagger it. I am well aware and have seen it myself, that the government has developed models on sliding scales. This is something that could encourage people to say, wait a minute, we are just going to make a little bit, you know? We are going to charge just a little bit more this month because you are making more this month. I think people would be encouraged then. The more you make, the more we will be part of the solution to help you.

Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging that this motion comes forward, because this really again speaks to the need that we need to find ways to empower people. We know that people working are healthier people. We know that when people are working, their families are stronger. We know that if we create a system where they are dependent on the system, that they are much happier to be at home. That is not healthy for anybody.

So, Mr. Speaker, this motion creates independence and I think that is why we are here. I would like to see that go through. I certainly hope Cabinet could find its way to support this motion, but I know they'll sit and watch it go by in their abstaining kind of way. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how, in advance, I am going to be disappointed by this Cabinet because I know exactly how they will vote. And that said, I will support the motion and I look forward to seeing this motion pass with uniting this side of the House and we will show Cabinet how it really needs to be done. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Abernethy for bringing this motion forward. I think the public housing tenants often have other debts, possibly to family members or their friends or retailers that have been supporting them in their time of need. This sort of thing helps to address this sort of situation. Flexibility and a graduated rent assessment application or a responsible policy that realistically deals with income that varies over time would be an important support for public housing tenants struggling to get by.

Many families are unique in the pattern of income they experience and this needs some recognition. Again, this motion will not provide the answer, but it

is potentially an important step towards applying some common sense that could encourage people to work and actually result in a net benefit and a net increase in the revenue accruing to the Housing Corporation. This motion recognizes the complexity of the real world, Mr. Speaker, and that policy must be able to respond to that complexity. The motion strives to recognize and support that policy development and, as such, I will be voting in support. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Mr. Bromley. To the motion. I will go over to the mover of the motion for closing comments. Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues for all their comments and support given to this motion. Mr. Speaker, if Cabinet adopts this motion, we together could make a real change for the people that we represent. Today I ask for a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Lafferty; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: Results of the recorded vote: in favour, nine; opposed, zero; abstaining, seven. Motion is carried,

---Carried

Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project; Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits; Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits – What We Heard; Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy; Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012; Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future;" Tabled Document 98-16(5), Supplementary

Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2009-2010; Tabled Document 99-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2009-2010; Tabled Document 100-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2010-2011; Tabled Document 101-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2010-2011; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act; Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act; and Minister's Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I call Committee of the Whole to order. Items in Committee of the Whole today are: tabled documents 4, 30, 38, 62, 66, 75, 98, 99, 100, 101, Bill 4, Committee Report 3-16(5), and Minister's Statement 65-16(5). What is the wish of committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee today would like to do Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, and we would like to deal with the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Okay, we will move to the capital, page 3-10, information item. With that, I would like to ask the Minister if he will bring in any witnesses.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses.

For the record, Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me, to my left, Mr. Jeff Polakoff, president and CEO of the NWT Housing Corporation; to my right I have Mr. Jeff Anderson, vice-president of finance with the NWT Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. We are dealing with an information item with regards to page 3-10. Are there any questions? Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you Mr. Chair. I've gone through the list of items identified within the capital estimates, they're information items. It looks like there are one, two, three, four, five new units under the HELP program for construction in '11-12, and I know there's been a lot of talk about the number of vacancies and the Minister has made some commitments in the House about getting rid of the vacancies that exist in the Northwest Territories, but over my three years in the Legislative Assembly, I have been to a number of the communities and a lot of the communities that I go to, there are vacant HELP units. What kind of analysis is done before we decide to put more HELP units in a community? On this list I see HELP units going into Aklavik, and I see HELP units going into Colville Lake, and I see HELP units going into Fort Simpson as well as Whati. So what kind of analysis is done to determine that that's the community that needs a HELP unit? Has there been any analysis to see if there's a demand for those HELP units? Are there people that will meet the programs as they exist to take those HELP units?

I think we need to be cautious about creating more and more units when we have some vacancies and the department's already challenged with trying to get rid of some of the HELP units that we have. What kind of analysis goes into play, how do we decide where they go? Those types of things.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Part of the analysis was through the Needs Survey. Part of it was some of the units that were put down, 2009, the Member's correct; there has been a lot of HELP units on the ground. This number is actually a little lower than was originally planned for because of the number of vacant units we have on the ground. Part of the analysis was based on the Needs Survey. There's still a need for some of the HELP units in some of the communities. That was the reason these particular communities were chosen.

MR. ABERNETHY: I recognize compared to previous years there seem to be a lot less HELP units being built, which I think is fine given that you guys already have a number of vacancies. Once again, I recognize that you're working hard to fill those vacancies. There are a lot of public housing replacement lines within this capital plan. Once again, I'm curious about the process. How does one determine when a public housing unit has reached the end of its lifecycle? How do we decide to dispose? Are they all destroyed? Are some simply renovated and their life is reinvigorated, if you will? Are some of them sold off to private interests? How do we determine and, I guess, further, do we maintain a particular size of housing stock? Do we plan on our housing stock for public housing to grow or do we maintain a static number over time that we're replacing and fixing, replacing

and fixing, and disposing where appropriate? Just if you could help me understand that, that would be great.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There are condition ratings done every year on public housing units and if they reach a certain condition rating after they've been renovated a few times, then this one is determined that they're taken out of stock.

The public housing replacement units that you see, as we bring in new public housing units into a community we have to remove a few of them to keep our public housing portfolio level because of declining O and M funding from CMHC. So we try to dispose of the units. I think we have 44 right now that we're looking to dispose of.

We've had discussions with community groups. They're quite interested in taking over some of these units. We've been able to broker a few deals with them, which worked well for the Housing Corporation. There's an interest out there. I was at a couple of meetings recently where they expressed an interest in some of our older stock. Some we would sell off to the existing tenants, if the need arises.

Our last option would be to totally destroy the units. We'll explore all other opportunities to put these units to use before we actually demolish them.

MR. ABERNETHY: The next area I just have a few questions on is, I'm looking through your list and I'm seeing a lot more duplexes in here. I've been to a lot of communities over time and I guess I'm seeing more and more duplexes and more and more row housing type units over time. I think that's a good direction for us to be going. I really feel that getting away from sort of single, stand-alone units over time will be better as far as maintenance costs, heating costs, if we can share some of the costs on a unit basis, construction costs, all of those types of things.

Does the Housing Corporation have a program where we're going to be moving away from single, detached units to multi-family units? Is there any move towards apartments in some of these communities that can house a larger number of people for a far more economical cost? I mean, apartments that we can heat with a single sort of source rather than multiple sources. As far as reducing our overall costs but maximizing the number of people, have we thought about going down that direction? I see duplexes, great. Is there any thought about taking that next step to maybe more or larger multi-family dwellings?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Member is very correct; that is the direction as a corporation that we're trying to go. With the changing demographics across the Northwest Territories, we're finding that we have a lot more younger people, small families, single people getting into units, and seniors. This is

one that works well with the declining funding. We need to try and be as efficient as possible.

There is a move towards more multi-family type units, duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes. We have some nine-plexes in some of the communities. That is a direction that the Housing Corporation will go. It used to be that the bulk of our units were all detached units and awfully expensive to maintain and heat. If we can use a common system to heat the units, that is the direction that we are going. Especially with the changing demographics too, I think it's the right direction to go.

MR. ABERNETHY: I agree 100 percent. I think about our long-term costs, given that our funds are decreasing, I think it's super important.

Which I think goes to the next thing and I know my colleague Mr. Bromley always asks these types of questions, and I know the Housing Corporation has already accepted a standard of construction that is higher than, say, the national standard. When it comes to what we're doing, I mean, it's a little bit more expensive to do some of these things now to increase our efficiencies, to go with pellets, to go with other things, woodstoves, all these types of things in our communities, but there is some real benefit to it. Forget the positive side of the environment and just think about the positive side of the costs. Huge opportunities here to help people reduce their costs which might address some of those things we were talking about earlier today.

I encourage you to continue to push the envelope as the Housing Corporation and move even further beyond what you're doing as far as efficiencies in the homes, your construction techniques to help the people in those homes and ultimately you as the Housing Corporation reduce your costs, because it's going to get harder and harder over time, especially with the decreasing funds.

I'm encouraging you to push and push and push and move further and further beyond the national standards for building to increase those efficiencies and opportunities to help us save costs. Just a comment. Doesn't really need a response.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Just a comment. Mr. McLeod, if you want to reply, it's up to you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comment from the Member. It is something that as a corporation we're constantly trying to keep on top of the technology and how we can improve the products we put on the ground. At the end of the day, you're absolutely correct that there is a savings to the Housing Corporation. Obviously, it's climate-friendly and a saving to the homeowners at the same time. It is something that we're constantly trying to do, is improve the product we put on the ground.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first question is for the Housing Corporation Minister. I wonder what type of cycle the construction is on. I see there's materials, labour and land development. I'm wondering if the corporation is building on three-year cycles.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In some of the communities it would be a one-year cycle. In some of the smaller communities, as you can see from the list, materials are brought in one year and then labour. So it's a two-year cycle, the short answer.

MR. BEAULIEU: One of the needs at the community level has been a need to provide small, detached units for a certain type of homeownership clientele in the communities, and the Housing Corporation has been working on a small unit. There is a need for units that are maybe a little under 500 square feet to something that may be a little over 700 square feet. Those are fairly small units basically designed for a single person or a two-person family. I'm wondering if there's been any progress made for that type of unit.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There has been some discussion amongst myself and the officials to put this out for an expression of interest to see what kind of feedback we get on it, what we get back for as far as pricing goes. I believe we kind of have a design in mind, one that we're proposing to go with, and a lot of this was working with the Rural and Remote committee who felt there was a need for this particular type of unit in some of the smaller communities.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering if the Minister and the corporation have contemplated design-build for this type of unit.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Well, we're looking for more innovation. I mean, if somebody wanted to put in a proposal to do a design-build, I mean, we're always looking at ways where we can get... At the end of the day, as long as we get a quality product out there, how we come about it, I don't think that's set in stone. If there's an opportunity for someone out there to do a design-build, I mean, we'd obviously welcome that too. I think that would all be part of this expression of interest that we're proposing to put out.

MR. BEAULIEU: Staying on the same line of questioning, Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering if there are construction regulations, or standards, perhaps is a better term, that is preventing this unit from being delivered at an economical rate per square foot.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: It has to meet standard building construction practices. It has to meet industry standards, but it is not one that is preventing us from getting it out there. We just need

to make sure that we get a quality product. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of work being done in the public housing area in the area of replacements and retrofit and possibly, well, replacement is new public housing units. I recognize that retrofits are just maintaining the same units and retrofitting them if they're within economical repair, and the ones that are being replaced, my assumption is that they're beyond economical repair. Is there any possibility that those units could be put essentially on the market for individuals that perhaps could do some renovations to the unit and keep the unit or the corporation assisting maybe this type of clientele who would go for the smaller unit? Some of these units, the detached units that are being replaced may be the right size unit. I'm wondering what types of discussions has the Minister had with the corporation in that area of the disposition of the units that are being replaced.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we're looking to dispose of some of the old units that we've written off, and as I mentioned to Member Abernethy, the last thing that we want to do is demolish them if there's an opportunity for someone that might want one of these units. You know, at the end of the day, we've written them off because they're beyond economical repair, so obviously it's going to be an as-is, where-is, and Housing completely out of the picture. On the other hand, they're going to need to be able to maintain the unit as far as looking after all the utilities and that goes.

We're looking at different ways of how we can dispose of the units without having to demolish them, because we know in today's environment we don't want to be seen as going into a community and demolishing units that there's a possibility that these units could be put to some use.

That's one of the reasons that we had discussions with and been approached by communities that want to take on some of these old units. They understand that they'll be getting them on an as-is, where-is basis. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman, on the retrofit of public housing units, can the Minister tell me if there's been any discussion with the corporation on the disposition of materials that are coming off the units that are being retrofitted, possibly to give the materials to individual homeowners that may otherwise not be eligible for regular repair programs? In a sense, for clarity, I'm saying that if they take replacing the siding with a better grade of siding on the retrofit of these public housing units, can that siding be given to an individual or individuals in the communities that are otherwise not eligible for any assistance through the Housing Corporation due to various reasons? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we have heard of stories where a contractor would be taking a unit apart and are approached for some of the materials that are coming apart. For the most part, I mean, it's the contractor's responsibility to dispose of this material and if they can give it away or if somebody comes and takes it, then that would be something to do.

We could probably have the discussion of maybe making it a condition of the contracts where houses are being retrofitted that they allow people to come and take the material. I've heard of cases where contractors allow people to actually take the unit apart and just keep whatever they salvage out of it, which worked well for a lot of people. It is something. We hear the term, "thinking outside the box" and "doing things differently," "being a little innovative," and if this is one of the ways that we can assist in helping people using some of the old material, then it's something that we would consider.

MR. BEAULIEU: I encourage the Minister to put that provision in the contracts. I think it's very important. There are a small percentage of people in the communities that could use those materials and assist their own housing needs even though they may not be eligible for the regular programs. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I will take the Member's advice and in my discussions with the officials when we're done this process, we'll look at making it a condition of the contract where it's appropriate and where it would help people in the communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to just ask a few questions about the plans for Dettah and Ndilo and the situation there. I understand, from the material provided by the Minister, that there will be 13 retrofits planned and four new units for Dettah/Ndilo next year, 2011-12. Are these units on this plan completely separate from those scheduled for the 2010-12 year? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Housing.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the Member is correct; they are completely separate from the ones that are going there now. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for that confirmation. We are seven months into the year 2011. The last I understood, the units planned for this year had not started construction. Obviously, we are into the winter season now. I am wondering, first of all, what is the status of construction for the 2010-11 year. What are the expectations for carryover into 2011-12?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we are just in the process of trying to finalize some of the

contractual details. That is one of the challenges we face when we enter into these particular type of contracts. The Member is correct again; there will obviously have to be some carryover into the next fiscal year. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chairman, I realize there are challenges and in negotiating a construction by local businesses I hope that is a policy of the Housing Corporation throughout the Northwest Territories. I certainly appreciate any progress on that front, because I think that work is obviously quite critical to the communities.

I also understand that crucial delays can happen in Cabinet decisions during the prime construction season. I think that is something that the Minister might take up to see if progress can be made and the timing of those decisions. What are the cost implications for construction during the winter as opposed to during a more appropriate construction season? Will that affect the amount of projects that are able to be completed? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, that would depend on some of the terms of the contract. There are many cases. There are some cases where there are cold weather clauses that kick in. If you are building in a particular type of year, obviously the cost is going to be higher. It is a cost that is the cost of doing business in winter when the construction season is a lot different. There will be costs. As to exactly how much, we wouldn't be able to give that information to the Member until after these are completed or we make some progress on them, then we will have a fairly good idea of the actual cost of this. I will be willing to share that with the Member. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chairman, thanks for those comments from the Minister. I think, Mr. Chairman, this highlights a situation that we faced in all of our infrastructure in other departments. I think the government has been quite progressive. They have had an infrastructure subcommittee. I believe the deputy ministers tuned up that process quite a bit. We also, as a House, have implemented a new process for our capital budget. That has allowed that implementation.

I am wondering, it is different for the Housing Corporation, I understand. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss this now, but my understanding is that we don't actually approve this budget until perhaps the winter session because it is somehow related to O and M.

I suppose this is a convoluted way of saying it would be great if we could begin negotiation now with the sort of okay of the House on this budget so that we don't have these construction delays and higher costs during the 2011-12 season. Is the Minister working on this? Is there any solution to this dilemma in sight that we could actually allow negotiations to...

Again, horribly important here to get our local businesses and people employed. They sometimes take longer to negotiate. We are talking capacity building and another very important and identified role of this government. Is there potential? Is the Minister thinking about how we can tune up this approval process and budgeting process to allow that early discussion and negotiation to happen? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the Member raises a very good point. It is a concern that we have heard from Mr. Chairman himself on the process. We feel that with presenting our budget now, or as an information item for next year, will give us a head start on the planning. Members will have a fairly good idea of the project that we are planning, because you used to not be able to see this until the actual budget in budget session and then you approved it then, and then the planning started. That is the reason we have had so many delays and carryovers. Now, as part of this process, we can start the planning right now, have everything in place pending approval of our budget, because ours is a contribution through Finance. We see this as an important first step.

I think we will continue to improve on that. I think we are going to see the delivery of our infrastructure probably improve dramatically by using this process, presenting it to committee as an information item, having committee's input on it and then, once we are done this process, we start the planning instead of waiting for five months from now to start the planning.

That is one of the reasons we have run into so many delays in the past where we have had materials going into the community on the last barge when the snow is there. I think this is going to prevent us from doing a lot of that. We have started the process, Mr. Bromley. We see it as an opportunity to make a great improvement on the time and delivery of our infrastructure. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chairman, that is good news indeed. I understand it allows the planning. You have to reserve space for shipping and do the planning for ordering and so on. Does it allow negotiation of contracts for construction? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, it does allow us for earlier tendering. Then if there are expressions of interest out there for negotiated contracts early enough, then we can start the process a lot earlier using this process that we are in now. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chairman, that is good news. I guess two things that I would appreciate it if the Minister could keep working on this to fully realize those opportunities, perhaps working with the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister working perhaps through local housing organizations? What is the

outreach process for early notice to local businesses or community development corporations, if that is what they are called and so on, to ensure that they are alert to this possibility of early negotiation a year ahead of time or whatever? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, through our district offices, we try to get the information out there as quickly as possible and, again, having a pretty good idea of the potential projects for the next building season will give us an opportunity to get some of the information out there quicker so we can, if there are any expressions of interest out there, we would obviously hear about those a lot sooner.

The infrastructure budget is obviously a tabled item, so the information is available and will be available, so they would be able to realize the number of projects that might be coming out in their particular region. Whereas before you almost had to wait until the budget session in February/March to see what was coming to your region during the summer construction season. This process here is going to give us a good head start on being able to accomplish things a lot quicker and get things out there, get materials or everything in place and be ready to build at the beginning of the building season instead of at the end. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next I have Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to review the infrastructure investment by the NWT Housing Corporation. In my riding, of course, this is one of the regions with the highest core need. So I'm interested to see how the corporation is addressing that fact in the capital plan that's before us, Mr. Chair. If I could get the Minister to review some of the capital expenditures for the Nahendeh riding just to see how it reflects to address the core need that's there. I'm just kind of counting quickly and by comparison to other ridings, I don't see that much, but perhaps there's more in the works. Perhaps the Minister can explain how they're addressing the core needs in the Nahendeh riding with this capital infrastructure investment that's before us.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Housing, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of the projects here that are going to the Member's riding – I mean, he's seen the numbers here -- there's been a huge improvement in, actually, the repair dollars, the CARE dollars that are going into the Member's riding. Then there's some M and I that's happening. So this is just some of the infrastructure that's going on the ground. We felt that with putting more money into CARE, we'd be addressing some of the issues that were

identified through the core needs study survey. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: The Minister must be talking about some O and M dollars, because I don't see the amount of repair dollars reflected in the pages that are before me. Maybe the Minister can just clarify that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Minister, can you clarify or do you have that information available for Mr. Menicoche so he can maybe get a copy of that? Mr. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We can provide the information to the Member. We've got about \$1.2 million in CARE. The Member is correct; it is through the program delivery. So that's on top of the infrastructure that's going into the Member's riding. There's approximately \$1.2 million earmarked for CARE. Then we've got preventative maintenance money, but I can provide some information to the Member as to exactly what's going into his riding. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: One of the ways, if you're going to create a study there, Mr. Chair, I believe that you should address those needs and we'll certainly have that discussion when we talk about the business planning for 2011-12, Mr. Chair. But in terms of this budget, it's not really reflective of the identified core need. I was very pleased to see that study, because that study actually only confirmed what my constituents and I have been telling the Housing ministry for years and years, that these needs have to be addressed. In fact, when I go to Fort Liard, they're saying that they actually need 30 homes to replace. What's there doesn't address the accommodation issue, it only replaces what's there. There's still overcrowding if we replace that many homes, and that's the kind of action that I certainly would like to see and it's just not reflective in this capital budget. So I'd like the Minister to comment on that. As well, why aren't they using their own facts and figures to address shortages in certain ridings? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We feel like we're starting to take into account some of the numbers from the Needs Survey. I think in the Member's riding, a lot of his communities don't have public housing or local housing authorities and I think that's one of the biggest challenges we face there. I think there's a lot of people that say there's a high need for public housing. So we'll obviously have more of a discussion during the budget session and to some of the money, and I think I'll be able to provide the Member with a lot of the investment that's going on into his riding.

But I feel we're making an attempt to deal with the numbers from the Needs Survey and we'll continue to do that in the future, because, as I've stated in the House on a number of occasions, that we're using the Needs Survey to start allocating some of

our funds for homeownership and public housing into the places where it's most needed. Obviously, the Member has one of the highest needs, if not the highest need, I believe, in the NWT. So we're starting the process and I think it's one that will be improved upon. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'm pleased to hear that from the Minister and I'll continue to raise the issue and press the issue. I look forward to the discussion in the business plans early in the new year.

Just going down the list, perhaps the Minister can describe the four-unit four-plex building purchase in Fort Liard. Exactly what that is?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'll let Mr. Anderson respond to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That relates to the four-unit seniors facility that we're presently leasing in Fort Liard and we've been having discussions with the owner about the potential for acquiring that asset through this process. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. That kind of clarifies it to me. That four-plex building, I'm glad to see that it's back on-line and is being utilized. It's something that the community of Fort Liard has certainly wanted to see up and running again.

Just in terms of Wrigley, the two units, the duplex, this says replacement of the current public housing unit. Maybe the Minister can comment on that as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Housing.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: That's exactly what it says there, Mr. Chair. It's the replacement of two public housing units.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Chair, just in terms of Fort Simpson, maybe the Minister can describe what the plan is for the one unit and two lot developments that are there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The one is a HELP unit. It's a one unit detached. The second one is another HELP unit or land development. Two of them are land developments. So two are lot developments and one is a HELP unit, the one unit detached. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: What exactly does lot development mean? Is it the same lot that the unit's going on so there's only one other lot being developed, or what's the process with the lot development?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: No, these are lots that we're acquiring for future development. In some of the communities that we go into, we have to identify

and try and obtain lots ahead of time so we can develop them. So when we go back in the next year and go out for tender or have units to build and we actually have lots to put them on instead of in some of the communities we're told we should come in a year early and develop some of the lots, because the ground could be swampy and you need time to settle that. That's exactly what this is. It's just developing the lots for future use.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Just for the Minister, you did offer up some information to Mr. Menicoche, so maybe it's possible if you have it with you to share it with the Clerk so we can circulate it. It might be helpful to the other Members. The information that you said you would provide to the Member, maybe you can also provide that to committee or to the Members in the House and get that to us. Next on the list I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions with regard to the housing capital for Yellowknife. I note that there's a multi-unit building purchase and then there's a 12-unit retrofit. I wonder if I could know how many units, first of all, are in that replacement for the multi-unit purchase and the location of that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'll have Mr. Anderson respond to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The two projects we have slated for Yellowknife for this next year are public housing replacement for two units through multi-build looking to acquire a duplex if possible. The other is we're doing 12-unit retrofit on public housing stock and that includes energy upgrades, insulation upgrades, siding, interior finishing, windows and doors on those 12 units.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: I appreciate the information. I would like to know, if I could, where in the city these two projects will be located.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I was just commenting to the official that we put in multi-unit purchase. We should have actually made it a little easier by just putting duplex because that's exactly what it was. I apologize for that and we'll make sure that doesn't happen again.

The fact of the matter is we're looking for a duplex to purchase. We haven't identified one yet. This is money that's earmarked for the possible purchase of a duplex.

MS. BISARO: And the other project, where is it located?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: These have not been identified yet. These are with the public housing inventory with the Yellowknife Housing Authority and they would identify the projects. We will budget the money and they will identify the projects.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: It's identified, we just don't have it here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Oh, okay.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: They have 300 units almost.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Oh.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Just one last question, I guess. Part of my riding includes Sissons Court, which has quite a number of public housing units. I wonder if the Minister could advise the status of those units in terms of their repair or lack of repair, basically an evaluation of their need for how good are they. Do they need repairs? When are they likely to be renovated and retrofitted?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Unfortunately we don't have that. I will follow up with the Member. Part of the 12 units, once we find out where those units actually are, some of them could be amongst the units that the Member is speaking about. I will get the proper information and I will share it with the Member.

MS. BISARO: I lied. I said I had one last question but I do have another one.

Quite often I've heard Members talking about the practice of putting out a tender for housing units and it's put out as supply, ship and erect. I gather that has quite an impact on smaller communities in that businesses within the smaller community cannot do that whole contract of supply, ship and erect. So has the Housing Corporation changed their policy of tendering housing projects so that they could be split into possibly supply and ship and then a second contract for just the erection of the units?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We have heard that. We have taken the message to heart and we are planning on doing some contracts, particularly in the smaller communities, with just labour only and just putting the supply/ship, then we'll have the labour as a separate contract.

MS. BISARO: I guess I heard the Minister say that we will do that. Is there a timeline on this? I've heard this for quite a while. I would have thought that if the Housing Corporation was going to do it, it would have been something they would have considered and have started already. When might

we be able to see these contracts split into two parts?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: With this budget and information that we're putting before you, a lot of these ones, when the construction comes out or the tenders come out this next building season, which is this summer, you'll see a lot of them where it's just labour only.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Overall I like what I see for the three communities of Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk and Ulukhaktok. But I'd like to ask the Minister what his plans are for Sachs Harbour in regard to getting some new units put into the community.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I have had discussions with the officials about the possibility of allocating a unit to Sachs Harbour. We'll continue to have those discussions. If we find that we're able to do it, then we'll see what we can do about getting a unit into Sachs Harbour this coming building season.

MR. JACOBSON: Just in regard to that, I see on the capital plan that we have for the upcoming season, that you have some communities with five duplexes being built. Sorry, six duplexes being built. With the community of Sachs Harbour, the assessment that was done to the community I think that was not accurate. We have young families growing up needing places to stay and I think this unit, if we could get a four-plex into the community sooner rather than later, what are the chances of getting a four-plex put on this year's business plan?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We realize the demographics are changing and we're going to have to, we say we're going to use the Community Housing Needs Survey as a basis for allocating infrastructure and this is something we're going to have to look at.

I did commit to the Member, I said one unit. The Member was referring to one four-plex unit and I meant one unit. Give an inch, take a mile. Obviously it's something that we're going to have to look at.

We have the information before you. There are reasons that other communities got the number of units they did. The one community there was serious structural problems that may have been quite dangerous to the people that are living there. It was determined that these come down and the duplexes go up in their place, because we are going to more of a multi-unit type facility.

As far as getting it onto this budget, we've allocated all that we have right now. If there are opportunities to make some adjustments, we'd have to have a look at that.

MR. JACOBSON: Myself, I looked through the proposed acquisition plan. There's nothing there for Sachs Harbour. That's why I'm asking if we can get something put into the acquisition plan for the community. Not only that, there's a HELP unit retrofit being done next year. I think something has to be done this year because the unit is needed in the community.

Just going back last year on the program for the professional housing unit, say for instance the community corp and any of the communities that wanted to take on professional housing for the people coming in, nurses, teachers, for a unit like that, is that program still available to those outlying communities?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'm sorry; if I could ask the Member to repeat his question. I think it was something to do with staff housing, housing for staff in the communities and if there's opportunity for the local communities to take advantage of these. If he could just repeat that, I'd appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Jacobson, if we could please get you to restate your question.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question is in regard to professional people coming into the community, doctors, nurses, teachers, and stuff, taking units away from the community. The four-plex that I'm asking for in the community for professional housing, is that program still available for professional housing to provide for outlying people coming to the communities for work?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There's always an opportunity for the community to approach the corporation and try to secure some kind of program to put a four-plex into the community. There are loan guarantees that the corporation has used in the past. We've got a \$25,000-a-door incentive that we offer to communities that try to provide housing for staff. So the opportunities are there. We're always willing to sit and listen to what the communities propose.

MR. JACOBSON: I'm up to two four-plexes now in the community of Sachs Harbour. It's good.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, but you're paying for one.

MR. JACOBSON: I know. We are going to pay for one. But anyways. The one four-plex that I'm asking for in the community for the young families growing up in the community, is it possible to get that into the community this year for this summer's construction?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: No. Then he'll say he's got three four-plexes. No, Mr. Chairman, I said our budget's been allocated. Our infrastructure's been allocated. If there's opportunity, if something changes and there's an opportunity to possibly be

looking at working with Mr. Jacobson to get a unit into his particular community, then that is what I will commit to do.

MR. JACOBSON: Could I ask the Minister if it's possible to change the HELP unit to a four-plex? Because that HELP unit is not helping.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: This is not actually a HELP unit that's being built there. It's a retrofit to an existing HELP unit.

MR. JACOBSON: I look at all the business acquisitions that we have going on for some of the communities. I think again last year I had a commitment for Sachs Harbour in getting a unit in there. I think that obviously it's not going to happen. I really want to work with the Minister to try to get two units in there, one for professional housing and one for the community, so we're not so tied up for the young families and professionals that are trying to come into the community to provide a service for our people. I think if it's possible with the Minister... I'm going to invite the Minister into the community to meet with the local representatives to try to get these units on the go. Try to work together to get the two units into the community if possible and we just have to take one away from somewhere. It looks like Yellowknife has lots and other communities have lots.

---Interjection

We need something in Sachs Harbour. We have been bypassed long enough. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I would be more willing to accept the Member's invitation to visit his community and it gives me an opportunity to listen to their concerns and see what our product is on the ground there.

Going back to the Member's wish for a four-plex, he was talking about the community taking the initiative and that is something that I have committed to the Member, that as a corporation we are always willing to listen to the communities and some of the initiatives that they come up with and we will do what we can to work with them, realizing that some of the units that they want to put on the ground, we are there to assist whenever possible. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: I just want to clarify what the Minister just said. The community of Sachs Harbour, the community corporation is looking for the backing for the four-plex that was offered last year to go to the bank to build the four-plex for professionals, and what I am asking for is for the NWT Housing Corporation to give me a four-plex for the community. That is what I am asking for. They are two different things and the community is only asking for the professional housing, the community corporation. I just wanted that clarified. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As far as the community's need for a four-plex, I would have to have a discussion with Mr. Jacobson. I think I am going off on a rabbit trail here and maybe I got lost somewhere, but as far as his desire for a four-plex for his community as public housing, I have told the Member that if there is an opportunity there or if some changes happen or if there are things that change, and if we feel that we are able to assist the Member in securing a unit for his community, then that is something that we would be willing to entertain. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you Minister McLeod. The next on my list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you Mr. Chairman. One of the issues that has come forward is in regards to the last Needs Surveys that has been done compared to the last one done previous was 2004. I think one thing that we see is there is still a question about housing core need. Basically the lifecycle of a lot of our housing units, I think that we have to face the reality that at some point in time the housing units that we have basically have used their lifecycle. There is no way that you can repair them and you can't replace them. I think that is one of the reasons we are barely keeping our heads above water to really meet the core needs that we are running into.

I think one of the things that we have to look at is what do we do to deal with the old northern rentals, look at what we are doing with the Weber houses. Those units are basically 35 years old. I think that we have to and the communities have to realize that we are not meeting the needs.

Looking at the duplexes, stuff like that, it does accommodate, but I think another area that we can really make a difference in our communities where we still have these high core needs is to look at seniors housing. I don't see that in here. We are talking more in regards to public housing, but I think there is a need for seniors multiplexes in communities. Looking at our aging population, I will use Fort McPherson where there are 122 elders over the age of 60 and we have some 86 elders over the age of 70. I think we have to be realistic to the aging demographics in our communities and the basic lifecycle for housing needs and I think that is one area that I see that we can really help communities. We have challenges regardless whether it's singles housing, family housing units and or seniors.

I think we hear a lot of issues around here about seniors staying in public housing by themselves and that that house could maybe be better used by a family. I know it is an issue between Housing and the Department of Health and Social Services, but I think that is something that we should really be looking at, is the infrastructure for seniors housing in our communities.

I know I have raised this in the House before about disabled housing, but again that could also be to accommodate our seniors, because as you age, you are fragile and eventually there are situations where you will find yourself in that category of need by way of your disability. I think that is something that we have to look at, so I would like to just ask the Minister is that something that is contemplated in the housing reviews going forward. When we build a unit in a community, can we look at the possibility of designing a unit or four-plex specifically designed for seniors? We are going to spend the money anyway, so can we design the units to specifically meet the needs of certain classes of our population in our communities, especially for seniors in social housing, especially for a lot of our isolated communities and communities that we do need that accommodation in our communities and keep the elders in our home communities as long as we can? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you Mr. Krutko. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just in regards to the Members' first concern with the old northern territorials, and he is correct, we try and take, as we put new public housing units into the system, some of the older ones out, because a lot of them are beyond economic repair. Those are the ones that we would take out first. The Weber units, I think are almost the next in line for that. We still find that the Weber units, a lot of them have gone through a retrofit probably within the last 10 years, so there is still some life left in those.

The northern territorials are basically all out of the inventory now, so as we bring new units in, we take some of the older ones out, ones that we just can't fix anymore and have been repaired maybe four or five times. That is something that we are looking at.

As far as looking at the different demographics and designing our homes we have, in some communities, seniors units in some of the communities and so we are able to do our part in keeping the seniors in the communities, especially those that are fairly independent. The design is part of what we are incorporating into our new public housing and homeownership design. You see with some the LHOs before the corporation started designing a lot of these units to accommodate those that are disabled and seniors. Some of the LHOs would designate some of their own units as seniors or disabled units and they do the necessary retrofit, so that is one that we recognize is getting to be... The seniors especially, we just had, I think, a new seniors five-plex open in one of the Sahtu communities. So it is one that we recognize that we need to go to more of a multi-type unit. We have a lot of seniors still staying in some of the older public housing but you are kind of reluctant to move some

of them out because they have been in there for basically the last 40 to 45 years and they are given an option if they maybe want to take a smaller unit, but we figure at this point it would do them more harm than good to move them out of there. So we try and recognize the fact that they have become quite attached to some of the units that they are in. But as far as going forward and into our new designs, this is something that we are trying to incorporate and all future design will be able to accommodate seniors and those with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KRUTKO: Like my colleague for Nunakput, in regards to Sachs Harbour, I just noted, going through the lists, Tsiigehtchic is not on there. I am just wondering have we forgotten Tsiigehtchic or is it for some reason excluded. I would just like to know what are the future plans for Tsiigehtchic, because I noted going through 2011-2012 and 2013-2014, Tsiigehtchic is not listed so I don't know if it is a mistake or if they deleted Tsiigehtchic out of our housing stock altogether. What is the status of Tsiigehtchic.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The money that Tsiigehtchic's getting is mostly on the O and M side, but the Member raises a fairly good point going into future years. That's something that I'll commit to the Member that I will take up with my officials and see, well, first of all, about the need in Tsiigehtchic and... But I will commit to the Member that I will take it up with the officials and have a discussion with them, because we can't be going three or four years into the future and not see an investment of any kind in any of our communities. I'll have that discussion with the officials. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: In regard to the other aspects, I think that as the Housing Corporation who really does benefit communities economically and socially and by job opportunities and training opportunities for a lot of people, and more importantly, trying to get our young people into the apprenticeships, this is one department that really can achieve results in communities, especially when we talk about the economics and social conditions of our communities, high unemployment and economic opportunities. I think that one of the ways that we should be looking at is... I know the whole area of breaking down contracts and trying to get them to a stage where we contract the different segments regardless if it's site development work, put that out as a separate contract. Foundation work such as pilings, that could be a separate contract, and also even to a point where we actually try to attract local businesses to get into the different segments regardless if it's dry walling or painting or plumbing or electricians. I think that is an area where we can really develop the communities' social and economic potential, especially for young individuals who want to get into the trades, want to stay in their

local home communities and look at that as a business opportunity.

I think that's something that we have to be cognizant of, especially where we're starting to see higher and higher statistics in our communities in excess of 40 percent. To me, that is telling us something when you have 45 percent unemployment in the community where you have a population of 800 people. That should be sending a message out.

I'd just like to know if that's something that can be considered and contemplated in regard to the contracting practices and procedures and even looking at the contracting guidelines that we have, if there are ways that we can try to sustain and maintain as many of those capital investment dollars in our local communities.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I have committed and I mentioned earlier that we are planning, in the coming construction season, going out with as many labour-only contracts as possible, especially in some of the smaller communities. When there's a lot that needs to be developed, there are a lot of contractors within the communities themselves that are able to undertake this work.

One thing that I would be very wary of doing is breaking down the contracts too much. I mean, there's always going to be a need for a general contractor and then he gets his subcontractors. In most cases, if he's from a small community he'll use the same people. There's obviously some parts of it where he'll have to go outside the community, but if we started breaking it down into too many different segments of a contract, I think we're going to find that the work is not going to be done as quickly as it should. So with the general contractor, he'll be able to crack the whip and make sure that everything that is planned and going on for when it's supposed to be. But that is our intent, is to put out and let contracts and have some of them as just labour-only contracts where it's appropriate. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. I have no more Members on my list. Are there any questions? We're on page 3-12, which is an information item. Programs and district operations, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$16.420 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We've concluded the detail so we'll go back to the first page, which is page 3-10. The NWT Housing Corporation, information item, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$16.420 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that that concludes our consideration of the NWT Housing Corporation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that that concludes our consideration of Table Document 66-16(5)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Ramsay.

COMMITTEE MOTION 13-16(5):
CONCURRENCE OF TD 66-16(5),
NWT CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2011-2012,
CARRIED

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 66-16(5), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates 2011-2012, be now concluded, and that Tabled Document 66-16(5) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. A motion is on the floor. The motion is being distributed. Actually, before we take that next step, I'd like to thank the Minister and his staff for talking to us today. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out.

A motion is on the floor. The motion has been distributed. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Question has been called.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Now recognizing the clock, I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 66-16(5), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates 2011-2012, and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted, and that consideration of Tabled Document 66-16(5) is concluded and that the House concur with those estimates and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

---Carried

Item 22, 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, October 29, 2010, at 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. 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 20-16(5), Retention of Long-Form Census Questionnaire
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project
 - Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits
 - Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits - What We Heard
 - Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northern Voices, Northern Waters: NWT Water Stewardship Strategy
 - Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future"

- Tabled Document 98-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2009-2010
- Tabled Document 99-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2009-2010
- Tabled Document 100-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2010-2011
- Tabled Document 101-16(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2010-2011
- Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act
- Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act
- Minister's Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights

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 Friday, October 29, 2010, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

